# Online
# Accessibility

Inclusive digital strategies
for every business.

CITY OF MELBOURNE

Flare
Access

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# **Contents**

# Introduction

Welcome to the Online Accessibility Guide: Inclusive Digital strategies for every business, a valuable resource developed for the City of Melbourne by Flare Access. In our increasingly digital age, the internet has become a central hub for communication, work, education, and entertainment. However, for the 4.4 million Australians living with disability, there remain significant barriers that can hinder the full enjoyment of these online spaces and resources. Understanding and implementing digital accessibility is crucial in addressing this disparity and ensuring that every individual has equal access to the digital world.

Effective digital communication stands as a cornerstone for any business seeking to expand its reach, enhance customer loyalty, and build a robust brand reputation. However, an often-overlooked aspect of this digital engagement is the principle of inclusivity - ensuring that the digital services provided are accessible to all individuals, regardless of any disabilities they may have.

True digital success lies in a business's ability to communicate and connect with every individual in its audience.

Inclusive digital communication is indispensable for businesses as it significantly broadens market reach, enhances customer engagement, and facilitates instant feedback and interaction. In today's digital era, consumers are constantly seeking convenient, clear, and rapid communication from businesses. Providing this through accessible and inclusive digital platforms, such as websites, social media, and apps, enables companies to reach a more diverse audience, expanding their customer base and market share.

# About this
# **Toolkit**

This toolkit unfolds the layers of digital accessibility that may be relevant for businesses, offering insights, strategies, and actionable steps you can implement across different communication mediums. We delve into the nuances of creating accessible content for your websites, the subtleties of social media inclusivity, the art of crafting accessible emails, and the science behind developing videos and multimedia with accessibility in mind.

So, whether you're a business owner striving to make your mark, a content creator desiring to resonate with your audience or an organisation committed to making a difference, this toolkit is your starting point. It's not exhaustive; the journey to full accessibility is an ongoing process of learning, adapting, and growing. But it's a step—a significant one—towards a more inclusive digital space where every voice is heard, every need considered, and every individual valued.

This toolkit serves as an introductory guide to enhancing the accessibility of various digital communication forms. While it provides comprehensive insights, it is not exhaustive and should be regarded as a foundational starting point from which you can begin to deepen your understanding and continual practice of creating accessible communications.

We recognise that individuals with disabilities have diverse preferences, with some favouring person-first language and others advocating for identity-first language. In this document, we primarily adopt a person-first language approach, while respecting all perspectives within the community.

# What Do We Mean By "Digital Accessibility" ?
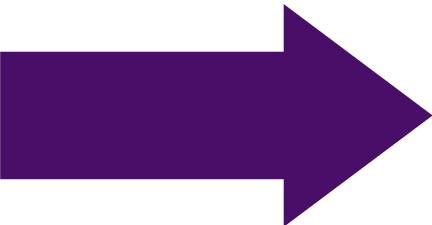
Online or digital accessibility refers to the inclusive practice of removing barriers that prevent interaction with, or access to, websites, applications, and other digital tools by people with disabilities.

When sites, apps, and digital technologies are correctly designed, developed, and edited, all users have equal access to information and functionality. This doesn't only apply to people with disabilities but also benefits users in general, for instance, those using mobile devices, smart TVs, smart watches, and other devices with small screens.

For instance, it means creating websites that are navigable by screen readers, offering video content with subtitles or sign language interpretation, and designing interactive functions that can be fully operated through keyboard commands. It also encompasses the use of clear, simple language that can be easily understood, and ensuring compatibility with various assistive technologies.
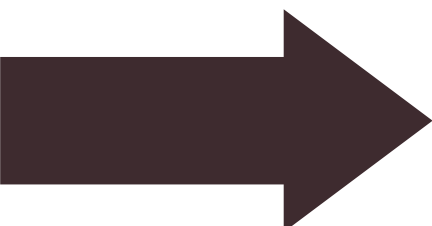
In essence, digital accessibility embodies the principles of inclusivity and equal access in the digital realm, ensuring that no individual is excluded from interacting with your business online.

# Why Is It Important To Make Your Online Communication Accessible

### Ethical responsibility and inclusivity:

On a fundamental human level, it's the right thing to do. Everyone deserves to access information, and businesses should ensure they aren't excluding people with disabilities. By making online content accessible, companies demonstrate a commitment to fairness, equality, and social responsibility, thereby contributing to a more inclusive society.

### Expanded audience reach:

In Australia, approximately 4.4 million people live with some form of disability, which is about 18 per cent of the population. This statistic highlights a substantial segment of the community that businesses might not fully reach if their online content isn't accessible. Beyond those with disabilities, there are also individuals with temporary impairments as well as an aging population who might face accessibility challenges. Designing online communication with these groups in mind fosters inclusivity and significantly expands a business's potential audience and customer base.

### Improved user experience:

Accessibility often leads to better overall usability. Features that make content more accessible can also benefit users without disabilities. For example, captions on videos aid understanding in noisy or quiet environments, and clear, simple content can be crucial for people accessing information in a second language.

### Positive brand image:

Companies seen as caring, inclusive, and socially responsible tend to attract more customers and have better customer loyalty. In contrast, those seen as neglecting these values may face negative public perception and loss of business opportunities.

**Legal compliance:**

In Australia, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) mandates that individuals with disabilities must be granted equal rights and opportunities across various facets of life, including access to information and services. This extends to digital spaces, where businesses and service providers are required to ensure that their online platforms and resources are accessible to everyone. Non-compliance with the DDA can lead to legal repercussions, including complaints lodged to the Australian Human Rights Commission, which can result in investigations, legal proceedings, and potentially, penalties.

The Australian Government endorses the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) as the standard for online accessibility, encouraging organisations to align with these guidelines to provide an inclusive digital environment. Adhering to these standards is not only about legal adherence but also reflects a commitment to social responsibility and equality in the digital realm, crucial for building trust and integrity in any business.

# Understanding Various **Customer Needs**

Understanding the spectrum of user needs is critical for creating inclusive content. Here's how different disabilities can affect a persons ability to interact with your digital content.

## Blind or low vision:

This includes customers with a partial or total inability to see or to perceive colour contrasts. These customers may rely on screen readers, braille readers, or screen magnification. Ensuring websites have alt text for images, can be navigated using a keyboard alone, and have high-contrast colour schemes can significantly improve accessibility for these users.

## Deaf or hard-of-hearing:

These customers may have difficulties with content presented in audio format. Transcripts, captions, or sign language interpretation are essential for making audio and video content accessible.

## Motor or mobility disability:

These customers may have difficulty, or an inability to use a mouse or keyboard, with limited fine motor control. Websites that can be navigated entirely using a keyboard or a speech recognition system are essential for these users. Some of these consumers may rely on voice commands to operate their computers and navigate the internet.

## Developmental, cognitive, and intellectual disabilities:

These users may benefit from simplified language, clear instructions, and intuitive navigation support comprehension and ease of use. Features like text-to-speech, adjustable text size, and calm, distraction-free layouts cater to diverse learning and concentration abilities.

## Neurodiversity:

Some customers may experience sensory sensitivities or difficulty processing information. These customers may benefit from implementing features like clear navigation, consistent layouts, and the avoidance of sensory overload - such as flashing images or auto-playing videos - reduces cognitive fatigue and makes digital platforms more welcoming.

## Psychosocial disability:

Thoughtfully designed digital spaces can minimise triggers and anxiety by ensuring that content is straightforward, predictably structured, and free from overwhelming stimuli. Features such as adjustable font sizes, simplified layouts, and calm color schemes cater to those with concentration difficulties, while easy navigation aids those experiencing cognitive fatigue or memory issues.

# Accessible vs Inclusive
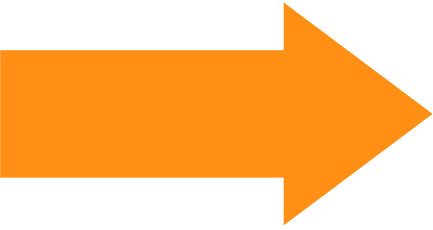
**Accessible content**

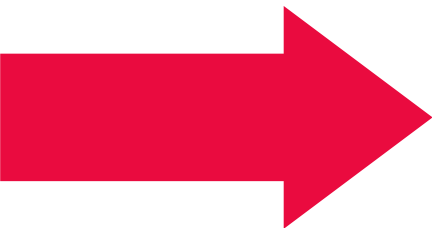Accessible communication refers to creating communication that is easily understood and usable by people with disabilities, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or those who are blind or have low vision.

**Inclusive content**

Inclusive communication goes beyond accessibility by ensuring that communication is designed to be inclusive of everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, cultural background, or language proficiency.

# Tips to inclusive content

### Diverse representation

Images and videos should include people with a range of disabilities. Representation matters, and visuals should reflect the diverse communities that businesses serve.

### Use inclusive language

Use inclusive language in marketing and communication materials.
Use person-first or identity-first language based on the preference of the community or individual you're depicting.

### Consultation and collaboration

Engage with individuals with disabilities, advocacy groups, or organisations in the creative process to ensure an authentic representation. They can provide valuable insights into respectful portrayals.

### Authentic portrayal

Use images and narratives of actual individuals with disabilities, not just actors. Share their real stories and experiences, emphasising the person over the disability.

### Diverse roles and contexts

Depict individuals with disabilities in a variety of roles - as professionals, parents, athletes, artists, etc... just like anyone else. Avoid defining them solely by their disability.

### Avoid ableist language

Avoid using language that reinforces negative stereotypes about people with disabilities.

# What Forms of Communication **Should You Consider?**

It's important to consider multiple forms of communication to ensure you are reaching your audience. Each platform or form of communication may serve a unique purpose and reach a different segment of your audience.

### Websites

A central hub for information about the business and its products or services.

### Social media platforms

Vital for brand presence, updates, customer service, and community building.

### Email communications

Used for direct messaging, newsletters, and transactional communications.

### Videos and multimedia

Great for storytelling, product demonstrations, or complex explanations.

### Blogs and articles

Helpful for providing deeper insights, stories, or expertise.

### Webinars and virtual events

For live presentations, conferences, or workshops.

### Podcasts and audio recordings

For auditory learning and entertainment.

### Feedback and surveys

A central hub for information about the business and its products or services.

### Customer support channels

Essential for assisting customers with their needs.

# Introducing the Principles of **Accessible Web Design**

Creating an accessible website means ensuring that everyone, including people with disabilities, can perceive, understand, navigate, interact with, and contribute to the web. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), outlines four main principles of accessible design, often remembered by the acronym "POUR," that stand as the foundation for any inclusive website. These are:

## Perceivable:

This principle deals with the presentation of information and user interface components in ways that can be discerned by all users. For instance, it involves providing text alternatives for non-text content (like images and videos), creating content that can be presented in different formats (e.g., simpler layout) without losing information or structure, and making it easier for users to see and hear content by separating foreground from background.

> What this can look like in practice:
> - Alt text for images and multimedia.
> - Captions and other alternatives for multimedia.
> - Content is presented in different ways, including through assistive technologies, without losing meaning.
> - Sufficient contrast between text and background that make things easy to see and hear.

## Operable:

Users must be able to navigate and operate the interface. This means the website must function with keyboard-only navigation for those who can't use a mouse, provide enough time for users to read and use content, not use content known to cause seizures, and help users navigate and find content.

> What this can look like in practice:
> - All functionality is available from a keyboard.
> - Users have enough time to read and use content.
> - Avoid flashing images.
> - Users can navigate, find content, and determine where they are easily.

# Understandable:

Information and the operation of the user interface must be understandable, meaning text content is readable and understandable, web pages operate in predictable ways, and users are helped to avoid and correct mistakes.

❯ What this can look like in practice:
- Text content is readable and understandable.
- Web pages appear and operate in predictable ways.
- Users are supported to avoid and correct mistakes with guidance and feedback.

# Robust:

Content must be robust enough to be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies. As technologies and user agents evolve, the content should remain accessible.

❯ What this can look like in practice:
- Compatibility with current and future user agents, including assistive technologies.
- Standard web development techniques and guidelines are followed.
- Test website compatibility with different devices and browsers.

# Navigating Web Accessibility
## **Checklist**

Refer to this Checklist to address the key elements of Website Accessibility. This is an introductory audit. For further support, consult your Digital Accessibility Specialist.  For more information visit https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/

## Perceivable design

- [ ] **Provide alternative text for images.**

- [ ] **Use clear and simple language**
  - Use plain language, write in short sentences and paragraphs.
  - Avoid using slang or idioms.
  - Use headings and bullet points.

- [ ] **Provide captions for video content**
  - The captions and subtitles should accurately represent the spoken words and include any relevant sound effects.
  - The captions and subtitles should be synchronised with the content.
  - The text should be easy to read and understand, with appropriate font size and colour contrast.
  - The captions and subtitles should be positioned in a way that does not obscure any relevant visual information.
  - The captions and subtitles should be available in multiple formats, such as text files or video overlays.

- [ ] **Provide text transcripts**
  - Provide text transcripts for audio and video content.

- [ ] **Provide an audio description for videos**
  - Identify the parts of the video that need description. These could be actions, facial expressions, or changes in location.
  - Record the audio description as a separate audio track that users can access when playing the video.
  - Ensure that it doesn't overlap with the audio content of the video.
  - Provide clear instructions on how users can access the audio description.

☐ **Ensure visual clarity**

- Use high-contrast colour combinations.
- Use a colour contrast checker tool.
- Use bold or larger fonts.
- Avoid using colour as the only way to convey information e.g. it's use in graphs.

☐ **Ensure content is adaptable**

- Use semantic HTML: Use headings, lists, and other HTML elements to structure content in a logical manner.
- Use responsive design: Make sure the website is designed to adapt to different screen sizes and resolutions.
- Test that the content fully usable when text is enlarged up to 200 per cent.

☐ **Provide orientation and context**

- Use descriptive and informative page titles that accurately reflect the content on the page.
- Use clear and consistent headings to organize content and show the hierarchy of information. H1 h2 h3 etc.
- Provide a search function that allows users to quickly find what they are looking for.
- Use descriptive link text that accurately describes where the link will take the user.
- Use clear and concise language to describe the purpose of buttons and other interactive elements.
- Provide clear and concise instructions for completing tasks, such as booking a room or purchasing a ticket.

☐ **Use accessible forms**

- Use clear and descriptive labels for all form fields, including checkboxes, radio buttons, and drop-down menus.
- Provide helpful and meaningful error messages that describe what went wrong and how to fix it.
- Make sure that all form elements are keyboard accessible, meaning that users can navigate through the form using only the keyboard.
- Ensure that form validation is clear and easy to understand, especially for users who may have difficulty seeing or hearing.
- Test forms with assistive technologies, such as screen readers and keyboard-only navigation, to ensure accessibility for all users.
- Use CAPTCHA alternatives such as Google's reCAPTCHA v2.
- Avoid requiring proof-of-humanity without a good reason.

# Operable design

☐ **Keyboard Accessibility**

- Providing keyboard shortcuts.
- Ensuring that all interactive elements are keyboard accessible.
- Does the page order make sense when navigating with a keyboard?

☐ **Focus Indicators**

- Ensure that the focus style is visible and consistent across all interactive elements on the website, including buttons, links, form controls, and menus.
- Avoid removing or hiding focus indicators.

☐ **Consistent Navigation**

- Place the main navigation menu in the same location on each page.
- Use clear and descriptive labels for navigation links. Avoid using vague labels such as "click here" or "read more."
- Provide consistent visual cues to indicate which page the user is currently on.
- Consider implementing a breadcrumb trail.

☐ **Provide sufficient time to read and use content.**

☐ **Offer the option to pause, stop or hide audio or video that automatically plays.**

☐ **Error Handling**

- Provide clear and descriptive error messages.
- Use colour and formatting to convey errors.
- Ensure that error messages are announced to screen reader users.
- Provide suggestions for how to fix the error.
- Ensure that error handling is consistent throughout the website.

☐ **Provide clear instructions and feedback**

- Use clear and concise error messages that explain what went wrong and how to fix it.
- Use visual cues to provide feedback.
- Test your website with users of varying abilities to ensure that instructions and feedback are clear and understandable to everyone.

☐ **Make sure the website is compatible with assistive technologies**

- Use semantic HTML: Using semantic HTML helps screen readers understand the structure and meaning of the content on a website.
- Test with assistive technologies.

☐ **Make sure the website is predictable with:**

- Consistent Layout.
- Clear Navigation.
- Consistent Styling.

# Understandable design

☐ **Use clear and concise language**

- Use plain language.
- Use active voice.
- Use lists.
- Use images.
- Test your website with actual users to see if they can easily understand the language and find the information they need.

☐ **Provide definitions of complex terms.**

☐ **Use proper text formatting**

- Use headings.
- Chuck information.
- Use bold and italics to identify key points but avoid using large blocks of bold or italics.
- Use a font size and line spacing that is easy to read. Avoid using fonts that are too small or too ornate, as these can be difficult to read.
- Use colour contrast: Use sufficient colour contrast between the text and background to ensure that the text is readable for all users.

☐ **Use descriptive link text**

- Use descriptive link text that clearly indicates where the link will take the user. Avoid using vague or generic text such as "click here."

☐ **Use simple and consistent design**

- Keep the layout and design consistent throughout the website to provide a familiar experience for users.
- Use clear and high-quality images that are relevant to the content on the page.
- Use white space effectively to create a clean and uncluttered design.

☐ **Provide clear and concise instructions.**

# Robust design

☐ **Use valid and well-formed code**
  - Ensuring that all code is valid and well-formed can help ensure that it works consistently across different browsers and devices.

☐ **Provide alternative content**
  - Providing alternative content for non-text elements, such as images, audio, and video.

☐ **Ensure compatibility with assistive technologies**
  - Responsive design: Use responsive design to ensure that your website is optimised for different screen sizes and devices.
  - Testing on different browsers and devices. You can test your website on different browsers and devices to ensure that it works well on all platforms.

☐ **Test the Website.**

# Helpful tools and resources

- WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool: This is a web accessibility testing tool that helps identify issues with content that could make it difficult to understand.

- WCAG Guidelines: The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) provide a comprehensive set of guidelines for creating accessible websites. The guidelines cover a wide range of accessibility issues and can be used as a reference when designing and testing your website.

- Vision Australia's Document Accessibility Toolbar (DAT): A dedicated toolbar that works within Microsoft Word, designed to simplify the process of creating accessible documents.

- WebAIM: This is a nonprofit organisation that provides resources and training on web accessibility, including tips for creating understandable content.

# Alt Text
# **Checklist**

Refer to this checklist so that you address the key elements of Alternative Text. This can be used for all marketing and communications including social media, your website and emails.

☐ **Identify the purpose of the image:**

Consider the context of the image and the message it conveys.

☐ **Keep it short and concise:**

Alt text should be brief, usually under 125 characters, but long enough to describe the image accurately.

☐ **Use descriptive language:**

Describe the content of the image in detail, including any relevant details, such as colours, shapes, and sizes.

☐ **Avoid unnecessary details:**

Do not include irrelevant or extraneous information in the alt text.

☐ **Include important details:**

Include any important details that are not immediately apparent in the image. For example, if the image is a photograph of a person, you may want to include their name, age, or role.

☐ **Use appropriate language and tone:**

Use appropriate language and tone that is consistent with the message and tone of the content.

☐ **Test the alt text:**

Before publishing the content, test the alt text to ensure that it accurately describes the image.

☐ **Consider the audience:**

Consider the needs and preferences of the audience and ensure that the alt text is appropriate for their level of understanding.

☐ **Provide image descriptions:**

Provide additional information about the image if necessary, such as a caption or image description but don't repeat what you have included in alt text.

☐ **Update alt text regularly:**

Regularly update the alt text as needed to ensure that it remains accurate and relevant.

☐ **Context:**

Consider the context in which the image is being used and provide information that is relevant to that context.

☐ **Alternative information:**

If the image is being used to convey information that is not immediately clear from the image alone, include alternative text that provides that information.

☐ **Tone:**

Consider the tone of the image and try to convey this in the alt text. For example, if the image is humorous or sarcastic, you may want to reflect this in the alt text.

☐ **Keywords:**

Use keywords that accurately describe the image, as this will help people who are using assistive technology to find the image.

# Creating Accessible
# **Social Media Content**

To create content that is accessible, consider the following strategies:

**Alt text for images:**
Write descriptive alt text for images you upload.

Be concise but accurate in describing the elements of the image that are crucial to understanding the content.

**Hashtags and Emoji use:**
Avoid overuse of emojis, as screen readers read them aloud, which can be overwhelming if used excessively.

Also, use CamelCase in hashtags (e.g., #AccessibleContent) to ensure screen readers can read them correctly.

**Captioning videos:**
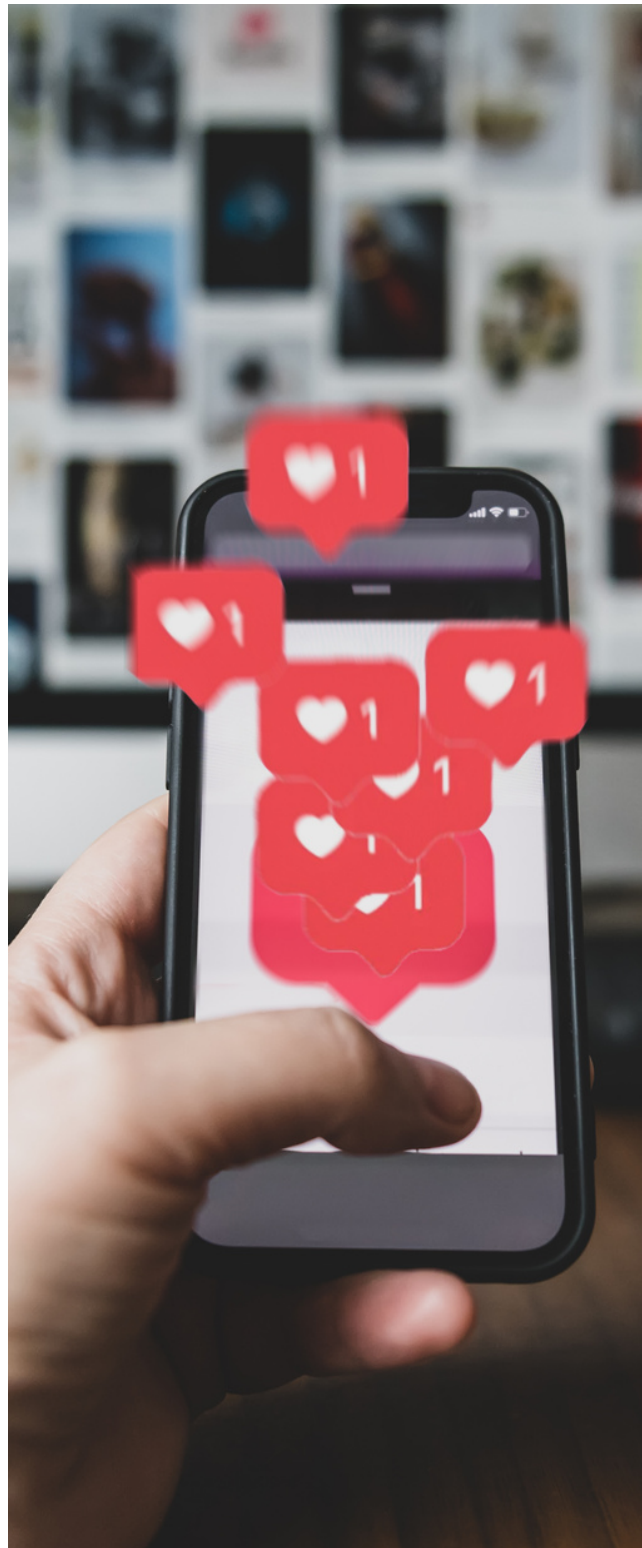Include accurate closed captions for videos.

If the platform doesn't support closed captions, provide a transcript or link to one.

**Content clarity and readability:**
Use plain language, clear fonts, and high-contrast colour schemes.

Break text into shorter paragraphs and use bullet points for readability.

Avoid placing text that is important within or over images.

# Social Media Accessibility

Ensuring accessibility in social media is crucial since these platforms serve as key communication channels for businesses to engage with a diverse set of audiences. Below, we'll explore various aspects of making social media content and interactions more accessible.

## Understanding the accessibility features of various platforms

Each social media platform has unique features and limitations regarding accessibility. Being aware of these can help you maximise the inclusivity of your content.



### Facebook

Supports alt text for images and videos, closed captioning for videos, and automatic text translations. However, you need to manually edit the automatically generated alt text for more accurate descriptions.



### LinkedIn

Offers alt text for images and video captions. However, video captioning must be included in the video file, as LinkedIn doesn't generate captions automatically.



### Instagram

Uses automatic alt text for images and videos, which can be manually edited for accuracy. Also, Instagram Stories has an option for adding text, which can be read by screen readers.



### Twitter / X

Allows users to add alt text to images, provides image descriptions, and supports external link previews. Remember to enable the alt text feature in the settings.

# Videos and Multimedia Accessibility

Multimedia content, including videos, is a dynamic and engaging way to communicate information. Here we explore the importance of and strategies for creating accessible multimedia content.

## Creating accessible video and multimedia content:

**Video captions:**
Provide accurate captions for videos. Captions are critical for deaf or hard-of-hearing users and are also helpful in noisy environments or where sound can't be used. Live content should also have real-time captioning.

**Audio descriptions:**
Include audio descriptions of visual content for users who are blind or have low vision. Descriptions should narrate the significant visual elements critical to understanding the video's content.

**Transcripts:**
Offer full-text transcripts of video and audio content. Transcripts help users who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, and who have auditory processing difficulties, and they also boost SEO.

**Clear audio:**
Ensure your video has clear audio to assist those who rely on hearing aids or have difficulty processing sound.

**Accessible video players:**
Use video players that support accessibility features like keyboard controls, on-screen caption toggling, and adjustable playback speed.

# Accessibility of
# **Blogs and Articles**

Creating accessible blogs and articles ensures that your content resonates with a wider audience. This section explores the essential components of making your written content more accessible online.

## Creating accessible Blog and article content:



**Structured content:**

- Use headings and subheadings correctly to organise content. This structure helps screen readers navigate the page, allowing users to jump through sections easily.

**Alternative text for images:**

- Always provide alt text for images. This descriptive text should convey the meaning or content displayed in the image for those who cannot see them.

**Readable fonts and colours:**

- Choose fonts and colours that are easy to read. High contrast between text and background colours is crucial, and fonts should be clear and large enough to read comfortably.

**Simple language and formatting:**

- Write in plain language and avoid complex sentences and jargon. Short paragraphs, bulleted lists, and highlighted keywords can make the content more digestible and understandable.

**Accessible links:**

- Ensure links are descriptive – avoid using 'click here' or 'read more'. Instead, the link text should describe the destination content.

# Accessibility of
# **Webinars and Virtual Events**

In an increasingly digital world, webinars and virtual events have become commonplace. They offer convenience, expanded reach, and resource efficiency. Here's how to make virtual events and webinars more inclusive:

## Key strategies for hosting accessible webinars and virtual events:

**Platform selection:**
Choose a webinar or virtual event platform known for its accessibility features. Check if it supports screen readers, offers keyboard navigation, and allows for adjustable text sizes and colour contrasts.

**Live captioning and transcripts:**
Provide real-time captioning for live content and transcripts post-event. This practice assists participants who are deaf or hard of hearing or who find it easier to understand information when it is written. It also benefits those whose native language differs from the speaker's.

**Sign language interpretation:**
Offer sign language interpretation, especially for large events or when requested by participants.

**Audio descriptions for visual content:**
For participants who are blind or have low vision, or those who are unable to watch the screen, provide audio descriptions of important visual content displayed during the event.

**Accessible presentation materials:**
Ensure all presentation materials are accessible. Use large, legible fonts, high-contrast colour schemes, and provide alt text for images in presentations.

**Interactive features:**
If your event includes Q&A sessions, polls, or other interactive elements, ensure these features are accessible to all users and that everyone can participate.

## Post-event accessibility:

**Feedback collection:**

- After the event, collect feedback specifically about the event's accessibility. Learn from participants with disabilities to understand what worked well and what needs improvement.

**Accessible event recordings:**

- If you offer recordings of the event, ensure they are also accessible: captioned, with available transcripts, and include audio descriptions if necessary.

**Continued engagement:**

- Use accessible formats for any post-event communication, whether emails, surveys, or social media posts.

# Accessibility of Podcasts and Audio Recordings

Podcasts and audio recordings are immensely popular for their convenience and intimacy. Here's how to ensure these audio mediums are accessible to all:

## Enhancing accessibility in podcasts and audio recordings:

**High-quality audio:**

Ensure your audio is clear, with minimal background noise. Use quality microphones and sound mixing to keep audio levels consistent and voices distinguishable.

**Transcripts:**

Provide accurate, verbatim transcripts of each episode or recording. Transcripts should be easily accessible, ideally linked directly from the episode's webpage or show notes.

**Descriptive show notes:**

Detailed show notes can offer summaries, key points, and time stamps, aiding listeners in navigating to sections of interest. This is especially helpful for individuals who might need to process information at their own pace.

**Inclusive language:**

Use inclusive language that acknowledges and respects diversity. Avoid idioms, jargon, and complex language that might be confusing for people who are not familiar with the topic or those who are not fluent in the language of the recording.

# Accessibility of
# Email Communications

Email is a primary channel of professional and informal communication, and its accessibility is crucial to ensure that information is inclusively conveyed. Here's how you can make your email communications more accessible:

## Creating accessible email content

**Use a clear and logical layout:**
Structure your email content logically, using headings, subheadings, and bulleted lists to break up text, making it easier for screen readers to navigate and users to understand.

**Plain language:**
Use clear, concise language and avoid complex sentences and jargon. This practice benefits everyone, including people with cognitive disabilities and those who are not native speakers of your email's language.

**Accessible images:**
If your email includes images, use alt text (alternative text) to describe them. Screen readers use alt text to convey the content of images to users who can't see them.

**Meaningful link text:**
Use descriptive link text that provides information about the link's destination. Avoid generic text like "click here" or "read more."

**High contrast and large text:**
Ensure there's sufficient contrast between your text and background colours. Use larger font sizes to improve readability.
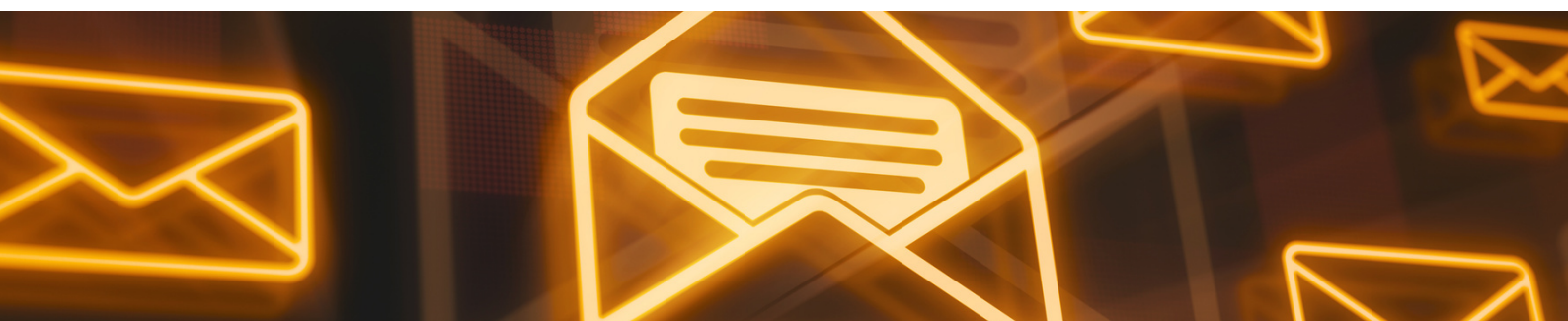
# Accessibility in
# **Customer Support Channels**

Effective customer support is pivotal in maintaining client satisfaction and loyalty. Here's how to ensure your customer support is inclusive and accessible to all:

## Strategies for accessible customer support:

▶ **Multiple support options:**
Offer various ways customers can get in touch, such as email, phone, live chat, and social media, catering to different needs and preferences.

▶ **Accessible communication:**
Ensure all written communication adheres to accessibility guidelines, like clear language, easy-to-read fonts, and text alternatives for images.

▶ **Video Relay Services (VRS):**
For customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, offer sign language options through VRS.

▶ **Screen reader compatibility:**
Verify that digital support platforms are navigable and readable by screen readers for visually impaired users.

▶ **Cognitive considerations:**
Simplify processes and use clear, concise language to aid individuals with cognitive disabilities.

▶ **Physical accessibility:**
For in-person support, ensure physical locations are accessible with features like wheelchair ramps and accessible desks/counters.

## Training and resources for staff:

▶ **Disability inclusion training:**
Conduct regular training sessions to educate customer support staff on different types of disabilities and best practices for communication.

▶ **Resource availability:**
Compile and maintain resources, such as guidelines, quick reference sheets, and FAQs about accessibility, for easy staff reference.

▶ **Empathy and patience:**
Encourage staff to practice empathy and patience, understanding that some customers may need more time or different communication methods.

# Accessibility in
# **Feedback and Surveys**

Feedback and surveys are essential for businesses to understand customer satisfaction, product/service efficacy, and areas requiring improvement. Here's how to ensure your feedback mechanisms and surveys are accessible to all:

## Creating accessible feedback forms and surveys:

**Clear language:**
- Use straightforward and precise language, avoiding jargon and complex sentences that might confuse respondents with cognitive disabilities.

**Alternative text for images:**
- If your survey includes images, charts, or graphs, provide descriptive alt text so users can understand the content with a screen reader.

**Keyboard navigation and screen reader compatibility:**
- Ensure surveys can be completed using only a keyboard and are compatible with screen reader software.

**Error identification and guidance:**
- When users make an entry error, ensure the alert is clear, and provide guidance on how to correct it.

**Flexible response options:**
- Provide multiple ways to respond, such as selecting from a drop-down, typing in a response, or choosing from radio buttons, to accommodate the needs of various users.

**Accessible questions:**
- When using online surveys, ensure the question types are accessible. For example using Text Box type or Radio Button type instead of Drag and Drop ranking type.

**Sufficient time:**
- If your survey is timed, ensure there's adequate time for all users to complete it, or provide an option to request additional time.

**Alternative methods:**
- Provide alternative methods to the online survey such as email or phone.

# Ongoing Commitment to **Accessibility**

Digital accessibility should not be viewed as a one-time initiative but rather an ongoing commitment. This enduring dedication is crucial in maintaining an inclusive environment that evolves with technological advancements and diverse user needs. Here's how you can sustain this commitment:

**Regular updates:**
As platforms and technologies evolve, regularly review and update your communication to ensure continued accessibility.

**Feedback and improvements:**
Encourage and act on feedback from your audience, especially users with disabilities, to continuously improve accessibility.

**Stay informed:**
Follow developments in multimedia accessibility standards and tools. Regular training and awareness for content creators and managers are also crucial.

**Evolving user needs:**
The spectrum of disabilities and the tools created to assist individuals are continuously evolving. Staying committed means staying relevant and responsive to these changes.

# Implementing a Continuous **Accessibility Plan**

Implementing a Continuous Accessibility Plan ensures an ongoing commitment to inclusivity, adapting to new technologies and user needs for an ever-evolving, equitable digital experience. Consider:

**Regular audits:**
Conduct routine accessibility checks to identify and rectify any new issues, ensuring compliance with standards like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

**User feedback:**
Establish and maintain channels through which users can report accessibility issues and provide feedback. Act on this feedback promptly and effectively.

**Training and awareness:**
Provide regular training and updates for staff on accessibility standards, tools, and best practices. Create a culture that values and prioritises accessibility.

**Procurement practices:**
Ensure that any third-party content, tools, or digital platforms you procure meet accessibility standards.

# Leveraging Community **and Expert Insights**

Leveraging community and expert insights can support businesses to gain a deeper understanding of real-world accessibility challenges, ensuring their digital platforms are genuinely inclusive and user-friendly for individuals with disabilities.

**Engagement with the disabled community:**
Collaborate with disability communities and advocacy groups for insights into real-world accessibility challenges and solutions.

**Expert consultations:**
Engage with accessibility consultants and experts for regular reviews of your digital content and strategies.

**Industry forums and events:**
Participate in relevant seminars, webinars, and conferences to stay informed about the latest in digital accessibility.

# Summary

As we reach the conclusion of this toolkit, remember that this isn't the end but the beginning of a journey of transformation for your business. You're on the precipice of change, about to launch into a bold new era where your digital spaces aren't just compliant but exemplary, standing as beacons of inclusivity and innovation.

A genuine, ongoing commitment to accessibility goes beyond compliance; it reflects a business's dedication to social responsibility and inclusivity. By ensuring that digital content and services are continually accessible, companies affirm their respect for the dignity, independence, and equal rights of all users.

Imagine the profound impact your actions will have. Each step you take towards inclusivity not only unlocks a new segment of customers but also unveils untapped potentials - new ideas, new perspectives, new opportunities for growth and connection. By ensuring every individual has access to your digital content, you're not just building a better business; you're building a more inclusive world.

So, take the leap. Embrace the strategies, tools, and insights you've gained from this toolkit. The road to digital accessibility might have its challenges, but the rewards - in terms of customer loyalty, brand enhancement, and company culture - are beyond measure.
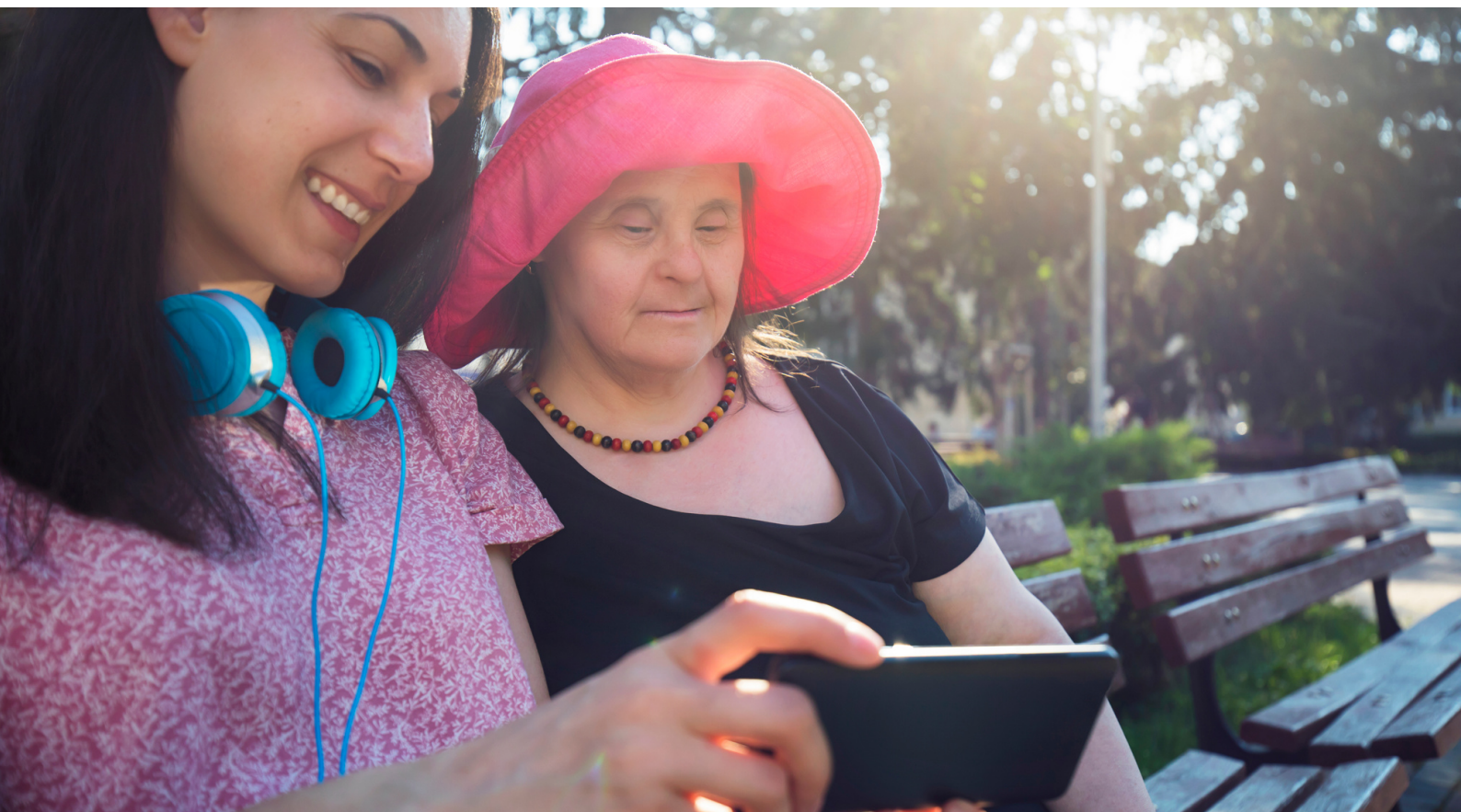
Thank you for your dedication to accessibility and for being a part of our mission to make Melbourne more accessible, vibrant, and diverse for all of its residents and visitors.

# Disclaimer:

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Accessibility requirements and regulations may vary by location and may change over time. To ensure that your chosen solution meets all necessary standards and regulations, we strongly recommend consulting with accessibility experts or professionals who specialise in accessibility modifications. Their expertise can help tailor solutions to your specific needs and ensure full compliance with current accessibility standards.