ADA Accessibility Requirements

Background

Why is creating accessible documents important?

First, it is the right thing to do:

- 11,400,000 people have visual conditions not correctible by glasses
- 6,400,000 new cases of eye disease occur each year
- 2,800,000 people are visually handicapped from color blindness
- 1,100,000 people are legally blind

Second, it is the law:

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220), August 7, 1998.

> *"I call on all Americans to celebrate the vital contributions of individuals with disabilities as we work towards fulfilling the promise of the ADA to give all our citizens the opportunity to live with dignity, work productively, and achieve their dreams."*
>
> *George W. Bush*
> *Proclamation, July 24, 2007*

New York State's Accessibility Policy

To read the accessibility policy, see: http://www.cio.ny.gov/policy/NYS-P08-005.pdf

To read the requirements outlined in the policy, see: http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/standards.htm and then refer to:

Subpart B — Technical Standards

§ 1194.22 Web-based intranet and internet information and applications

Subpart C — Functional Performance Criteria

§ 1194.31 Functional performance criteria

Web Addendum

The "Web Addendum" is included in all NYSERDA contracts that have deliverables that are to be posted to the Web. This document outlines specifications related to privacy, security, web hosting, application development, and ADA issues. To read the Web Addendum, see: http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Funding-Opportunities/~/media/Files/FO/Standard%20Forms%20and%20Agreements/webaddendum.ashx.

What is an Accessible Document?

Some people need to use assistive technology to read because their disability affects their ability to either see or process printed information. These people will typically use a screen reader to manage written material. The screen or text reader will convert the written words of an electronic document into speech, thus allowing the person with a visual disability to hear the text. The formatting of these documents is critical to the success of the conversion from text to speech. The simpler the documents, the simpler it will be to guarantee accessible Portable Document Format (PDF) files. There are four things to keep in mind when producing an accessible document:

- Use headings in the document
- Use Alternate Text (Alt Text) for images and objects
- Provide captions for all tables, images, and figures
- Create simple tables with a logical header and data structure
- Use contextual links, do not use long URLs or "click here"

How to Make an Accessible Document

For more information on how to make an accessible document see Adobe's Best practices page.

What is NYSERDA's Responsibility?

As of April 15, 2010, all website content published by NYSERDA are required to meet ADA Accessibility standards.

Terminology

Accessibility	Accessibility means making something usable by everyone — including people with disabilities. Since you cannot always determine audience characteristics, documents that are as accessible as possible to everyone should be created, allowing each individual to extract information as necessary.
Alternate Text	The text that describes and summarizes graphics, figures, and images for an auto reader. Alternate, or Alt Text, is required for all images in a document. Some images will automatically import the filename as "Alt Text," which must be changed so that the description is clear. Descriptions for images should be easy to understand and use simple terms. Remember that Alternate Text is what the screen reader is "saying" to the disabled user.
Captions	Use captions for all images, tables, figures, and equations. If the document is printed, the Alt Text will not appear to the sighted reader.
Headings	Allow readers to navigate easily through a document using adaptive software. Headings not only provide a consistent look and feel to the document, but ensure greater usability for the visually impaired.
Hyperlinks	Hyperlinks are elements within electronic documents that link to another section in the document or to another electronic document such as a webpage, another work document, a presentation, a spreadsheet, etc. Styles The use of style elements in Microsoft Word creates the tags needed by screen readers to navigate the document.
Tags	Tags are hidden codes within Microsoft Word that will create the PDF structure.