

Appendix E. Supporting Tips, Tools, and Resources

Many of the tips, tools, and resources listed in this Appendix offer baseline support for improving accessibility. Additionally, Digital.gov offers an [advanced approach to accessibility](#) which provides an easy to follow, in depth resource on government accessibility beyond what the checkers in this resource provide.

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Accessibility for New or Upgraded Buildings or Outdoor Facilities

The best way to ensure that new or altered/upgraded buildings or outdoor facilities are accessible is to work with experienced professionals who understand the regulations and codes as well as best practices for designing accessible public spaces. For large-scale projects, it's recommended to have a third-party vendor review plans for accessibility. The following resources are offered for the Town to have a general understanding of accessibility in the physical environment.

Helpful federal resources include:

- ADA.gov's accessible [**New Construction and Alterations**](#) overview provides a hyperlinked index to more information on the basics of ADA standards and specific topics of interest to local governments, such as parking-related regulations
- ADA.gov's invaluable resource for local governments, [**ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Governments**](#) includes a section on [**Making the Built Environment Accessible**](#)
- US Access Board's [**Guide to the ADA Accessibility Standards**](#) offers detailed guides on aspects of the standards for all public audiences

Helpful resources from the New England ADA Center include:

- A section on [**Building Accessibility**](#) geared toward local governments in the [**ADA Title II Action Guide for State and Local Governments**](#)
- [**Checklists**](#) to review accessibility in existing buildings or recreational facilities

Incorporating Accessibility in Future Emergency Preparedness and Planning Efforts

There are many state resources to assist municipalities to plan, prepare, and respond to emergency events in accessible ways. At minimum, the Town should:

- Incorporate accessibility information and specific services in future plans such as Emergency Operations Plan, Sheltering Plan, Continuity of Operations Plan, or Emergency Dispensing Site Plan as they are developed
- Perform an accessibility audit of emergency shelter facilities and plan to fix inadequacies
- Allow service animals and provide space for their needs in emergency shelter
- Build and maintain a multi-modal emergency notification system that provides more than reverse phone calls (text, email, and physical notification such as flyers or visits at identified homes)
- Have assistive technology and other supports at shelters, distribution sites, and other events, including copies of [Show Me](#) tools

Below are some resources to assist the Town with emergency planning and preparedness:

- MEMA's [Emergency Planning for People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs](#) (2019) offers an overview and links to many other helpful resources
- MA-DPH offers a [Public Health Planning Toolkit for At-Risk Individuals with Access and Functional Needs](#)
- The state [Emergency Preparedness Data Report Builder](#) is an interactive tool that pulls data from state and federal sources to inform the Town on specific functional needs and disabilities in Westhampton residents
- The state offers multiple tools to assist with emergency communications on its [tools and resources for integrating considerations for individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs in emergency planning and response](#) webpage

Plain Language Resources

The resources below can support Sherborn in writing materials that are accessible to all audiences, including during public meetings, emergency communications, and service delivery:

- [Plainlanguage.gov](#) is an official federal website that provides resources geared towards government entities
- [Hemingway](#) is an online tool to improve language clarity
- The [Text Readability Consensus Calculator](#) uses seven popular readability formulas to calculate the average grade level, reading age, and text difficulty of sample text
- [Mass.gov: How to Conduct a Plain Language Review](#) provides a step-by-step guide for reviewing public-facing content to make it easier to understand
- [Harvard Catalyst Writing Center – Plain Language Resources](#) offers resources and best practices for translating technical or academic content into accessible language

Language Translation Resources

- [Localize](#) helps government agencies and municipalities provide their communities with essential services and information in the language they understand best
- [Para-Plus Translations](#) is a translation and interpretation company offering global translation and interpretation services to governments and municipalities to reduce disparities and inequalities. They offer transcription, voice-over, sign language, and Braille services in more than 100 languages
- [Government Machine Translation Software](#) master list. Machine translation software facilitates the translation process by translating text automatically from one language to another without the need for human editing

Accessibility Features in Microsoft Suite (M365)

Many Microsoft 365 applications include an Accessibility Checker that finds accessibility problems and lists suggestions for making content accessible in Outlook, Word, Excel, or PowerPoint. All Town staff are encouraged to use these features when creating public-facing materials or internal documents.

The accessibility checker can be found under the Review tab in each application. The tool automatically scans for common accessibility issues, such as missing alternative text, poor color contrast, or incorrect heading structures. Staff should use this function as a final step before publishing or sharing content.

Additionally, PowerPoint offers live subtitles and automatic captioning during presentations:

- Go to the Slide Show tab and select “Always Use Subtitles” to enable
- Select “Subtitle Settings” to choose the spoken language and subtitle language. You can also choose the desired position of the captions or subtitles
- Toggle on the “Subtitles” button from Slide Show View or Presenter View, located on the toolbar below the main slide
- Start the slide show and begin speaking. As you speak, your narrative will appear on-screen as captions or subtitles

Additional support can be found at [Microsoft’s Accessibility Help Center](#)

Accessibility Features in Google Suite (Google Workspace)

Google calls its suite of applications “Google Workspace” and offers the [Google Workspace user guide to accessibility](#) with hyperlinks to accessibility features for each one of its applications. Some helpful guides include:

- [Make your document, presentation, sheets & videos more accessible](#)
- [Present slides with captions](#)
- [Use Google editors with a screen reader](#)
- [Use Google editors with assistive technologies](#)

Adding Alt Text on Social Media

When sharing images on the Town’s social media channels, add alt text to make content accessible to users who are blind or have low vision. Most major platforms allow manual entry of alt text, though it’s not always obvious in the posting workflow. Taking this step ensures that important visual information is available to all residents:

- **Facebook** – Select “Edit Alt Text” after uploading an image
- **Twitter (X)** – Click the “+Alt” button when attaching an image
- **Instagram** – Tap “Advanced Settings” before posting to add alt text
- **LinkedIn** – Use the “Add Alt Text” option when uploading an image

For a detailed, platform-by-platform walk through, see [How to Add Alt Text to Images on Social Media](#) from the **Perkins School for the Blind**.

Adding Alt-Text to Bulk Uploads of Photos

Alt text (alternative text) is essential for ensuring that images are accessible to residents who use screen readers or have low vision. When working with large batches of images, such as website photo galleries or digital publications, these tools can help automate and streamline the process while allowing for staff review.

- **[BIALTY: Bulk Image Alt Text Plugin for WordPress](#)**

Allows users to apply alt text to multiple images at once using post titles or SEO keywords. Works with most major WordPress themes and page builders

- **[AI Alt Text Generator – SEO Toolbelt](#)**

Uses AI to generate alt text for individual or bulk images. Auto-generated text should be reviewed and edited for accuracy and context

- **[Harvard University: Describing Content Images](#)**

Provides plain-language guidance and examples for writing effective alt text for different types of content, including complex visuals and decorative images

Alt text should be concise, relevant, and clearly describe the purpose or content of each image. These tools support efficiency but should not replace human oversight. Staff uploading or managing digital content should follow established accessibility guidelines to ensure all residents can access the Town's information and services.

Making PDF Documents More Accessible

PDFs are commonly used by the Town to share information with the public, including reports, forms, and meeting materials. To ensure that all residents can access this content, including those using screen readers or other assistive technologies, PDFs must be properly formatted for accessibility. Accessible PDFs are structured so that the content can be read, navigated, and understood by people with a wide range of abilities. This benefits not only residents with disabilities, but also anyone accessing documents on mobile devices or with limited internet connectivity.

- [**Adobe: What is an Accessible PDF?**](#) Explains the purpose of accessible PDFs, common barriers in standard PDFs, and how to use tools like Adobe's Accessibility Setup Assistant
- [**W3C PDF Accessibility Overview**](#) A web accessibility standards resource that provides a high-level summary of how PDFs can meet WCAG 2.1 criteria
- [**WebAIM: PDF Accessibility**](#) Offers detailed how-to guidance for creating and testing accessible PDFs, including tagging content and evaluating with screen readers

Core Elements of an Accessible PDF Include:

- Proper document structure using headings, lists, and tables
- Alternative text for all images and meaningful hyperlink text
- Logical reading order and consistent formatting
- Labeled, fillable form fields
- Sufficient color contrast and accessible fonts
- Defined document language and metadata

When possible, begin accessibility at the source, for example, by structuring Word or InDesign files properly before converting to PDF. Adobe Acrobat's built-in [**Accessibility Checker**](#) (found under "Tools") can help identify and fix common issues before sharing. For documents already created, consider using the [**Make Accessible Action Wizard in Adobe Acrobat Pro**](#) or consulting external support tools to retrofit accessibility.

Building Accessible Forms

Online and fillable PDF forms must be accessible to residents who use screen readers, keyboard navigation, or other assistive technologies. Inaccessible forms can prevent individuals from completing applications, requests, or registrations, creating barriers to participation in Town services.

The following resources provide clear guidance for making forms inclusive and ADA-compliant:

- [**Harvard University: Creating Accessible Forms**](#) Outlines best practices for building accessible web forms, including labeling fields, ensuring keyboard access, and grouping related inputs
- [**WebAIM: Accessible Forms**](#) A detailed guide for improving form accessibility across platforms, including error messaging, field instructions, and required field indicators
- [**Illinois State University: Creating Accessible Interactive Forms with Adobe Acrobat Pro**](#) Step-by-step instructions for making interactive PDF forms accessible using Adobe Acrobat Pro, including proper tagging, labeling, and logical reading order

Key elements of an accessible form include:

- Descriptive and programmatically associated labels for each field
- Logical tab order and full keyboard navigability
- Clear instructions and accessible error alerts
- Tagged form fields with readable fonts and sufficient color contrast
- Grouped sections with descriptive headings

Town staff are encouraged to use accessibility checkers built into form platforms, and to test all public-facing forms using a screen reader or keyboard-only navigation before publishing.