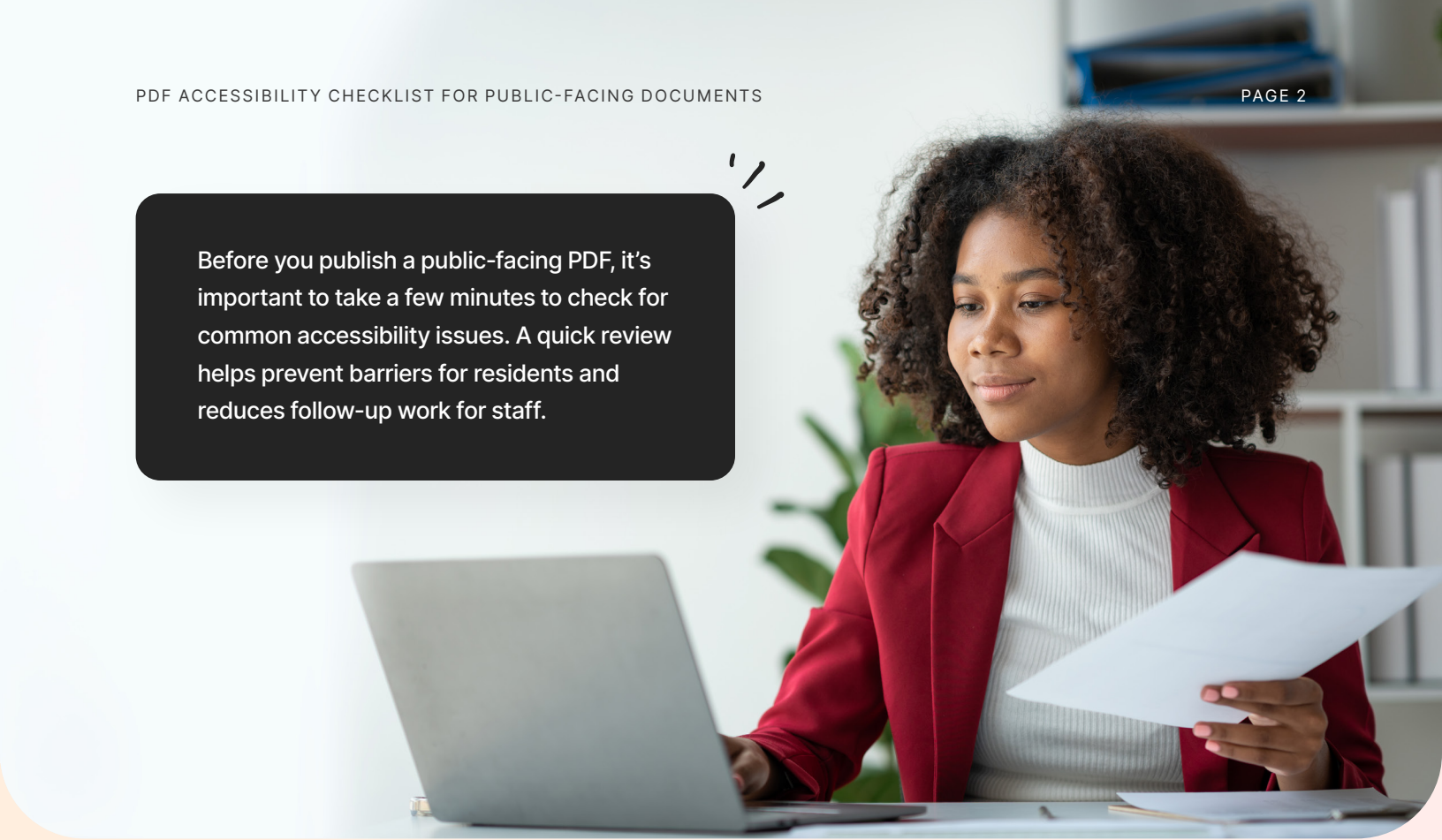


PDF Accessibility Checklist for Public-Facing Documents

A PDF Readiness Check for Local Governments





Before you publish a public-facing PDF, it's important to take a few minutes to check for common accessibility issues. A quick review helps prevent barriers for residents and reduces follow-up work for staff.

Why Accessible PDFs Matter Right Now

- Recent Department of Justice (DOJ) updates clarify that state and local governments are expected to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA standards for web content, including PDFs. That includes making documents perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust, or [POUR](#).
- Accessible PDFs support equity, transparency, engagement, and resident trust by helping more people access and use public information.
- They can also reduce legal and operational risk by preventing barriers that may lead to complaints, investigations, or costly fixes after publication.



Use this checklist as a quick review tool to help your team publish more accessible documents with confidence.

For immediate support, see how [CivicPlus® DocAccess](#) helps automate PDF accessibility and reduce manual workload.



6 Essential Checkpoints for Accessible PDFs : Meet the POUR Principles



PRE-CHECK:

Is a PDF the Right Format?

- ☐ Does this content need to be a PDF, or would a web page or online form serve residents better?
- ☐ If a PDF is required, is there a legal, archival, or business reason for using it instead of an accessible webpage or online form?
- ☐ Does your team have the original editable file so future updates can be made cleanly and accessibly?

CHECKPOINT 1: PERCEIVABLE

Can Residents Access the Information?

- ☐ Does every meaningful image, chart, logo, icon, and graphic have alt text?
- ☐ Are decorative images marked as decorative so assistive technology can skip them?
- ☐ Is there enough color contrast between text and background?
- ☐ Is information communicated through more than color alone?
- ☐ Are tables formatted so headers, rows, and columns can be understood?
- ☐ If the PDF includes audio or video, are captions or transcripts provided?

**CHECKPOINT 2 | OPERABLE****Can Residents Navigate and Use the PDF?**

- ☐ Can residents move through the PDF using a keyboard or assistive technology?
- ☐ Are links labeled clearly so residents know where they lead?
- ☐ For longer or multi-section documents, are bookmarks added to help users jump to key sections?
- ☐ If the PDF includes forms, are fields labeled clearly and placed in a logical order?
- ☐ Are there no flashing, moving, or time-limited elements that could make the PDF difficult to use?

**CHECKPOINT 3 | UNDERSTANDABLE****Is the Content Clear and Predictable?**

- ☐ Is the document language clear, direct, and easy for the intended audience to understand?
- ☐ Are acronyms, technical terms, and legal terms explained when needed?
- ☐ Do headings and subheadings help readers understand what each section covers?
- ☐ Are instructions, deadlines, contact details, and next steps easy to find?
- ☐ Are links labeled clearly so residents know what will happen when they click?
- ☐ Does the document use consistent formatting for dates, phone numbers, forms, buttons, and section labels?

**CHECKPOINT 4 | ROBUST****Can Assistive Technology Read the PDF Correctly?**

- ☐ Is the PDF text-based, not a scanned image?
- ☐ Is the document title meaningful and set correctly in the file properties?
- ☐ Is all main content correctly tagged, including headings, paragraphs, lists, tables, and figures?
- ☐ Are headings applied in a clear hierarchy without skipping levels?
- ☐ Does the reading order follow the way a person would naturally read the page?
- ☐ Do tables, lists, and figures have the structure needed for assistive technology to interpret them correctly?

**CHECKPOINT 5 | TESTING AND SIGN-OFF****Is the PDF Ready to Publish?**

- ☐ Has the PDF been run through both an accessibility testing tool and a manual review, with errors and warnings reviewed and addressed where possible?
- ☐ Has someone completed a keyboard-only review to confirm users can move through links, fields, and key content without a mouse?
- ☐ Has someone tested sample sections with a screen reader or equivalent assistive technology?
- ☐ Has the review date and the reviewer's name or role been documented in your accessibility log or workflow system?
- ☐ Have any remaining accessibility limitations been documented and routed to the right internal resource, like [CivicPlus DocAccess](#) or your organization's accessibility solution?



Fast Facts: The 3 Cs of PDF Accessibility



1 Content

Important content can become inaccessible when a PDF isn't properly tagged and structured for screen readers and other assistive tools.



2 Complaints

Inaccessible PDFs can trigger civil rights [complaints, investigations, and settlement agreements](#) that force agencies to rapidly remediate large document libraries.



3 Confidence

Agencies that act early on PDF accessibility are better positioned if residents raise access concerns or if regulators review their digital services.



The Easier Way to Deliver Accessible PDFs to Your Community

For agencies overwhelmed by inaccessible PDFs, there is a stress-free path forward.

HTML transcripts convert complex PDFs into mobile-friendly pages residents can easily read, search, and translate, without requiring your staff to hand-remediate every file.

Once [DocAccess](#) is activated, all current and future PDFs on your website open in an accessible HTML transcript that is:

- ✓ Screen reader accessible
- ✓ Searchable
- ✓ Translatable into 250+ languages
- ✓ Automatically available within minutes of initial upload

Streamline PDF Accessibility With DocAccess

Reduce the burden on staff, improve access for residents, and take a proactive approach to PDF accessibility ahead of applicable DOJ compliance deadlines.



Schedule a demo to see how DocAccess can simplify PDF accessibility for your organization.

[Schedule a Demo](#)

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