



Town of Arlington Office of the Town Manager

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To: Sandy Pooler, Town Manager, Arlington Disability Committee, Arlington Select Board, and Arlington Finance Committee

From: Joan Roman, Public Information Officer

Date: April 14, 2023

RE: Online ADA Compliance Report as outlined in the Online ADA Compliance Strategy and Training Plan

According to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international body that develops standards for the web, about one billion people -- 15-20% of the world's population -- have some type of disability. According to the 2020 Census, 8% of Arlington residents have a disability.

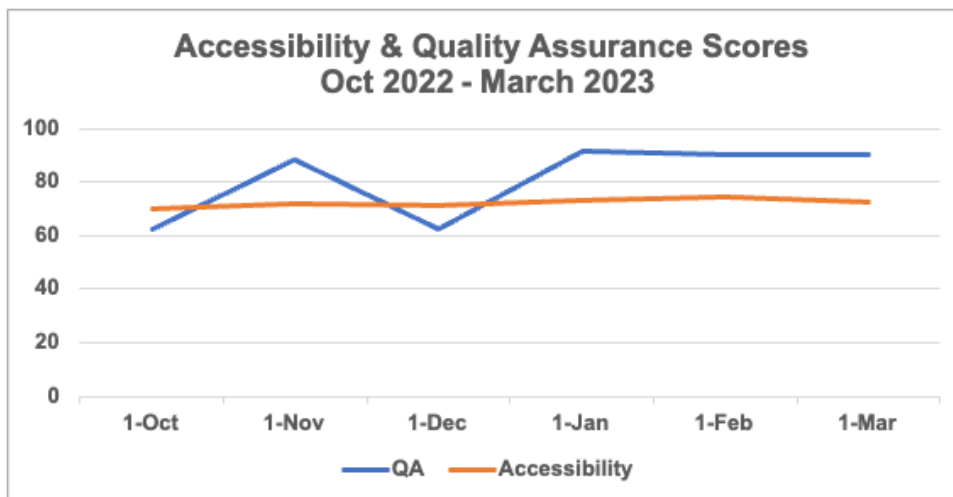
In the Town's continuing efforts to improve customer service and online accessibility for all, it has made investments from federal funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). With ARPA funding the Town was able to hire a temporary Communications Coordinator whose duties include responding to findings identified in the Town's ADA Self-Assessment Report and the development and implementation of the Online ADA Compliance Strategy & Training Plan, hereafter referred to as the Online ADA Plan. The latter, aimed at building institutional knowledge of ADA best practices among staff that post website and social media content for the Town. Paired with recent funding from the Disability Commission to purchase Adobe



Acrobat Licenses for staff who post documents to the Town’s website, the Town now has the foundational resources to address online accessibility in a meaningful way.

Online ADA compliance is never fully achieved. It is an ongoing process of improving website infrastructure, correctly preparing content to post online, fixing reported errors, and adjusting to new requirements as they are published by the W3C. For example, the W3C is currently refining new WCAG 2.2 accessibility criteria with a plan to publish the new standard in 2023. In 2018 they published WCAG 2.1 criteria, which the Town adopted in 2019 when it posted its [Website Accessibility Statement](#).

To help monitor our ADA compliance, the Town uses a third-party application by Siteimprove to scan its website and provide reports on possible ADA issues. Siteimprove also reports Quality Assurance (QA) issues and provides an overall score for both Accessibility and QA. These are the scores used in this report. As outlined in the Online ADA Plan, the Town has a set a goal score of 90+ for both Accessibility and Quality Assurance.



Because the Siteimprove software is excellent in finding issues, the Town reached its goal of 90+ for Quality Assurance rather quickly. The dip in December shown in the chart above was due to a broken link in the website footer, which linked to the vendor’s website. Because that link shows up on every page, that one broken link accounted for over 2,000 errors. Similarly, there are a handful of ADA issues that only our website vendor can fix, which generally reduces our ADA score. We are in communication with our vendors for resolutions to these issues. When these issues are resolved we fully expect our Accessibility score to reach the 90s or come very close.

ADA compliance is dense with rules for navigation, pages, documents, and images. In an effort to train staff to perform this ongoing work, we have created a three-phase training series as described in the Online ADA Plan. This first report covers activity around Phase 1, the first six months of this plan, plus other ADA activities of interest.

Phase 1 Completed: ADA Orientation and Siteimprove Training

Training was developed in September of 2022 after the Town hired its Communications Coordinator. Phase 1 trainings were conducted from October 2022 – January 2023 in which 28 staff members were trained. With the support of the Communications Coordinator this training will be part of the onboarding of new staff that post to the website.

Phase 2 to Begin: ADA Compliance Training | Simple Documents

This training will begin in May 2023 and focus on how staff should properly prepare agendas and minutes for the web so that they are ADA compliant. The Town posts approximately 1,500 documents per year and most of them are either an agenda or minutes. Adobe Acrobat Pro provides an Accessibility Checker, which enables staff to check and fix documents for ADA compliance.

Related ADA Activities

Social Media Best Practices and Accessibility Workshops

Not included in the Online ADA Plan but worth noting is that in early 2023 we convened a group of staff that either post to social media or create content for social media to discuss best practices for ADA compliance on social media platforms. The group of eight staff members were highly engaged and included members of the Town Manager’s Office, Department of Planning and Community Development, Health & Human Services, Public Works, and Police Department. After the first meeting they eagerly committed to adopting social media best practices including adding Alt Text for all their social media images, follow color contrast rules, and to keep their messages simple. These practices are not only good for ADA compliance, but good for everyone and produce more effective and inclusive communications.

Institute for Human Centered Design | Web Accessibility Report

In 2020 the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) issued a Web Accessibility Report at the same time they provided the Town’s ADA Self-Assessment. When the Communications Coordinator came onboard the Town was able to make significant progress in resolving many of the issues [cited in the Website Accessibility Report](#).

Vendor	Issues Reported	Issues Fixed	Issues to be Fixed
Granicus (arlingtonma.gov)	30	21	9
WebQA (Request/Answer Center)	7	7	0
Town	10	9	1
People GIS	7	0	7
Recycle Smart	1	1	0

We continue to work with our vendors and staff to resolve the remaining issues and will report progress in the next report.

Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD)

May 18, 2023 is Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD), which is focused on digital accessibility. Interrupted by the global pandemic, the Town hasn't marked the day since 2019 when it issued its Online Accessibility Statement. Although this day is aimed at digital accessibility, it can be a good time to highlight recent and current Town ADA initiatives. From employing universal design principles when designing the upcoming Robbins Farm Park playground to accessibility upgrades at the Community Center, there are many stories to tell to make Arlington inclusive for all, and we plan to do so in the week surrounding the event.

Report Feedback

Comments or questions on this report may be directed to Joan Roman at jroman@town.arlington.ma.us or 781-316-3350.