Government of Canada   Gouvernement du Canada

Canada.ca  ❯  How government works  ❯  Policies, directives, standards and guidelines

❯ Standard on Web Accessibility

# Standard on Web Accessibility

## ❶ Note to reader

Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC) has officially adopted the European harmonized standard on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for use in Canada.  The standard EN 301 549 states the accessibility requirements for ICT products and service. Under the code CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024, this standard is now approved for use throughout the country as an official standard for the Government of Canada

The official endorsement of this standard re-iterates the importance for federal organizations to take action in adopting the measures therein and follow the guidance provided in the Guideline on Making Information Technology Usable by All. It is recommended that organizations adopt the CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 standard in support of the Government's commitment to an accessible and barrier-free Canada.

# 1. Effective date

**1.1** This standard took effect on August 1, 2011 and was updated March 31, 2013. It replaces Part 2 of the Common Look and Feel 2.0 Standards for the Internet.

# 2. Application

**2.1** This standard applies to "departments" as defined in section 2 of the _Financial Administration Act_, with the exception of paragraphs (b) and (c), and unless excluded by specific acts, regulations or Orders in Council.

**2.2** Section 6 applies to all Web pages:

- That are public-facing (i.e., available to individuals and businesses outside of the Government of Canada);
- For which the department is accountable; and
- That are provided through Government of Canada Web sites and Web applications.

**2.3** Section 6 does not apply to:

- Web content that the department is not accountable for;
- Web pages that are archived on the Web; and
- Video content provided exclusively for reuse by media for broadcast purposes.

**2.4** Section 6.1.1 is implemented in phases and applies as follows:

- Phase I (August 1, 2011 – February 29, 2012)
  - All home pages and pages referenced from website and Web application home pages.
  - Significant number of Web pages that provide the most important information and services for individuals and

businesses including rights and benefits.

- ○ Significant number of Web pages that are the most frequently used.
- ○ All new Web pages published post October 1, 2011 must immediately conform

- Phase II (March 1, 2012 – July 31, 2012)
  - ○ Additional Web pages that provide the most important information and services for individuals and businesses including rights and benefits.
  - ○ Additional Web pages that are the most frequently used.
- Phase III (August 1, 2012 - July 31, 2013)
  - ○ Remaining Web pages.

**2.5** Specific requirements of section 6.1.1 do not apply to:

- Web content where exclusion for a period of time can be demonstrably justified; and
- Web content that is excluded by the <u>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0</u>, such as essential images of text.

A list of exclusions is attached in <u>Appendix B</u>.

**2.6** Sections **7.2**, **7.3** and **8.2** relating to the role of the Treasury Board Secretariat in monitoring compliance and directing consequences for non-compliance do not apply with respect to the Office of the Auditor General, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, the Office of the Information Commissioner, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner. The deputy heads of these organizations are solely responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the standard within their organizations, as

well as for responding to cases of non-compliance in accordance with any Treasury Board instruments providing principles and guidance on the management of compliance.

# 3. Context

**3.1** The Web channel is an important part of the Government of Canada's commitment to multi-channel access and service delivery. The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that a high level of Web accessibility is applied uniformly across its websites and Web applications.

Web technologies and standards are constantly evolving and web accessibility plays a major role in making the Government of Canada Web channel more effective and inclusive. To meet the Government of Canada commitment to Web accessibility, the Government of Canada has adopted the WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0. The WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 states: "Following these guidelines will make content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. Following these guidelines will also often make your Web content more usable to users in general."

**3.2** This standard supports the _Policy on Management of Information Technology_ and the management of GC (Government of Canada) Web presence by providing departmental Chief Information Officers (CIO (Chief Information Officer)) or equivalents as well as heads of communications or other officials supporting the management of IT (Information Technology) with additional requirements to ensure consistency in IT (Information Technology) management processes.

**3.3** This standard is issued under the authority of section 7 of the _Financial Administration Act_ by the Secretary of the Treasury Board pursuant to subsection 6(4) of the _Financial Administration Act_ and section 3.5 of the _Policy on Management of Information Technology_.

**3.4** This standard is to be read in conjunction with the _Standard on Web Usability,_ the _Standard on Web Interoperability_ and the _Standard on Optimizing Websites and Applications for Mobile Devices_.

# 4. Definitions

**4.1** Definitions to be used in the interpretation of this standard are attached in Appendix A.

# 5. Standard statement

## 5.1 Objective

**5.1.1** The objective of this standard is to ensure a high level of Web accessibility is applied uniformly across Government of Canada websites and Web applications.

## 5.2 Expected Results

**5.2.1** Government of Canada websites and Web applications respect internationally accepted guidelines for Web accessibility and are measured consistently.

# 6. Requirements

## 6.1 Managers, functional specialists, and equivalents responsible

## for Web content or Web pages are responsible for:

**6.1.1** Ensuring each <u>Web page</u> meets all five <u>WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 conformance requirements</u>:

- <u>Conformance requirement 1 (Conformance Level)</u> defines the levels of conformance.
  It can only be met if the following are true:
  - Level AA conformance is met in full.
  - <u>Common failures</u> are avoided for all applicable <u>success criteria</u>.
  - <u>Sufficient techniques</u> are used to meet all applicable <u>success criteria</u>.
  - <u>Sufficient techniques</u> specific to each <u>technology</u> (that is <u>relied upon</u>) are used where applicable.
- <u>Conformance requirement 2 (Full pages)</u> defines what needs to be assessed for a Web page.
- <u>Conformance requirement 3 (Complete processes)</u> defines what needs to be assessed for a Web page that is part of a <u>process</u>.
- <u>Conformance requirement 4 (Only Accessibility-Supported Ways of Using Technologies)</u> defines the ways of using <u>technologies</u> that can be <u>relied upon</u> to satisfy the <u>success criteria</u>. It can only be met by use of the following <u>technologies</u>:
  - <u>XHTML (Extensible Hypertext Markup Language)</u> 1.0 or later excluding <u>deprecated elements and attributes</u>,
  - <u>HTML (Hypertext Markup Language)</u> 4.01 excluding <u>deprecated elements and attributes</u>,

- HTML5 (Hypertext Markup Language 5) or later excluding obsolete features, or
- Technologies with sufficient techniques (specific to each technology) to meet all applicable success criteria.

- Conformance requirement 5 (Non-Interference) defines requirements for ways of using technologies which are not relied upon to satisfy the success criteria.

A list of exclusions is attached in Appendix B.

## 6.2 The senior departmental official, designated by the deputy head, is responsible for:

**6.2.1** Overseeing the implementation of this standard in their department and carrying out the activities referred to in 7.2.

## 6.3 The departmental Chief Information Officer (CIO) or equivalent is responsible for:

**6.3.1** Ensuring that software and systems acquired by departments enable websites and Web applications to meet the requirements of section 6.1.1 or are modifiable to enable them to meet these requirements.

# 7. Monitoring and reporting requirements are as follows:

## Deputy heads

**7.1** Deputy heads are responsible for monitoring adherence to this standard within their departments, consistent with the provisions of the Treasury Board's *Policy on Evaluation*, and *Policy on Internal Audit*, and for ensuring that appropriate remedial action is taken to address any deficiencies within their departments.

## Senior departmental official

**7.2** The senior departmental official, designated by the deputy head, is responsible for supporting their deputy head by overseeing the implementation and monitoring of this standard in their department, bringing to the deputy head's attention any significant difficulties, gaps in performance or compliance issues and developing proposals to address them, and reporting significant performance or compliance issues to the Chief Information Officer Branch of Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

## Government-wide

**7.3** The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat will monitor compliance with this standard in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, the following:

- assessments under the Management Accountability Framework;
- examinations of Treasury Board submissions, departmental performance reports, results of audits, evaluations and

studies; and

- work performed in collaboration with departments.

**7.4** Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat will review this standard and its effectiveness at the five-year mark from the effective date of the standard (or earlier if warranted).

# 8. Consequences

**8.1** In instances of non-compliance, deputy heads are responsible for taking corrective measures, within their organization with those responsible for implementing the requirements of this standard.

**8.2** Consequences of non-compliance with this standard can include any measure allowed by the _Financial Administration Act_ that the Treasury Board would determine as appropriate and acceptable in the circumstances.

**8.3** Potential corrective actions, including consequences, are included in Appendix C and align with the _Framework for the Management of Compliance_.

# 9. Roles and responsibilities of government organizations

## 9.1 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (Chief Information Officer Branch), in consultation with other departments, is responsible for the following:

**9.1.1** Developing standards, guidelines, and tools, and providing interpretive advice and guidance on these instruments;

**9.1.2** Communicating and engaging the government-wide Web community on the plans, progress, risks and challenges associated with implementing this standard and its supporting instruments in the federal government; and

**9.1.3** Providing support to the CIO (Chief Information Officer) Council and other committees and working groups, as necessary, to address government-wide challenges and opportunities related to implementing this standard and its supporting instruments.

**9.1.4** Publishing and maintaining the list of exclusions from specific requirements of section 6.1.1.

# 10. References

## 10.1 Relevant Legislation

- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- *Canadian Human Rights Act*
- *Financial Administration Act*

## 10.2 Related Policy Instruments and Publications

- *Common Services Policy*
- *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*
- *Directive on the Management of Information Technology*
- *Directive on Official Languages for Communications and Services*
- *Directive on Privacy Practices*
- *Foundation Framework for Treasury Board Policies*
- *Framework for the Management of Compliance*
- *Guidance on Implementing the Standard on Web Accessibility*

- *Policy on Evaluation*
- *Policy Framework for Service Improvement in the Government of Canada*
- *Policy on Government Security*
- *Policy on Information Management*
- *Policy on Internal Audit*
- *Policy on Management of Information Technology*
- *Policy on the Duty to Accommodate Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service*
- *Policy on Privacy Protection*
- *Policy on Official Languages*
- *Standard on Optimizing Websites and Applications for Mobile Devices*
- *Standard on Privacy and Web Analytics*
- *Standard on Social Media Account Management*
- *Standard on Web Usability*
- *Standard on Web Interoperability*

## 10.3 Related External Standards and Specifications

- Accessible Rich Internet Applications (WAI-ARIA (Accessible Rich Internet Applications)) 1.0
- Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG (Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0
- HTML5 (Hypertext Markup Language 5)
- User Agent Accessibility Guidelines (UAAG (User Agent Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0

- XHTML (Extensible Hypertext Markup Language) 1.0 The Extensible HyperText Markup Language

# 11. Enquiries

Please direct enquiries about this standard to your department's Web Standards Centre of Expertise. For interpretation of this standard, Web Standards Centres of Expertise should contact:

Digital Policy

Office of the Chief Information Officer

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

Ottawa ON K1A 0R5

E-mail: DPPN@tbs-sct.gc.ca

# Appendix A: Definitions

**archived Web page (*page Web archivée*)**

A Web page that is:

- maintained for reference, research or recordkeeping purposes;
- not altered or updated after the date of archiving; and
- stored in a digital repository.

An archived Web page may be provided on the web, but must be clearly identified as being archived.

**conforming alternate version (version de remplacement conforme)**

It is a version that:

1. conforms at the designated level, and
2. provides all of the same information and functionality in the same human language, and
3. is as up to date as the non-conforming content, and

4. for which at least one of the following is true:

    a. the conforming version can be reached from the non-conforming page via an accessibility-supported <u>mechanism</u>, or

    b. the non-conforming version can only be reached from the conforming version, or

    c. the non-conforming version can only be reached from a conforming page that also provides a mechanism to reach the conforming version

For further information and examples please consult the definition of <u>conforming alternate version on the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) Website</u>

**content (Web content) (*contenu Web*)**

Information and sensory experience to be communicated to the user by means of a <u>user agent</u>, including code or markup that defines the content's <u>structure</u>, <u>presentation</u>, and interactions (Source: <u>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0, Appendix A: Glossary</u>.)

**Government of Canada Websites and Web applications (*sites Web et applications Web du gouvernement du Canada*)**

Websites and Web applications for which the Government of Canada is accountable.

**process (*processus*)**

Series of user actions where each action is required in order to complete an activity.

For further information and examples please consult the <u>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0, Appendix A: Glossary</u>

**relied upon (technologies that are) (*dépendre [des technologies]*)**

The content would not <u>conform</u> if that <u>technology</u> is turned off or is not supported. (Source: <u>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0, Appendix A: Glossary</u>)

## success criteria (*critères de succès*)

For each guideline, testable success criteria are provided to allow <u>WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)</u> 2.0 to be used where requirements and conformance testing are necessary such as in design specification, purchasing, regulation, and contractual agreements. Additional information on <u>WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)</u> levels can be found in <u>Understanding Levels of Conformance</u> and <u>WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Layers of Guidance</u>.

## sufficient and advisory techniques (*techniques suffisantes et techniques recommandées*)

For each of the *guidelines* and *success criteria* in the <u>WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)</u> 2.0 document itself, the working group has also documented a wide variety of *techniques*. The techniques are informative and fall into two categories: those that are *sufficient* for meeting the success criteria and those that are *advisory*. The advisory techniques go beyond what is required by the individual success criteria and allow authors to better address the guidelines. Some advisory techniques address accessibility barriers that are not covered by the testable success criteria. Where common failures are known, these are also documented. See also <u>Sufficient and Advisory Techniques in Understanding WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0</u>. (Source: <u>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0, WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Layers of Guidance</u>.)

## technology (Web content) (*technologie Web*)

<u>Mechanism</u> for encoding instructions to be rendered, played or executed by <u>user agents</u>

*Note 1:* As used in these guidelines "Web Technology" and the word "technology" (when used alone) both refer to Web Content Technologies.

*Note 2:* Web content technologies may include markup languages, data formats, or programming languages that authors may use alone or in combination to create end-user experiences that range from static Web pages to synchronized media presentations to dynamic Web applications.

*Example:* Some common examples of Web content technologies include HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) , CSS (Cascading Style Sheet), SVG (Scalable Vector Graphic), PNG (Portable Network Graphic), PDF (Portable Document Format), Flash, and JavaScript.

(Source: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0, Appendix A: Glossary.)

## video content provided exclusively for reuse by media for broadcast purposes (*contenu vidéo fourni exclusivement pour être réutilisé et diffusé par les médias*)

Video content provided exclusively for reuse by media for broadcast purposes (e.g. B-roll, etc)

The video content must be clearly identified as being provided exclusively for reuse by media for broadcast purposes.

## Web page (*page Web*)

A non-embedded resource obtained from a single Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) using HTTP plus any other resources that are used in the rendering or intended to be rendered together with it by a user agent

*Note 1:* Although any "other resources" would be rendered together with the primary resource, they would not necessarily be rendered simultaneously with each other.

*Note 2:* For the purposes of conformance with these guidelines, a resource must be "non-embedded" within the scope of conformance to be considered a Web page.

For further information and examples please consult: Web page, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)) 2.0, Appendix A: Glossary

# Appendix B: List of Exclusions: Published August 1, 2011

*The following exclusions from specific requirements have been put in place for a period of time and will be updated annually as technology advances. Exclusions include:*

| Web content | Requirements |
|---|---|
| Complex maps (text alternatives) | WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Success Criterion 1.1.1 Non-text content |
| Live Video Captions (closed captions) | WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Success Criterion 1.2.4 Captions (Live) |
| Audio Description (prerecorded video) except where the video provides information related to health and safety of Canadians | WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Success Criterion 1.2.5 Audio Description |

Exclusions for a 10 business day grace period:

- Pre-recorded videos have a 10 business day grace period from time of publication to when closed captions and transcription of videos must be provided.

Live Video Captions exclusions refer to closed captioning and transcription of live video

Audio Description (prerecorded Videos) are only required for videos that relate to health and safety of Canadians; for remaining prerecorded videos, audio description is not required.

Complex maps: A map that associates information with one or more locations that cannot be represented by postal addresses or proper names such as intersections, landmarks, cities, or regions. An example of a complex map is one that shows the location and intensity of precipitation detected by a RADAR network.

Two clarifications

- "Essential" images of text are defined as logos, brand names and advertisements for government initiatives and marketing campaigns. As per WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0, these "essential" images of text are not required to meet WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Success Criterion 1.4.5 Images of Text.
- WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 allows multiple versions of content (including videos) to be made available on websites and Web applications; however there must be at least one version (conforming alternate version) that complies with WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0.

# Appendix C: Potential corrective actions, including consequences

Recognizing that the appropriate response in instances of non-compliance must be examined on a case by case basis, the following scenarios include a non-exhaustive list of examples of corrective actions that may be taken in cases of non-compliance.

# Scenario 1: Compliance scores are 95% or higher as assessed in 2013 and thereafter as per Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) reporting requirements**

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by deputy head or delegate):

- Develop strategy for reaching 100% compliance score
- Reduce Redundant, Outdated & Trivial Web pages
- Archive Web pages, where applicable
- Implement Web Experience Toolkit
- Participate in government-wide collaboration to address common challenges

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by Treasury Board Secretariat):

- Provide guidance
- Lead development of the Web Experience Toolkit and facilitate government-wide collaboration

# Scenario 2: Compliance scores are 90% to 94% as assessed in 2013 and thereafter as per TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada) reporting requirements**

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by deputy head or delegate):

- All potential corrective actions in Scenario 1
- Senior Departmental Official (SDO) commits to corrective actions in writing to TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada), via the Government of Canada Chief Information Officer

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by Treasury Board Secretariat):

- All potential corrective actions in Scenario 1
- Government of Canada Chief Information Officer requires Senior Departmental Official to commit to corrective actions in writing to

TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada) and report back on the results achieved

## Scenario 3: Compliance scores are 85% to 89% as assessed in 2013 and thereafter as per TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada) reporting requirements**

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by deputy head or delegate):

- All potential corrective actions in Scenario 1 and 2
- Deputy Head commits to corrective actions in writing to TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada), that could include
  - Ensuring effective controls in order that SDO has authority and span of control to achieve compliance
  - Reorganizing Web publishing activities

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by Treasury Board Secretariat):

- All potential corrective actions in Scenario 1 and 2
- TB Secretary to require deputy heads to commit to corrective actions in writing to TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada) and report back on the results achieved

## Scenario 4: Compliance scores are 84% or lower as assessed in 2013 and thereafter as per TBS (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada) reporting requirements**

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by deputy head or delegate):

- All potential corrective actions in Scenarios 1, 2 and 3

Potential Corrective Actions (undertaken by Treasury Board Secretariat):

- All potential corrective actions in Scenarios 1, 2 and 3
- Any other measure determined appropriate in the circumstances

** Regardless of overall compliance scores, the Treasury Board Secretariat may still take the action it deems appropriate in the case of a non-compliant website if that website provides, for instance, most important information and services for individuals and businesses.

**Date modified:** 2011-08-01