Accessibility Simulation

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First simulation: Government Departement page - <https://beta.novascotia.ca/government>

First of all, navigating to this page was quite simple and easy compared to how most sites are formatted, when first visiting the home page, we are greeted with five main categories that are further broken down into subcategories when clicked and viewed. However, It was unclear which category the departments were under between “Programs and Services” or “Government”. Trial and error was effective at finding the correct one, but was also frustrating to have to do in the first place. If the tabs were better titled, or even showed descriptions or subcategories within when you hovered over them, this style of layout would be much more effective and would have prevented any frustrating trial and error.

The colors up to this point have been mostly fine, if not a bit washed out in some areas, which created for an overall positive experience. However, once I started viewing the departement selection page, there’s a clear unintended color dynamic that can be seen, or at the very least, a rather displeasing one. The selections are highlighted in blue, while the background looks like some kind of washed out brown, my assumption being that it’s some variant of green or red. If this was just a minor section of the page it wouldn’t be all that frustrating. However, this background color scheme is used for all of the departments and you need to search through this area in order to find the departement you’d like to select. On top of this, is that not all departments are listed on this page as of yet, with only a small sentence at the top of all the table of choices to inform you.

While the departments are ordered alphabetically within the table, most are titled oddly or are combined with other sections, making the organisation poor and increasing the time you need to be searching through the table, only to potentially find out that what you were looking for wasn’t there to begin with. Searching through the “old website” that has all of the sections on it is less frustrating from a visual standpoint, as the color scheme is one of just a white background and blue selections like the majority of the main website. But the organisation is much worse in that there are so many sections but no form of search available to quickly find the one you’d like to read about.

The government section of the site is not only visually displeasing to me, but it also just functionally does not have all the information needed at the moment, with the majority of the sections being located on the previous version of the website which has no real form of search to navigate quickly and easily through the choices. It feels like as of right now, there’s just too many clicks to get to where I want to go to. What should be a relatively quick navigation, takes much longer due to the organisation styles used.

Second Simulation: News page <https://novascotia.ca/news/>

For the most part, the news page is a direct improvement in experience compared to the previous government page. The color scheme is mostly white and blue, with some odd coloration when making any selections on the page, but this is mostly minor as it doesn’t impede on the functionality of the site, and is much better than the entire brown background of the departements page. Having said this, there are still plenty of issues that plague the overall experience here too, especially to do with the organisation of information, and the navigation as well, which both seem to be a running theme in this site.

Navigating to the news page is very concise and to the point, it’s one of the five main tabs that are carried throughout the domain and can be accessed at any time. The issues with searching for the correct information start once you actually arrive at the page. Fortunately, in this tab there is some form of search bar that was created in order to find certain news articles that were published at a date that you can specify, and using keywords, the topic of the article can also be specified. The keywords also seem to take into account not only the title of article, but also all the words within them, which should provide for a much more accurate and inclusive search. However, there is another form of search that’s included that lets you filter by department, and the first issue becomes very apparent when you attempt to use this. The drop down is extremely cluttered and is difficult to process just due to how many options are thrown at you all at once. Just like before, the departments are listed alphabetically, but since some are combined with each other there is no way to rely on that. For example, if you were looking for culture you’d expect to find that category somewhere with the other sections that start with the letter “C”. However, since it’s combined with education, it’s found under the letter “E”.

There is a missed opportunity to organise the articles by preferred or spoken language, as there are many french documents that I don’t personally understand, that clutter up the articles if scrolling instead of using the search feature.

The simplistic coloration of this page helps a great deal however as everything stands out as its own elements that I can easily view, making it clear when a new article begins and ends. Font size is used over color to make titles stand out, and clickables are also underlined to emphasize that they are intractable rather than solely relying on their highlighting in blue. The layout of the articles themselves once visited are also very simplistic. Opting for just a white background and black text, with some reference links that are underlined and highlighted in blue to show they are intractable as well.

Overall, visiting this page was a positive and a mostly efficient experience, using simplistic choices greatly helped with the flow of the site, though iterating on the departement filter in the search feature is needed and some more depth in general would help it perform better.

Third Simulation: Education, training & skills - <https://beta.novascotia.ca/topic/education-training-and-skills> :

Out of all three of the web pages, this one perhaps suffers the most from some of the flaws of the domains web pages. Finding it is a bit of a hassle as it’s under a general tab titled “topics” where you’d think it could also be found under “Programs and Services”. Once accessed there is a very clear difference with how hovering over selections is handled. Similar to before they are underlined and highlighted in blue, however now the entire background of the title turns into a brown color that previously appeared only once the choice was clicked. It’s not too impactful on functionality, but it’s also not a pleasant feature, or consistent with the previous hover feature of just lighting up the blue.

Past this, upon selection of the category we are taken to another page that desperately needs some kind of search feature for the amount of courses that it offers. The color pattern stays consistent to black, white and blue. But the only semblance of organisation between the courses is once again alphabetical, though most start with TMR and then have their full titles after that, which nullifies any form of alphabetical ordering entirely.

The very bottom of the page has a notification, which isn’t the best spot for one, that informs us that not all information is on the page, just like the departement section. It would prove a lot more useful to have something like this at the top of the page because otherwise people may end up searching through the whole list only to see that the course they wanted wasn’t on the page.

Visiting the page with more information results in the same color scheme and layout as the previous, just with different overarching section such as “Location and Hours” and “Contact Government”. Though oddly enough, the hover animation previously discussed only applies to certain selections on this page. Which might mean there’s some sort of bug going on behind the scenes.

Most of the pages that are linked are set up in a similar manner, though there are some such as the enquiries page under “Contact Us” that stand out, using wide ranges of colors to emphasize certain things. And while it’s nice to see some variety, there are some that just don’t look all that great and the colors, which are supposed to represent different topics, end up blending together for me. Using shapes, or underlines, or font differences would be a much more universal differentiator than colors, and would be effective to at least use them in combination with each other.

This tab in particular of the site felt pretty empty in comparison with the other tabs that were reviewed, as there was much more linking to get to the information I wanted and with the unclear titles and irritating color hovering, it also became negative to navigate fairly quickly.