

# Heinz Corporation

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# Web Accessibility and Audit Testing [WAAT] Initiative

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Prepared for Heinz Corporation

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adarsh Rai".

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# Executive Summary

This project outlines the necessary steps required for a large-scale effort within Heinz Corporation to integrate accessibility within all aspects of product development and public-facing materials. Recent investigations and events have demonstrated significant procedural, managerial, & technical gaps that may pose financial and legal risks for the organization.

The proposal calls for the creation of a Web Accessibility and Audit Testing (WAAT) team, which will take ownership of accessibility initiatives across the organization. WAAT team members will work in tandem with external consultants to manage time-sensitive risks, subsequently integrating accessibility checkpoints in development cycles and client deliverables.

6 months after inception, the WAAT team will have designated department specific policies, KPIs, and standard operating procedures that will ensure monitoring & compliance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) and [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2](#) (WCAG).

Key Resources include

- Hiring an external accessibility lead
- Contracting an experienced accessibility audit firm
- Purchasing accessibility tools
- Restructuring 3 employees to the WAAT team
- Estimated funding of \$217,913

Approval of this proposal & budget will place Heinz Corporation on the path towards a sustainable strategy, allowing for scalable accessibility integration as our departments and capabilities expand.

Expected benefits include improved user experience & client relations, industry recognition, greater total addressable market size (TAM), and long-term cost savings with risk management measures. The return on initial investment is projected to break-even in 3 years.

# Introduction & Background

Heinz Corporation has had a less-than-proactive approach in the past when it comes to implementing accessibility initiatives. Initial events that originated as client support requests were symptoms of a lack of initiative in accessibility features among development teams within Heinz Corporation.

## Background

[Internal investigations](#) on 1/25/25 were conducted in response to multiple client support tickets. Numerous clients were facing issues with accessibility compatibility features on our website, more specifically 3rd party chatbots. A line of communication was established with the 3rd party service provider, and the chatbot was disabled until the expected patch date. Aziz - the senior web developer, raised concerns over the lack of a dedicated accessibility checkpoint on all Heinz Corporation products.

Subsequently in the 2nd week of February, Aziz's comment about HC's lack of attention to accessibility on LinkedIn went viral on social media. [Multiple tech blogs and a notable disability influencer](#) started pulling Heinz Corporation in the limelight. In 2 posted blogs, HC was being used as an example for industry-wide accessibility issues.

## Current State & Impact

- 3 Clients have terminated contracts, resulting in a [9%](#) reduction in annual recurring revenue (ARR).
- 23% decrease in requests for information, 43% reduction in overall client conversion from web.

Heinz Corporation is an inclusive organization, with core values of ethical integrity and ownership of our work. We follow through on our commitments. The WAAT initiative is our response to client concerns regarding accessibility features in our products and the recent social media crisis.

# Problem Statement

Insufficient standard guidelines, pre-deployment accessibility testing, and lack of ownership and oversight has led to fragmented accessibility practices. The result is costly post deployment fixes and siloed communication across departments. Without immediate intervention, Heinz Corp risks continued legal liability and erosion of client trust. An inclusive, cross-departmental approach is required to ensure checks and balances are maintained on every product before release.

# Solutions

Successful implementation of the WAAT strategy is dependent on rapid execution of short-term goals, and adherence to procedural changes in the long-run.

## 1. WAAT Team Formation

The team will take charge for ensuring accessibility requirements are met in internal policies and external products. It will consist of the following members:

### Accessibility Lead

Responsible for owning the WAAT process, reporting progress to senior management, and reaching monthly KPIs. Due to current employees lacking specific experience, this role will be an external hire - scouted candidates are in [Appendix A](#).

### Design & Development Specialist

This individual will have technical expertise and UI/UX experience, to suggest necessary product changes and assist with implementation. They will also implement assistive tools and technologies to work with our current public and internal systems. Li from the [CITL team](#) is a strong suggestion.

### Testing Specialist

Current employee Eddie Mumphrey has been at Heinz Corp for 3 years, uses [hearing aids](#), and has some great suggestions surrounding closed captioning tools and alternative text reader options.

### Accessibility Auditor

The WAAT project will benefit from an auditor from the legal team. Frank Sinatro, our acting attorney, has expressed personal interest due to his blind son. His signature on audit attestations will serve as an internal seal of trust - from an attorney who has never lost in court.

### Policy Intern

Interns in this position will perform rotational shifts in different departments to break down communication silos while drafting appropriate department specific policies. They will work with the team lead for oversight. Disability scholarship programs similar to [Microsoft](#) are recommended.

## 2. Audit, Compliance, Accountability & Training (A-CAT Stage)

These procedural steps ensure all products & departments meet appropriate accessibility standards. Execution time is key, and external support will help mitigate the current [PR crisis](#).

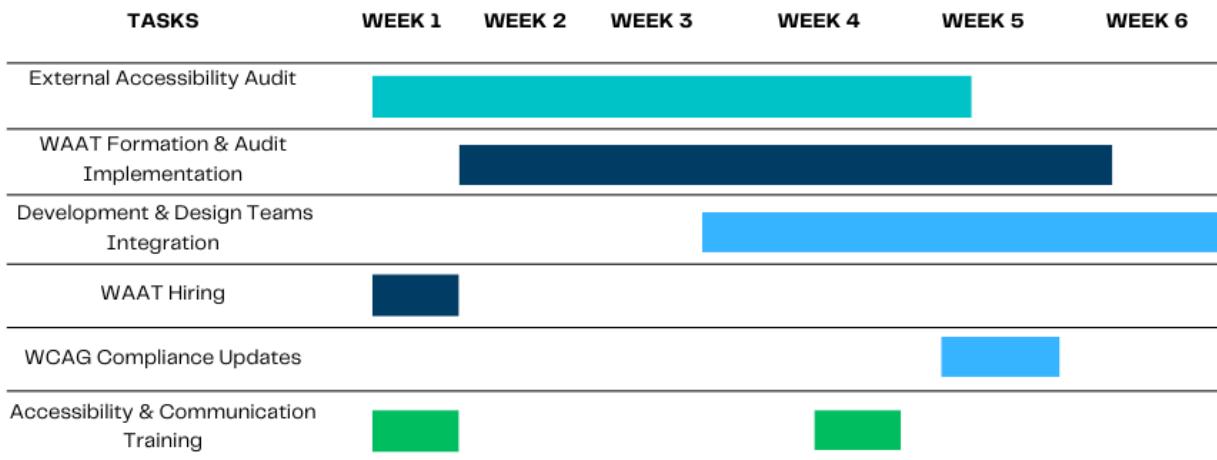
**External Audits** - Hiring an agency for external audits such as [accessible.org](#) will fast-track audit compliance of all public webpages and 3rd party integrations. A successful example is the [Government of Georgia Website Audit](#). This will be implemented while forming the WAAT team, allowing them to gain experience and become familiar with HeinzCorp systems.

**Performance & Reporting** - Drafting KPIs [\[see Appendix A\]](#) and measures of success for weekly, monthly and quarterly reviews by senior management. Structured reporting formats decided by accessibility lead and Dr. Fitz will be shared with the C-Suite. Case studies will be compiled analyzing business impact before and after each audit - enriching the approach and strategy before next quarter.

**Testing, compliance & feedback reviews** - Addition of [WCAG 2.2](#) Compliance Reviews within extended product and design lifecycles. The WAAT team will conduct extensive usability testing, gap analysis, providing development teams with iterative feedback. Standard operating procedures will be drafted for ensuring auditor and development teams attest to the accessibility features within their products.

**Training-** Enforcing mandatory accessibility and communication training as a requirement for all Heinz Corp employees. This will ensure proactive thinking for internal accessibility requirements, and give employees the tools to escalate issues and effectively to avoid [cases](#) of siloed communication.

## A-CAT Implementation Timeline



- Initial WAAT audits driven by external consultants, implemented by internal team
- Monthly progress reports and KPIs achieved communicated to senior management
- Established 6 week completion cycle for existing content audits
- Monthly rotational audits of internal accessibility requirements within HeinzCorp departments

# Policies and Procedures

The WAAT team will move to designate department specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and accessibility review policies [\[Appendix B\]](#). These policies will be further tracked using WAAT KPIs [\[Appendix A\]](#). The current list is tentative, and subject to change as the team uncovered further nuances and opportunities for improvement within our current organizational structure.

## Project Cost Breakdowns

Category	Description	Estimated Costs
External Accessibility Audit	Consulting support from experienced organizations. Estimated from <a href="#">\$150-\$500</a> per page	\$15,000
Accessibility Lead Hiring	Full-time accessibility lead for leading WAAT Teams. Calculated <a href="#">P.A average salary</a> -	\$106,628
Employee Training Programs	Accessibility & communication training for staff, priced at <a href="#">\$45/person</a> ~ 100	\$45,000
Assistive Tools and Technology	Necessary software for hardware and software training ( <a href="#">NVDA</a> - license, JAWS - Open Source)	\$1,475
Policy Intern Program	Scholarship for disabled public policy interns from CMU	\$30,000
Contingency Fund	Reserve funds for unforeseen accessibility costs (10%)	\$19,810
<b>Total Estimates</b>		<b>\$217,913</b>

The total estimates for implementing the WAAT initiative is **\$217,913**. This includes support from external accessibility experts, hiring of a WAAT team lead, and considerations for software across proprietary and open-source options.

A comprehensive forecast of the return on investment (ROI) is included in [page 8](#).

# Benefits

## 1. Risk Management

The A-CAT implementation strategy will ensure full legal compliance with ADA regulations and WCAG 2.2 standards. Starting from week 1, the company will be in a position to protect itself against legal liabilities and extremely costly lawsuits that can range upto [\\$92,383](#).

## 2. Company Reputation

Negative internet publicity has resulted in a [9% decline](#) in HeinzCorp's annual projected revenue. Releasing public case studies, and thought leadership in implementing accessibility at an organization wide level will help position HC as an outstanding entity, considering [75%](#) of websites are inaccessible. Participating in the [disability index evaluation](#) will serve as a 3rd party attestation to our efforts.

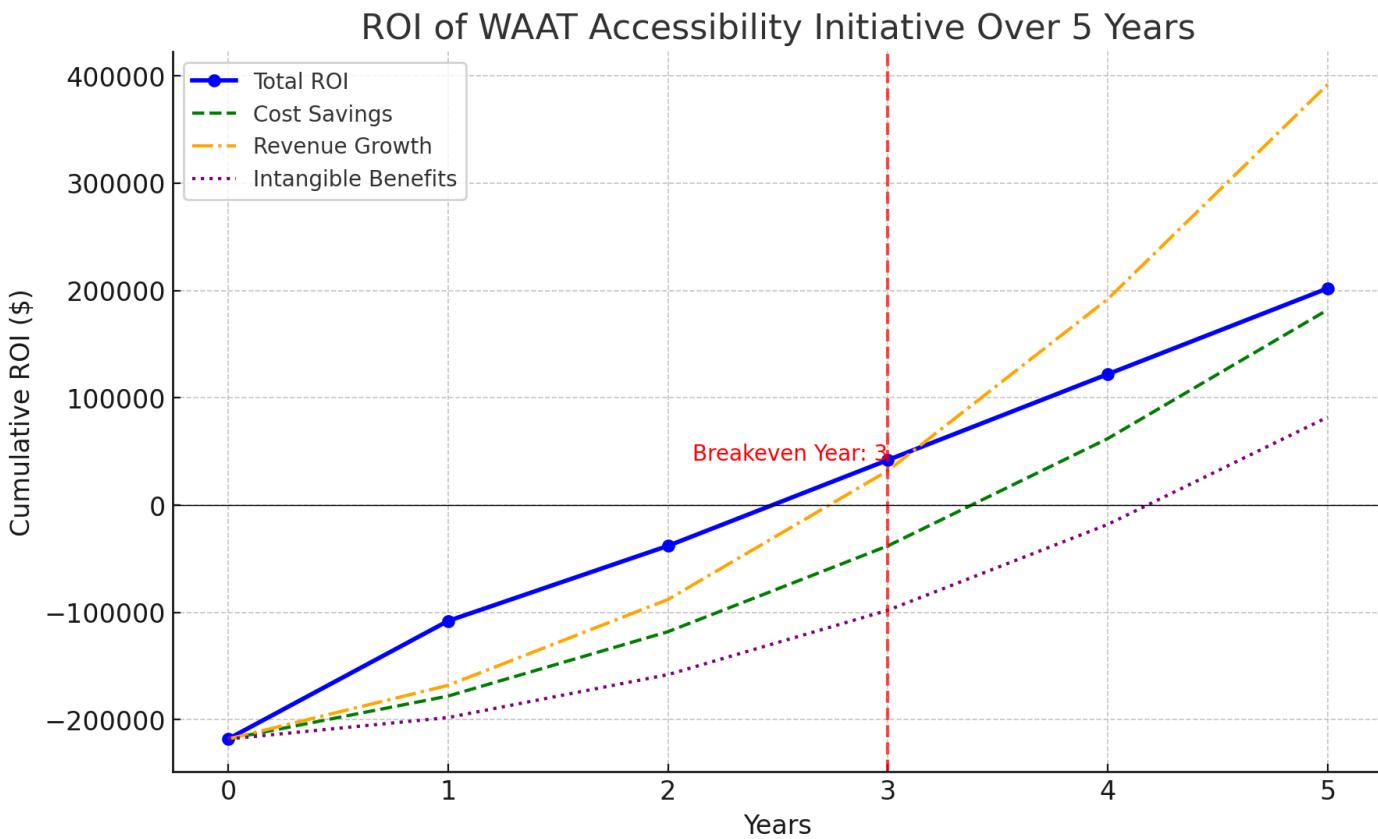
## 3. Increased Customer Satisfaction & Loyalty

Demonstrating our swift action and commitment, HC will have a better standing with existing customers, and can use this opportunity to attract new clients that are passionate about accessibility.

## 4. Long Term Scalable Strategy

The return on investment is beyond monetary. It will set up Heinz Corporation for success, and establish the groundwork needed for a long term approach. The audit teams will be well-versed to assist any additional capabilities as our offering expands within the decade. Investing into Policy Interns will open up a hiring pipeline of new talent with diverse perspectives and familiarity with Heinz Corporation.

## Returns on Investment (ROI)



The return on initial investment is projected to break even in 3 years. Studies have demonstrated that every dollar invested in accessibility results in a [return of \\$99](#), almost a 99% ROI.

The total ROI representation estimate has 3 constituent parts:

- **Cost Savings** - Civil penalties start at \$92,383. This fails to account for additional legal fees, remediation costs, operational disruption, and indirect costs such as [higher insurance premiums](#).
- **Revenue Growth** - Created income from a larger consumer base, particularly with clients that champion accessibility initiatives.
- **Intangible Benefits** - Positive social outlook, greeted brand loyalty, and restoration of faith from long-term clients will provide greater benefits in the long run.

## Appendix A

### External Hire - Accessibility Lead Candidate List

Name	Experience	Notes
Jason L	5 YOE leading accessibility initiatives, PM experience	Go-getter, high energy, has a personal connection
Sam W	8 YOE, highly experienced in website design	Wise, humble, and lots of good suggestions
Chris N	3 YOE, manager role after graduation, great track record	Eager to learn, proactive, created a communication strategy for the interview

### Sample KPIs List

KPI	Target	Description
Compliance Rate	50% : Week 6   95% : Week 16	Percentage of digital assets compliant with WCAG 2.2 Standards
Violations Resolved	100% : 30 days	Number of issues discovered in audits, percentage resolved in set timeframe
User complaints	-50% : 60 days	Reduction in customer support tickets related to accessibility issues
Knowledge Retention	85% Average	Average score target of knowledge retention after accessibility training
Policy Implementation	100% : 6 Months	Percentage of accessibility policies implemented across departments after gap analysis
Cost Per Resolution	-20% : 1 Year	Reduction in average cost per resolution of compliance issues
Time spent on Accessibility Features	20%	Increase in time spent on incorporating accessibility features by development, product, and web design teams
Employee Engagement	75%	Percentage of employees participating and contributing to accessibility initiatives.
Targets Met Per Quarter	85%	Number of KPI targets achieved by WAAT team each quarter

## Appendix B

### Initial draft - Policies and Standard Operating Procedures

Policy/Procedure	Objective	Scope	Key Requirements	Procedures	Reporting & Accountability
Compliance Policy	Ensure WCAG 2.2 & ADA compliance	All digital assets, third-party integrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WCAG 2.2 AA compliance</li> <li>- Quarterly audits</li> <li>- 30-day remediation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarterly reviews by Accessibility Lead</li> <li>- Annual external audits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monthly reports to Communications Lead</li> <li>- Quarterly updates to C-Suite</li> </ul>
Design & Development Integration Policy	Integrate accessibility into design & development	Design, development, content creation teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UI/UX accessibility (keyboard nav, contrast)</li> <li>- ARIA for interactivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design review by Design Specialist</li> <li>- Usability testing with assistive tech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory review meetings</li> <li>- Accessibility Lead's sign-off required</li> </ul>
Third-Party Integration & Procurement	Ensure accessibility in third-party tools	Third-party software, plugins, CMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Due diligence checklist</li> <li>- Vendor VPATs</li> <li>- Assistive tech testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Auditor verifies compliance</li> <li>- Legal adds accessibility clauses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legal Team ensures compliance</li> <li>- Monthly progress reports</li> </ul>
Accessibility Testing & Feedback	Continuous testing & feedback	All products, updates, and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Automated &amp; manual testing</li> <li>- Feedback loops for improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Automated tools in CI/CD</li> <li>- Quarterly user testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback reviewed in WAAT meetings</li> <li>- Case studies for improvements</li> </ul>

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