

Designing Accessible Digital Services for a Modern Workforce: Lessons from Federal and State Leaders

Webinar Transcript

>> Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar, Designing Accessible Digital Services for a Modern Workforce: Lessons from Federal and State Leaders. Our public workforce system relies on digital tools more than ever to reach and serve job seekers. But for many people with disabilities, everyday interactions with these tools still come with barriers. It could be an American job center website that's hard to navigate, a virtual workshop without captions, a learning platform that's inaccessible, or a job fair flyer posted on a workforce or social media with event details that cannot be accessed by blind and low vision individuals utilizing a screen reader. These examples illustrate the real-world impact of inaccessible technology and why digital accessibility has to be built into every part of a modern workforce system. As we move through today's content, our message is simple. Modernizing the workforce system is only achieved when accessibility is integrated into the digital tools and platforms we use every day, so they serve all, effectively. Next slide, please. Hi, I'm Sarah Loizeaux, Subject Matter Expert on Career Pathways with the LEAD Center at the National Disability Institute and facilitator for today's webinar. A phenomenal lineup of panelists have joined us today representing federal, state and cross-agency perspectives from policy leadership to day-to-day operations. This includes the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability, Employment and Policy and Civil Rights Center, Colorado's Department of Labor and Employment, and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development with Minnesota IT Services Office of Accessibility. And looking at our registration list, we know we're joined today by equal opportunity officers, one stop operators and a wide range of professionals all dedicated to the pursuit of a workforce system that's accessible to everyone. This is third slide? Okay. To ensure everyone can participate fully in today's webinar, we would like to take a moment to share some captioning and housekeeping tips. Today's webinar is live captioned, and the captions appear below the slide deck. You also have the option to open the captioning webpage in a new browser, and the links have been posted in the chat or will be momentarily. Once the captioning window opens on your own system, you can adjust the background color, the text color and the fonts using the dropdown menus at the top of the browser window. We suggest you position the window to sit right on top of the embedded

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captioning to allow you to see the screen itself. This webinar is being recorded and the archive and supporting materials will be placed on the LEAD Center website under Recent and Upcoming Events within ten business days. Next slide. We love questions and encourage you to ask anything that comes up as we move through today's content. For today's webinar, we've set aside an extended question and answer period, and we'll be interspersing questions that were submitted in advance during registration with questions you ask live. I'd like to thank those who submitted questions in advance during registration. They were thoughtful and incredibly helpful in shaping today's conversation. We will do our best to get to as many as we can and some questions will hopefully be addressed during the panelists' presentations. At any point, you can submit your question into the Q and A box located at the bottom of your screen. If you're unable to locate the Q and A box, look for the Q and A button in the menu bar instead. Clicking it will open the Q and A panel, and you should be able to type questions for our presenters there. If you're experiencing at any time any technical issues or have questions for the technical support team, please type those into the chat box. Next Slide. I'd like to now thank the Office of Disability Employment Policy, also known as ODEP, for their leadership and support for today's webinar event. In case you are not familiar, ODEP is a sub-cabinet level agency within the U.S. Department of Labor. It is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers in all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities. Next slide. ODEP's mission is to develop and influence policies and practices that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities that meet the needs of America's employers. And with that said, it is my pleasure to introduce to you Policy Advisor to ODEP, Ben Cheriyan, who will provide today's opening remarks. Next slide. Ben Cheriyan is a Policy Advisor for the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy where he serves on The Workforce Systems Policy Team. Ben works closely with the ODEP funded National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities, also known as the LEAD Center, in the implementation of WIOA and to increase employment outcomes of Americans with disabilities. Ben provides expertise on how the workforce development system can implement artificial intelligence, financial education, and align services to meet the provisions of WIOA's Section 188. Ben also works closely with federal partners including DOL's Employment and Training Administration, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Social Security Administration, to enhance workforce development and leveraging federal resources to develop workforce policies and practices. He's a graduate of the College of Staten Island, where he earned his Master of Social Work. Ben, we are so glad you are here with us today. The floor is yours.

>> Thank you, Sarah. On behalf of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, I'm thrilled to welcome you to today's webinar on digital -- accessible digital services, a very important topic. Just want to say I appreciate everyone for joining us today and just a little interest and everyone taking the time to share those great questions. It's going to be a great discussion. As Sarah mentioned earlier, as workforce programs, workforce services, go -- move more towards a digital platform, accessible digital services is part of the foundation of customer service, American job centers and workforce programs across the country. As digital accessibility is not just about meeting legal requirements but ensuring that all Americans, including Americans with disabilities, access to services can participate and strive in a modern workforce system, so they can meet their workforce and career goals across and pursue employment in demand areas. This aligns directly with the President Trump's administration, America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, which focuses on creating infrastructure within the workforce system that promote worker mobility, skills development and success in emerging AI economy. Today's webinar -- in today's webinar, you'll hear from panelists from Colorado and Minnesota seeing how they implement these -- the goals of the America's technology in their work and the practice -- best practices. We're so thrilled to have them part of today's webinar and their expertise as they share how they integrate accessibility in their daily operations, implement structure to maintain momentum and tools to support staff and practice support staff. Our panelists will share how accessibility is part of their technology decisions, including for example when websites screen virtual fairs as well as when using emerging AI technology such as ChatGPT or Gemini. But first, we're so thrilled to welcome our partners from the Department Civil Rights Center, who will set the foundation and framework for today's webinar, talking -- going over briefly about the regulatory requirements of WCAG and how it supports the compliance of workforce innovation and opportunity, underscoring that accessibility is for all and that it's central in providing quality services and supporting all Americans, including those Americans with disabilities, have access to tools and services. If you're interested in additional resources on accessible technology, I encourage you to check out ODEP's Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology, or PEAT. For those who may not be aware, PEAT is an ODEP initiative that works with organizations and employers, providing -- sharing practices, promote accessible technology, websites, as well as AI so that all Americans and people with disabilities could participate in the workforce. You can subscribe to PEAT's newsletter as they continue -- as they continue to build their website. And I encourage you to follow PEAT for as new resources come out. Once again, thank you to all our speakers, our panelists from Colorado, Minnesota, our partners from the Civil Rights Center for joining us today and the expertise you'll be providing. This -- I'm very thrilled for this webinar and the level of interest and I'll turn it back to Sarah to kick us -- to kick us off.

>> Thank you so much, Ben, for opening us up today. Let me go ahead and go to the next slide. All right, so throughout this webinar today, attendees will hopefully walk away with understanding how federal digital accessibility standards, including WCAG 2.1, support compliance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, also known as WIOA, in the public workforce system, apply state-tested strategies to strengthen digital accessibility. We'll talk about identifying ways to embed accessibility into organizational strategy and daily operations. We would have introduced a brief, but it's not quite ready yet, but we may talk about at the end. But also today, we're going to have a chance to engage with today's panelists for an extended question and answer period where we'll be asking questions submitted both live and in advance at registration. But now I would like to move to our first panelist today. Our first presenter today is Naomi Barry-Perez. Naomi Barry-Perez has served as the Director of the Civil Rights Center for the U.S. Department of Labor and a member of the Senior Executive Service since 2012. In this position, she directs DOL's civil rights enforcement and compliance programs pursuant to Titles 6 and 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of Education Amendments of 1972, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 188 of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act, among other statutes. Ms. Barry-Perez serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Labor and departmental leadership on civil rights and equal employment opportunity with regard to entities receiving federal financial assistance from the Department of Labor, as well as employment with the Department of Labor. Ms. Barry-Perez holds a bachelor's degree in politics cum laude from Mount Holyoke College and a master's degree in public administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. In addition, she held a Public Interest Law Fellowship at the Georgetown University Law Center, where she received a juris doctor degree. In 2017, she was elected as a Fellow to the National Academy of Public Administration. Naomi, we thank you so much for being here with us today. I'll turn it over now to you.

>> Thank you so much. I'm doing a little bit of a mic check. Can you hear me?

>> You sound great.

>> Great. Thank you so much. Thank you to everyone who's joining today. Our -- again, our partners in the -- at the LEAD Center through the Office of Disability Employment Policy, super partners. We have always worked extremely well together to advance our mission, which is not only the enforcement of civil rights law, but really about including effectively people with disabilities in the programs and activities that are served by the U.S. Department of Labor. That long bio that was mostly all the important things that we do here in the Civil Rights Center omitted the fact that I am originally from Minnesota. So, I'm also grateful for colleagues from the state of Minnesota and also the state of Colorado. What you're going to hear in this presentation undoubtedly is how to actually implement these standards, these legal requirements, which is right where the rubber meets the road. It's one thing again to have a -- the -- the letter of the law, but really the purpose of the law is to serve people effectively. And so, such commitment, such gratitude, to the folks in Minnesota and Colorado and all of you joining for effectuating those important principles. So, I also want to thank Melinda Twasson [phonetic] of our team, who says disability law is her jam. She is considered a national expert on disability law and was our liaison with the LEAD Center and with ODEP to prepare for this panel. We're thrilled to be here having this conversation with you. It is absolute priority of this administration and really such a great opportunity and time as technology continues to advance very, very rapidly. Next slide please. So, what I wanted to share with you actually is that there have been disability -- electronic technology accessibility standards through WIOA for almost ten years now. Now, we're going to primarily focus on the WCAG standards today because they're -- they're newer, right? But the fact that electronic and other forms of technology were required to be accessible is -- is not new. Clearly, things, as I just said, have been advancing rapidly, but nonetheless there has been a legal requirement that any time technology is used to engage with customers, that -- those -- that technology be accessible to the greatest extent possible for individuals with disabilities. So, the first thing I want to tell you is again, Section 188 of WIOA requires that online service platforms be consistent with modern accessibility standards. That has been the legal requirement for about ten years now. Some examples of accessibility standards include Section 507 of the Rehabilitation Act and the WCAG 2.1. Next -- the next slide, please. So, because WIOA Section 188 predated these -- the -- the most up to date standards of WCAG, they do not require specifically that recipients meet these 2.0 standards. WCAG, it has some requirements that we'll talk about later, but WIOA does not have that specific requirement. This is kind of like legal technicalities, because we're also required to adhere to whatever law, is -- is the most advanced in this way. But again, for almost ten years, because of the online accessibility requirements of WIOA meeting now, the WCAG 2.1 standards will satisfy 188 standards. It's kind of an exciting time for everyone to catch up with this initiative. Next slide, please.

So, DOL through the Civil Rights Center does not enforce the WCAG 2.0 standards, but DOJ does, the Department of Justice. And so, if you have questions about the legal standards themselves, you -- we should -- you could certainly reach out to us, or you can go right to DOJ and seek guidance from DOJ directly. And we're happy to facilitate that. That would -- we -- we serve our -- our partners across the states, and so would be happy to -- to work with you in that regard and make sure that we all are on the same page. But just as a matter of fact, it's DOJ that enforces these requirements. There's a fact sheet that we have identified for you here, in terms of a link, that may be helpful. And the final slide for me please, just to reiterate what we do enforce, are -- is Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. So, if you have specific questions about that and many of you are coming from state Departments of Labor or employment development, etc. If you have specific questions about how your -- your agency, the agencies that you partner with, throughout the -- the workforce system need to comply with Section 188 with regard to disability, accessibility or other civil rights requirements, please reach out to us. We'd be happy to engage in whatever technical assistance is most helpful for you. So again, with gratitude, I think I'm passing it back to Sarah to continue our great webinar.

>> Thank you so much, Naomi. I really appreciate those federal insights and perspectives. I know that it's really always good to know somebody who knows which laws are which and who enforces them. So, I really appreciate you coming on today. All right, we can move on to our next slide. I am really excited to introduce our panelists with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, also known as CDLE. Today, we are joined by a great group. Britt Otter, Renee Rinehart, and Robin Bauknecht. You can go to the next slide. Let me introduce each of them to you. Britt Otter is an Accessibility and Inclusion Professional with over 15 years of experience advancing equitable access in higher education, state government and nonprofit sectors. Currently serving as the Web Accessibility Administrator for the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Britt leads statewide efforts to access and improve ADA Title I accommodation policies and develop accessible rulemaking processes. Her work has shaped inclusive practices across 66+ agency websites and influenced statewide training and policy development in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Information Technology. Previously as Assistant Director for Access and Accommodations at Colorado State University and the University of Colorado's Anschutz Medical Campus, Britt oversaw large Title II accommodation programs, supervised accessibility teams, and streamlined institutional procedures to align with the ADA, Section 504 and WCAG standards. A Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies, also known as CPAC, Britt brings expertise in policy review, digital accessibility, and systemic change.

She is deeply committed to removing structural barriers and fostering environments where all people can thrive. And she is joined today by Robin Rinehart. Robin Rinehart is the Employment and Training accessibility coordinator at CDLE. She's worked for CDLE's employment and training division for 25 years. She's a strong advocate for accessibility and has spent several years researching and learning more about accessibility, so she can support staff in making their digital materials accessible. She is certified in WebAIM's Accessible Documents course. She enjoys spending time with her husband, two kids and two dogs as well as being out in nature, reading and creating artwork. And finally, I'd like to introduce Robin Bauknecht, if I can find her. Oh no, Robin, I have yours. I'm so sorry. Here we go. Robin Bauknecht is a Senior Evaluation and Systems Training Advisor for the Division of Employment and Training at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. Robin Bauknecht leads the statewide WIOA evaluation team. She has been a dedicated advocate for assessing and advancing Colorado's workforce system, enabling the state to prioritize data driven investments across its programs. In her role as Systems Training Advisor, Robin supports statewide training efforts to enhance the Colorado workforce system. She is committed to educating workforce staff about statewide initiatives at all levels. Robin believes that strong systems and data driven insights are the best tools for creating equitable employment opportunities, ensuring that every Coloradoan receives the support they need to thrive. I am telling you, Colorado has done a great job. They are a great group. You're going to love hearing from them, and I will now hand the floor over to them. So, Britt, Renee, Robin, it's now your turn.

>> Next slide, please. Thank you. Hi, I'm Renee Rinehart and I'm going to go through with our challenges that we experienced with making our digital -- digital materials accessible. At CDLE, we encountered several challenges and successes with making our digital materials accessible. First, we worked on getting buy-in from executive leadership to frontline staff and managers. As with any new initiative, we received pushback from coworkers and managers due to lack of awareness about accessibility and its impact. Another challenge was funding. We had a lack of adequate funding in the beginning. We received temporary funding, but funding also went to competing priorities and a budget deficit within our state government. Also, we have a decentralized government, which is a challenge also. Because Colorado is so decentralized, everything from our department down to the division and the work unit determines how they will implement rules and state laws, the different resources, the staffing, the funding and the tools that are available. And last, like everyone else, when we -- we experience staff turnover and onboarding challenges, we lose experienced and knowledgeable trained staff and don't always know if replacement staff are trained in the same way. Each of our units determines training and resources.

So, this can be a struggle for consistency across divisions and work units. Next slide please. Successes. We zone into four main types of success: political, structural, human resources, and symbolic. We're going to go through those successes in more detail through the slides and Britt will be speaking first. Thank you, Britt. Next slide.

>> Thanks, Renee. So, I don't know if any of those challenges that Renee talked about resonated with you. This is Britt from CDLE. But the first one that really -- the first success that really helped us tackle those challenges was political or policy success. And that was because of Colorado's very own House Bill 21-1110, which was a state law passed in 2021, requiring us all across the state and local governments to make all of our digital content software, email, vendor software, all of our documents, everything internal and external, accessible. And it came with a deadline. That original deadline was July 1, 2024. Then we had another law soon after that said, "Okay, okay, that's a lot. Let's move that up to 2025." And we've made incredible progress since then. And I'll talk more about HB 21-1110 in a minute. But because of that law, we looked as a state, across our state, at a number of resources that we needed. And one of them was to create policies. And so, we created our very own CDLE policy 2403, which is our Digital Accessibility Policy. That launched a couple years after the state law did, after we did some research. And that policy says that every content creator is required to not only be trained and knowledgeable about accessibility, but ensure their content is accessible. So, that's on all of us. All of us create emails, all of us create documents. We are all responsible. And with that shared responsibility, we were able to work with our staff state OIT Centralized Technology Accessibility Program and create as a state, technology standards or rules that aligned with the web content accessibility guidelines. In our state, we used 2.1, and ensured, not only that we're using those guidelines, but we're also as a standard, making sure that we offer opportunity for folks to request accommodations easily and accessibly and that we share our progress as a state to the public. Next slide, please. So, a little more about HB 21-1110 for us law nerds like me. It required some things that the ADA Title II final rule that Naomi had mentioned, and Section 188 did not. It required not only our external public facing, customer-facing content is accessible, but it also required our internal staff facing contents accessible. That's a huge lift. Think about how many trainings and notes and policies and intranet sites we have. It also required that we post an accessible and prominent accessibility statement on our website detailing what level of WCAG standards we were going to commit to. We decided 2.2, which is the newest version of WCAG and there's a 3.0 coming out soon. And how to request those accommodations and provide feedback for digital accessibility. And it also delineated for us the exceptions in the standards that we created for when accessibility can be difficult. For example, an undue burden usually doesn't happen, a fundamental alteration or a direct threat to health or safety of others. Those are such few instances. We have hardly ever come into a situation where we have needed to use an exception.

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So, that's a little bit about House Bill 21-1110. Something else I didn't mention yet is that any member of the public can form a complaint, let us know, give us feedback, but they can also go to court as a measure of this law. And we can get fined as an agency \$3,500 each time something is inaccessible. So, if you want to make some change, put money on it. Right? Put money where your mouth is. Right? And we wanted to make sure our taxpayers who fund our department aren't going to pay a dime for those reasons to like, be inaccessible. That's not appropriate. Right? So, we used our resources and our processes to make sure that that wouldn't happen. Next, we're going to go over and talk to Robin. Oh, wait, no, just kidding. I'm -- I'm still next. Robin, you're -- you're after this. We also did structural changes that were really successful. So, speaking of the Office of Information Technology, they have a technology accessibility program that they developed over the last few years, and they provided us with websites and resources and training. They give us an hour every week for like four years. Training, guest speakers, conversations. The ability for us, as state employees across the state, to come together and equalize the playing field of - of our knowledge about accessibility. At CDLE, we took those resources and we created an accessibility Internet page for our department. We created an accessibility newsletter that sent out tips and resources and training opportunities. We also hired an accessibility analyst position that was temporary for a couple of years to get these policies and procedures up and running. And we also have some dedicated staff like myself and Renee and Robin, who are dedicated to accessibility in specific divisions, so that it's not, you know, a one and done, right? We know accessibility is a journey, not a destination. It's an ongoing permanent priority. And we also established effective workflows to shift accessibility as an after effect, an afterthought, right up into production. Right? As soon as we're thinking about what we're going to create, we start making sure it's accessible. And I'm going to pass it now on to Robin.

>> Okay, next slide please. Okay, the human resource perspective. To support our accessibility efforts, CDLE has implemented a range of comprehensive assessment programs, including department wide level access training, covering everything from docs, PDFs and screen reader testing. The department hosts accessibility Lunch and Learns on various topics. Looking ahead to the 2026 program year, CDLA is excited to roll out an Articulate Series on Google Suite Accessibility for all state staff. And just a side note, Britt and Renee are doing those trainings. We've developed key partnerships to reinforce accessibility efforts such as the Office of Information Technology Accessibility program that Britt mentioned. Continues to provide extensive guidance through weekly meetings. The Division of Labor Standards and Statistics is collaborating with the Secretary of State's office to standardize accessibility rulemaking documents. And the Department of Personnel and Administration is actively funding critical accessibility supports such as captioning, ASL interpreting and physical accommodations for both staff and the public. The next slide, please. Okay. And then looking at symbolic. The Colorado Department of

Labor and Employment has established an Accessibility Champions Team, which comprises representatives of each division. This team is responsible for planning and implementing accessibility initiatives. CDLE recognizes its staff commitment to improving accessibility. Notable recent achievements include the 2026 CDLE for All Awards presented to Renee and Britt, and the CDLE Employee of the Year presented to Britt. Accessibility is always a key topic on our staff meeting agendas. The Employment Training Division, where Renee and I work, created an ENT Accessibility team and holds monthly meetings to address any issues or questions staff may have regarding accessibility. And CDLE is committed to professional growth and development of its staff by encouraging employees to pursue relevant memberships, training and certifications such as those offered by the International Association of Accessibility Professionals and often covers the cost associated with such development. Staff members are encouraged to include these trainings and certifications in their performance plans, yearly performance plans, to acknowledge and celebrate their accomplishments. And next slide, please. I'll turn it back to you, Britt.

>> Yes, so a lot of you asked for a lot of resources in the Q and A and in the chat, and this is a list of a lot of those resources. And of course, you can reach out to any of us for additional questions or resources as well. These resources will be available to you after this presentation. But as an example, we have our Accessibility Statement, our Accommodation Request Form, our Accessibility Feedback Form for -- for digital content. We have the equally effective alternative access plan template that we use when we might have a -- a fundamental alteration or one of those exceptions. We still prioritize accessibility. Our Vendor Accessibility Checklist in Colorado from OAT, our Accessible Websites Toolkit from OAT, the Empathy Lab, which really puts the people in that position of what is it maybe like to have to go through an inaccessible website and also, planning for accessibility, what you need to think of, that criteria as well. So, hope that's helpful. And again, lots of other resources available. Just ask us for them. And that's it for us, Sarah. Are there any -- are we moving it back to you, Sarah, or we move --

>> Absolutely. Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Colorado. We've got so many questions in the chat, so it's been busy, but yes, everybody was like so excited about your resources that you've been sharing. So, thank you so much. I really appreciate you coming on and talking about that. We're going to move on to our next slide, please. And now, I want to introduce you to another state that has done incredible work around digital accessibility. And that would be the State of Minnesota and their Department of Employment and Economic Development. Representing Minnesota today, we have, you can go to the next slide, Jay Wyant. He is Minnesota's first Chief Information Accessibility Officer, or CIAO. He has led the Office of Accessibility at the State of Minnesota since 2012. The Office of Accessibility works with Minnesota state agencies to embed accessibility into the state's culture. We collaborate with agency and IT partner digital accessibility coordinators to

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empower agencies with effective and sustainable policies, processes, tools, procedures that ensure digital government operations and services are accessible and usable for all. And he's joined today by Heather Stein. Heather Stein serves as the Director of the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Appointed by the governor, she also serves as the state level Equal Opportunity Officer for Minnesota's workforce system, providing statewide leadership to advance equity, civil rights compliance and accessible service delivery. Heather specializes in leading organizational change that nurtures employee engagement and strengthens culturally responsive and accessible programs. She enjoys building coalitions and thrives in roles where she can act as a systems change agent. Known for leading with empathy and a heart of service, Heather is committed to creating inclusive environments where both employees and communities can thrive. And lastly, they are both joined by Samantha Clayton. Samantha or Sam Clayton serves as the Digital Accessibility Coordinator, where she leads efforts to ensure that all digital tools, platforms and communications are accessible, inclusive and compliant with state and federal standards. She partners closely with teams across the organization to improve user experience, develop accessible processes and support staff in meeting accessibility best practices. With a strong background in universal design and accessibility auditing, Samantha is committed to removing digital barriers and advancing equal access for all employees and community members. I know I've been very impressed with materials that Minnesota has put together, especially for people who work right on the front line doing everyday work. They -- just incredible. But I don't feel I could do them any justice. So, I will now hand it over to the five folks in Minnesota. So, I will. Jay, Heather, Samantha, it's your turn.

>> Thank you so much, Sarah. Hi everyone. I'm Heather Stein. As Sarah shared, I have the opportunity to serve as a Minnesota's state level Equal Opportunity Officer. So, my job is to enforce and monitor compliance with Section 188 of WIOA, which includes federal Digital Accessibility Standards. I also serve as the Director for the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, where my team and I work to support and sustain accessible business operations and program administration, ensuring that all Minnesotans have equal access to benefit from or participate in the services that our agency provides. So, before we dive in, I'll share a bit about our agency. So, Minnesota Department of Employment Economic Development, DEED, is the state's principal economic agency. DEED provides programs that promote business recruitment, expansion and retention, international trade, workforce development, and community development. Our agency facilitates an economic environment that produces jobs and improves the quality of our state's workforce. And we manage over 60 programs and the services to support them throughout the state. At DEED, our mission is to empower the growth of the Minnesota economy for everyone. So, to meet that mission, we partner with organizations and communities across the state to take on

the challenges that our economy faces now and into the foreseeable future. I take great pride in my work to ensure that Minnesotans have equal access to government services. But critical progress in Minnesota's accessibility space began long before I started in this role and by people with much deeper technical expertise. So, to help demonstrate how Minnesota is meeting the moment of the evolving accessibility needs and expectations across our workforce system, I've asked two of my highly respected colleagues to help me paint the picture. So, Jay will share insights about our statewide government efforts to provide accessible services to the public. Sam will reflect on the progress made at DEED from the ground up, as well as specific tactics to strengthen accessibility. And I will share the approach we've taken at DEED to embed accessibility into our organizational strategy and daily operations. So with that, I'll turn it over to Jay.

>> Thank you, Heather. This is Jay Wyant speaking. Can you please go on to the next slide? Okay, so you'll find that our journey has a lot of parallels with Colorado, as well as maybe a few different. So back in 2009, the state legislature passed a law, 16 OE, subdivision 9. I'll put that -- I'll put all these links in the chat later on. I think I got deep. Okay. And that law said that the state CIO shall create a safe accessibility standard. The law also said it should at minimum Section 508, which you heard about earlier in Web Content Accessibility Guideline 2.0 or WCAG 2.0. So, they put some funding together to get a work group. The work group had people from all across all agencies. That work group created the standard which became adopted September 1 of 2010, including these two components, [inaudible] and a few other things. Then they said, "Okay, now what? Then they said, what we do with this?

The legislature in 2011 created the Office of Accessibility and - speaking of funding - they created it using the technology access fund for technology in Minnesota.

Every state has one of those.

It is money that comes from -- when you look at your phone bill it's itemized.

And you would see technology.

Paying for the TTYs line back in the old day.

Paying for accessibility.

It shows you there's a portion of that fund that pays for this.

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The other thing that happened in 2011 was that the

legislature also consolidated all IT departments, which was significant because at that time - before 2011 - every agency had its own IT department.

The Office of Accessibility was created at the same time and, being in IT, could connect with all agencies.

It didn't have to be in IT – it could have been in Admin or MMB.

It could have been anywhere. But because of consolidation, IT was a good fit.

There was a new culture.

The other thing they did with the IT consolidation. When they created all IT jobs they include 2 requirements:

Support security and accessibility.

And that is part of everyone's job in IT.

In 2024 they updated the 2.0 to 2.1.

That added support for people with cognitive disabilities and motor disabilities as well as users of mobile devices.

Next slide please.

Accessibility is everyone's job. Agencies create content and make decisions to buy IT. IT supports the agencies and has their own role with accessibility.

It is something that we talk about when we talk about building a culture in Minnesota.

We started the Office of Accessibility with one person

There were two people until 2024 and then we had three people at the Office of Accessibility.

We created the role of accessibility coordinator at agencies.

IT teams would be a partner for the agency and the partner should have a coordinator.

So our CIO went out to all the IT team leaders and had them designate a coordinator. And they worked with me to encourage the agencies to also have a coordinator.

It varied with how quickly they brought a coordinator on board.

Some coordinators had their day jobs and they wore multiple hats. Others served as coordinators full time.

There was a big difference in terms of what the agencies would do.

Our role at the Office of Accessibility was, okay, we give you all the tools and all information and all the knowledge. Agencies varied in their responsiveness. We couldn't just tell them what to do.

>> Hey, Jay? Jay, I'm so sorry, but your microphone is giving you trouble. The captions are having a trouble picking you up. So, I don't want to make sure that we get that. Sorry, I don't hate interrupting you. I know what you're saying. It's really good.

>> I think because I'm waving my hand too much in front of the microphone. I'll try to keep my hand down and not be -- but not be the one that telling it. So, let me if it happens again. Okay?

>> Sorry, can you check your mic and we'll -- we'll make sure you get it, because I know, I -- I don't want to disrupt what you were saying because I know that it's really important.

>> Oh, it's okay. It's more important that people hear me, understand me, than see me waving my hand. So -- so, what I was saying was [inaudible] accessibility by creating the processes and best practices, by having everybody meet every month and that kind of stuff. With the coordinator job, to figure out how to leverage that as an EPP, and then what Sam, along with her counterparts or [inaudible] do or need and then within that organization they can also look at how do they grow because again, just two people for an agency, that's still not enough. So, they build their own network within their job, like we build our own network within the agency. And that's what Sam can talk more about in there. Again, accessibility, the journey. Just like Colorado said, it's a journey of governance, the journey of how leadership, support, [inaudible] leadership changes. It's a journey in terms of maintaining and growing grassroots support and all of that stuff. So, that's kind of how we get broad based overview of accessibility. So, Jamie and Heather can focus more on what's going on in DEED. And I'll share all the links to what I was talking about earlier. Thank you.

>> Wonderful. Thank you, Jay. My name is Samantha Clayton and I am DEED's Digital Accessibility Coordinator. And as Jay was talking about, I specialize in digital content. So, your PowerPoint presentations, PDF, Word documents, Excel spreadsheets. I like to tell people I'm a Word nerd and a PowerPoint geek. So, I kind of specialize in those. I do work hand in hand with my MNIT digital accessibility coordinator, Joanne Radio [phonetic] who is specializing in our website content, so our applications, things along that line. So, we each have a various different area of the digital content covered. But let me kind of go into a little bit about what we've been doing because I'm sure, you know, most of you, if not all of you are aware that incorporating accessibility into a workplace culture isn't something that can be done quickly or easily. DEED has been intentionally building accessibility into our organizational culture for many, many years. This has been sustained effort rather than a onetime initiative, much like Colorado has done. For more than a decade, we've partnered closely with MNIT to ensure that accessibility is considered throughout our procurement process. It's written right into our contract language that if one of our third-party vendors isn't creating accessible content, we can go back to them. We can ask for their VPAT or their voluntary -- Jay, you're going to need to help me with the VPAT acronym here.

>> This is Jay. You're talking about a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template. When you complete what becomes an Accessibility Conformance Report or APR.

>> Yes, thank you so much. Yes, a Voluntary Accessibility Report and -- and things along that line. And then we both, Joanne and I kind of go hand in hand and review those products to make sure that they are accessible. As Jay said, at the Department of Employment and Economic Development, we house state services for the blind. We also additionally, do vocational rehabilitation services. So, there's a large amount of our base of people that we serve, not only Minnesotans that we serve, but our staff that we help with that have digital -- or that have digital accessibility needs. So, in 2017, we did strengthen our internal commitment, and we launched the Accessibility Champion Program. We established champions within each division at DEED to help promote accessibility awareness and to serve as a local resource to division staff. At the same time, we did require all employees to complete the first two modules of the Office of Accessibility's Accessible Word Document training, which I believe Jay is going to be posting those links in the chat. This is a step-by-step module on how to create accessible Word content. It is free. It is open to more than just Minnesotans. So, once he posts that, please feel free to take a look at it. Five years ago, we did expand that requirement and all new staff coming to work at DEED as part of their onboarding process do need to complete all seven modules as part of the that -- that process of coming into DEED to start that establishment of accessibility.

This does help us ensure that accessibility knowledge is built into that employee experience from day one. In addition to the Champion program, we do -- and the Accessible Word document training, I do offer weekly office hours for all of our staff to come and ask questions like, "How do I format a list?" or "How do I do this?" "How do I do that?" And questions about, "How do I make documents accessible?" Get guidance on how to do that in various different programs. As Jay did mention, accessibility is everyone's responsibility. To kind of formalize that at DEED, our expectation or our hope is to actually include digital accessibility responsibility into everybody's position descriptions. That way, everybody has a buy in. We can make sure that this is something that is ongoing and again is part of the culture at DEED. It also reinforces accountability and helps ensure that accessibility is considered whenever content, documents, digital resources or anything along that line are created. For a little bit more on our milestones, I'm going to actually pass it over to Heather Stein and Heather on to you.

>> Thank you, Sam. So, here are a few updates on our more recent efforts to move DEED toward sustainable digital access accessibility. Excuse me. So, about a year ago, actually last summer, around this time, we had made -- we restructured a bit organizationally. So, Sam's position was formally in the communications division where there was a process built in for program areas to request an accessibility review of content. So, that content would then go to Sam for a review prior to being posted. We made a change in the structure of our agency to move this position and the responsibility for digital accessibility from communications to the Equal Opportunity Office, so we could better root the requirements for compliance in the law. So, because we're responsible for enforcing Section 188 of WIOA, and accessibility requirements, this has really helped create greater awareness around all employees' responsibility to meet accessibility requirements and truly fulfill the needs of all Minnesotans in accessing our programs. So, in taking this approach, we've been able to replicate our operational service delivery models by centralizing the responsibility for policies, establishing procedures, identifying the trainings that different program area staff need. We've been able to identify resources that programs can utilize, to remediate documents or make content accessible. They can certainly use and/or pay in indirect funds to support the centralized efforts or we can offer them resources above and beyond what our small but mighty Equal Opportunity Compliance Office can provide to meet their needs. And then, as Sam said, you know, she offers office hours on a weekly basis. So, we provide that ongoing technical support. And we've built in some new procedures for ongoing monitoring of our state's -- of our agency's website. So, shortly after we moved Sam's position to the Equal Opportunity Office, we engaged with our customer innovation team. And Sam and other digital accessibility specialists within the agency worked closely with a project management team to engage in strategic planning efforts.

And we really centered our partner experiences and our customers' input in designing a strategic plan. In the plan, we developed change management strategies to really update or refresh the mental models of our colleagues at the agency from thinking that digital accessibility is one person's job or the responsibility of one office to a collective responsibility that serves Minnesotans equally. By identifying tools and technologies, resources and identifying clear divisional ownership and accountability, we have been able to reset the expectation also that program administrators have budgetary responsibilities if there are noncompliance matters. So, it is now up to various program administrators and program employees to meet the requirements of our digital accessibility laws, because we've been able to identify what those are more clearly. We've provided training and resources and we're able to monitor and provide insights and recommendations on how to better meet digital accessibility requirements. We've engaged in a ton of work to remediate any existing digital accessibility barriers alongside all of -- all of you across the -- the country. But we feel good about the roadmap that we've implemented to address any outstanding work. And the sustainable compliance and governance model that we are actively working to implement gives me confidence that we'll be able to sustain better and more accessible resources for -- for Minnesotans because we do now have centralized ownership of agency expectations, and we have implemented new systems of accountability agency wide. So, while Sam shared quite a bit about the early adopters and champions of the work, we've talked about, you know, they've put together really solid business proposals for the investments that we needed to make, too. But I think the compliance requirements needed to be better understood by leadership and we needed to create greater shared understanding in order to implement systems of accountability. Over to you, Sam.

>> Thank you. So, as Heather stated, we worked with a lot of areas throughout the department on that shared responsibility. As Colorado stated too, leadership has to be -- you have to have buy in from leadership because leadership is in control of the money. One of the things that Colorado stated that we kind of struggle with here in Minnesota is we're on limited budgets. I mean, we -- all of our payments and everything have to be approved through legislature. So, we looked at ways that are sustainable to not only the department but to the units as well and looked at time saving. You know, instead of having to redo all of the work and pay for that person to do it along with all of those other things, we made that presentation of, "Hey, this is cost saving not only up front, but it's also cost saving later on." So, overall, it does really help with those things. Also here are some free software options for people to help make more accessible content. We did establish the program -- the program area liaisons or digital accessibility coordinators, or champions. We do have them work directly with staff in the various different units and in the various different divisions throughout the agency. And they are the first content for any staff at DEED to verify that their content is accessible.

If those liaisons have questions, they then come to me and go, "Hey, this is something we're struggling with. Can you help me with this?" And with that is within the Equal Opportunity Office, you know, I do monthly trainings. I provide technical assistance. I provide accessibility expertise. Working with our Customer Innovation Team, they are really the ones that kind of spearheaded a lot of the project planning, the coordination, reporting, communication. And then our communications department is -- or our communications unit as well is really great at kind of, you know, as a stopgap almost, where they're in charge of verifying documents that are no longer active, get archived. They update our documents to make sure the accessible content is published. They work closely with Joanne Radio [phonetic] in MNIT at DEED, to make sure that the website content is accessible, and they make sure that any content that is being submitted to be put onto the external website is accessible before it even gets published. And then we work hand in hand with MNIT. Jay and I work closely on a lot of different things, as, you know, such as reporting, technical solutions, procurement options, looking at various different software applications, testing those things, answering questions, system implementation. I mean, it really is just a shared responsibility, not only across DEED, but across the state of Minnesota. And really depends on that collaboration between all of our partners. And that includes our third-party vendors that partner with the state of Minnesota and holding them accountable to the same requirements that we have. So, I believe, is it Heather or Jay that I go to next? And also, advance the slide, please? So, this is a quick little video on why -- why accessibility matters. If you could go ahead and press play, that would be wonderful.

>> Text appears. Accessibility Matters.

>> Ensuring that the places we go and the information we receive is accessible benefits everyone.

>> A cartoon woman gives a presentation. The view moves to a man sitting in the back of the audience.

>> Imagine that you are in the back of a large conference room and you can't hear the presenter.

>> A volume slider appears beside the woman and decreases until it's muted.

>> That you can't step onto the sidewalk because the curb is too high.

>> A man crosses a street and approaches the sidewalk, but it suddenly rises above his head.

>> Or you are having trouble exiting a building.

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>> A motion activated door won't open for a man carrying a bag of groceries. The door next to him opens for another man, but not him.

>> Have you ever considered how many everyday objects we interact with that were first created by or for people with disabilities?

>> The presenter is speaking with a full volume and waveform symbol showing. A woman in a wheelchair uses a curb ramp to get onto a sidewalk and motion activated doors slide open for the guy with the groceries.

>> Many of us do not because they were developed with inclusion in mind. We have all been presented with physical barriers. Have you ever thought about how digital barriers affect us? Here are a few ways to create digital content for everyone.

>> A man works at a computer creating captions for an online video.

>> Adding captions to your video will make your content more accessible to a larger audience.

>> On the computer, a video titled Keynote Speaker shows a presenter speaking.

>> Captions also enable people to watch your content in loud spaces and not disturb those around them.

>> The closed captioning button is clicked, and captions appear with the Watching Now counter rapidly increasing. A computer screen reads Subscribe to the Accessibility Newsletter. Someone fills in their name and email, then clicks Subscribe. Another screen displays the code that created the form.

>> Creating accessible digital forms makes it easier for everyone to fill out their information. And using an accessibility checker when creating electronic documents helps ensure more people can access your content.

>> An accessibility checker analyzes a document, and check marks appear on the screen.

>> These are just a few examples of what you can do to make digital content accessible.

>> A man browses the Minnesota IT Services website scrolling through accessibility resources.

>> For more information on how you can create a better experience for your audience.

>> Text appears beneath the Minnesota State logo, mn.gov/mnit/accessibility.

>> Visit the Minnesota Office of Accessibility's website.

>> This is Jay speaking. We love that video. And so, we have a slide here about how there's a basic guideline for all content. I'm not going to detail here, but it's just simply a reminder that the accessibility, the basic principles of accessibility are the same regardless of what you're working on. Whether it's a document like a Word document or PDF or an application or a mobile -- mobile application. They're all the same basic. So, different skill that you may use, different practice you may use, but the concept remains the same. Next slide, please. So Heather, I think you take over from here.

>> Thanks Jay. Yes, this is Heather. In our final messaging, we really just wanted to stress that when implementing accessibility, it's important to be proactive. I think Sarah mentioned earlier that I -- I really try to take a systems change approach when thinking about how we need to better address barriers when it comes to serving Minnesotans. And that requires a root cause analysis and try to dig as deep as possible and identify where -- where we're going wrong in our processes. I firmly believe that systems do what they're designed to do. So, if we are -- if we are experiencing outcomes that are inequitable or different communities are experiencing different outcomes, we really need to take a deeper look and analyze our systems and our processes better, and make some -- some tweaks in order to get it right. So, when we think about baking accessibility in and being proactive from the beginning, we can reduce risks. As Sam said, we do not need to conduct rework and touch the same types of procedures or work multiple times. This creates efficiency in government. We are better able to utilize taxpayer dollars. We're able to invest money on the front end in order to design things correctly than paying out -- paying out money when we get it wrong. This really allows us to enable better, more effective technology in serving the public. And there's a cute little image on here, that demonstrates how we can bake accessibility in. And I think maybe Sam, Jay and I were a little hungry when we decided to use -- to use this graphic. But the image shows there are two different -- there's a side by side, two different images. In the first one, there's a man and a woman that are making muffins and there's a -- a bowl of dough and one person is pouring the blueberries into the muffin batter, as opposed to the image next to it where the muffins are already made and the -- that these individuals are trying to put the blueberries into the muffins that have already been baked. So, essentially when you implement those blueberries, you bake them into the muffin, it's going to help to affect the flavor. They're going to be warm. It's going to impact the texture. Like, those -- those are going to be some really good blueberry muffins. Right? But if you forget the muffins or if you forget the blueberries and they're an afterthought and you try to add them afterwards, they're going to be cold, they're going to roll around, they're just not going to be as good.

So, blueberry muffins. We can go to the next slide. And finally, just some quick takeaways. You've heard these messages multiple times throughout the session today, but they're important to drive home. Accessibility is a means to better, more useful digital information. We are in a time where digital information is the way that we reach and communicate with our customers. There are many simple things that anyone can learn and apply today. There are many free resources available. Colorado's shared a ton and we will be sharing a ton as well. Spread the word. Please feel free to share them with whomever can make a difference in people's lives. Starting with a policy. Identifying training and resources. Setting short term goals. Even something as small as adding alt text to images can go a very long way. And create ripple effects throughout your -- your state and the work that you do. Getting leadership key is -- excuse me. Leadership buy-in is key, in order to creating or aligning systems of power and resources and accountability in order to sustain the efforts. So, that's a very -- very important step. And finally, build an inclusive culture in public service. Accessibility really is everyone's responsibility. At DEED we have a -- a shared value of providing respectful service to all. And to us, that means considering the customer's experience and being thoughtful and considerate, but considerate about how we serve people. So, build it. Build accessibility right in to create an inclusive culture. And I wonder, we had one final slide that listed some resources. I'm not sure if we were able to get it into the presentation today here. Okay, great. So, Jay, I'll hand it over to you if you want to run through these quickly and then we can wrap up and Sarah will lead us in questions. Well, I'm not sure. Maybe we don't need to run through these. We can just share the -- the link with folks, too.

>> Well, you know, well, I will just say this before we get to the question and answer which I'm sure people are really excited for because we have so many great questions to cover. Minnesota, I will just say, I have been so excited. I go back to actually the web -- their main website where they have the resources. They have these quick cards, just really quick. So, say like, "How do I -- I have a Teams meeting coming up. How do I make it accessible?" "I have a PowerPoint presentation I'm doing." You don't have to be an accessibility expert to figure these things out. How you put alt text in, you know, how do you add captions to something, and the way that it's written in very plain language, easy to understand. I am telling you, if you are the accessibility person and you wish that your coworkers were a little bit more helpful, I would direct them to this page. There's a lot there that they can value from. Both Colorado and Minnesota have excellent resources. And a reminder, if you're not able to access all the links that are being shared in the chat, within ten business days, our archived webinar and all these resources and links will be listed on the Lead Center's website, leadcenter.org. And with that, let's get into these questions, and I want to thank everybody who had submitted questions in advance for registration. We're going to try to get to as many questions as we can in this limited time frame. But if we don't get to yours, and you really have a burning question, you know, still, please reach out to us. We would

love to get that question answered for you. So, I want to start with maybe a couple of the questions that we got answered live in this, and I appreciate so many people who responded on here, but this was a question that came up in our registration, and it's also been asked live. So, I want to start out with this one. If a partner or vendor's materials are not digital accessible, what is the appropriate way for workforce programs to share or distribute them while still meeting accessibility standards? I hear this all the time. I, you know, like it's not me personally who's creating this content. It's our vendor. How are we going to enforce what they do? So, I would love to hear from the panel, what's the best way to go about that? And Britt, I know you responded to it, but I didn't know if anybody else, too. I'll leave it open to everyone.

>> This is Samantha in Minnesota. I can answer, too. Kind of add on to what Britt has to say, too.

>> Yes, yes. So, I'll just share from my perspective, because this happens a lot. Right? It does. So, I think this is similar. Just thinking about what seems Sam has already said, again, this is Britt from CDLE in Colorado. So, we have gone through, just like in Minnesota, we have gone through our contract and procurement process and added specific language and stipulation about accessibility to all of our vendor contracts. So that is -- it's -- it's something that we don't often think about is, "Oh, what do the contracts say?" Because it's not sexy. Okay? But we do need to make sure it's there so later on we can look at it and go, "Hey, look, you agreed to this." Right? And it doesn't necessarily mean that the vendor is 100% accessible, because there is no such thing. Right? Accessibility is a journey, not a destination. But it does mean they are committed to resolving issues. Maybe there's a commitment to cure, as we call it, to remediate the issue that we identify in a reasonable amount of time. And that's up to us. Right? Because we are paying the vendor. And the vendor then has the responsibility to make that content accessible. We can notify them of these accessibility issues. They should have a team already doing that again for best practice. But that -- that's something that we now have baked into our contracts. If you don't, highly recommend that you do. On a partner side, these could be nonprofit partners. These could be people coming in to present at a staff meeting. Right? These aren't vendors. They're doing it for free. These are partners. So, let's be partners, right? So, maybe they don't have resources or knowledge about accessibility. We can share that with them. We can say, "Hey, it's our standard, it's our way of doing business that we make things accessible. Here's ways in which we do that." Here at CDLE, we send out a little checklist, a thing for our partners and our presenters to -- to do ahead of time. And then, if they get confused or need help, they reach out to me and say, "Hey, I need a little bit of help and training about how to make this accessible." And then send it to us ahead of time so we can check it.

And then, of course, we get their permission, whenever possible, to remediate it and then reach back out to them if we need support, such as captioning on a video that's protected by their account password or doing things like providing alt text, because those are all very contextual. Right? So, those are just a couple things I've done in my experience and in my work. But I would love to hear from Sam what else you're thinking.

>> We do a lot of the same at Minnesota. This is Sam Clayton, by the way. One of the things that we kind of utilize our contract language too, is we go, you in this contract said that you were going to provide us this accessible content. If this is a provider that is what I will affectionately refer to as a frequent flyer in providing inaccessible content, what that contract language does, it then allows us to file a complaint with our department of administration, who -- who administers the contract language. And we can let them know that if this is something you have signed up to do and you are not honoring that contract language, we can add you to a list of contracts or contractors that aren't fulfilling that contract language. So, it gives us a little bit of leverage. It's not something I've had to do in the 11-plus years that I've been doing digital accessibility. However, we have that as a feather in our tool cap. Another thing that we do is we do partner with our -- with our third-party vendors, much like Colorado does. And if it is a nonprofit or somebody who is just starting out, I we do small business startups at DEED all the time. We provide them the resources that are located on the Office of Accessibility website. And the one thing that I really want to call out is the link to role-based link -- role-based training on WCAG 2.1. That has training specific to people who are posting like maps or labor market information or people who are posting things along the lines of like annual reports or documents or, you know, like tableau type things. So, it really kind of focuses it -- focuses in on the different type of content creator and provides them information based on the type of work that they're doing. And so, we do a lot of that type of stuff along with the quick cards as well.

>> Thank you. Go, okay, go ahead, Jay.

>> Can I add one more thing to that?

>> Absolutely.

>> It's getting better, but a lot of times vendors, they think -- they know what accessibility is and they don't. Sometimes they think accessibility means getting to something rather than making enabling other people to get to it. And so, that's why we have, like I posted in the chat, expectations for accessible documents. We go beyond this. And then like Sam said, by providing free training and free resources, they have no excuses. And then the role-based training. So really, even though you could put everything in the border plate contract, put all that in there, you still have to vet the vendor, you still have to decide if that vendor is reliable and trustworthy.

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And so, we do also have what we call narrative questions. So, when a vendor is building something for you, you can't use the VPAT because the VPAT are things that are already built. So, they're building something for you. We ask questions on them and ask them to describe what they do about accessibility, what they know about and how they provide it. We also have a tool called Policy Driven Adoption for adjustability with the self-adjustment and their level of assurity. So, there's a number of tools that you can find on our procurement page in terms of how we make sure we could talk to vendor and then work with the vendor when they're doing the process.

>> Thank you. Thank you so much, Jay. And I just want to add, we are working on right now with the Lead Center, we're going to have a brief that's going to be published. It's going to highlight Colorado Department of Labor and Employment's efforts around digital accessibility, and we'll link to some of their resources too, and information on procurement and information. So, please stay tuned for that along with all the resources that we had here today. And Jay, thank you for also for sharing those resources in the chat. We only have a few more minutes left, so I really want to try to get through a couple more questions. Someone actually asked Samantha directly about the office hours and I actually find this very interesting myself. I know some states that offer a vendor office hours. Maybe they offer that for other offices in their state. Samantha, someone's asking you, "Have you had success getting people to use the office hours for individual assistance? I host weekly office hours, and it seems to be a high-level accessibility questions like how do I fit this into AI instead of tailored support as intended."

>> Yeah, thank you. It's -- it's been mixed, to be honest. I mean, I do have some staff that are coming in going, "Well, why can't I just get AI [inaudible] to do with it?" You know, "I put this into AI. Can you tell me if it's actually accessible?" The answer is technically it's accessible. It passes the checker. So, is it accessible? No, it's not. And that's because I -- I then take that question and turn it into an education option for them or like an informational thing going, you know, accessibility has to follow the four major principles. It's a poor excuse. P O U R. It needs to be perceivable, operable, understandable and robust. Is this technically accessible? Yes. But is it understandable? No. Or can somebody use this with assistive technology? No. So, is it technically accessible? Yes. But is it accessible? No, because you're missing these other components. And a lot of what my office hours turn into is just really educating people because like Jay said, people don't know what accessibility means. What is accessibility? What accessibility is for me is going to be different than what accessibility is for Jay or even what accessibility is for somebody who speaks English as a second language. You know, these are all aspects of accessibility that as professionals, we need to take a look at and kind of look at that over. But as far as the office hours go, kind of going back to there, I'll step off of my soapbox for a minute.

I do get a lot of questions like -- and this is the one that absolutely floors me because I get it the most is, "How do you add extra white space after a list?" And so, that's the one that I get a lot, and it's my favorite one. Just go in and click a button. I promise it'll work. And so, the office hours have really turned into a lot of questions on PowerPoint presentations, believe it or not. And I do want to kind of call out that Jay's Office of Accessibility also provides office hours to all state staff or people who want to come in and ask those same types of questions. My office hours are specific for DEED, but we do have an option for all state agencies and other people who are wanting to come in and learn those same questions too.

>> Thank you. All right, I'm going to try to squeeze in one more question because we got this -- some of this was, [inaudible] registration. Some people have asked this live. I know there's a lot of confusion about ADA Title II and it's been extended, but somebody specifically asked. They were talking about like, "Well, you're talking about content about Minnesota and Colorado. Are there laws to make this content viable in other states?" And I would say yes, ADA Title II. But I'm going to let the experts kind of answer to this. I mean, how should states really be responding to this right now? Because it does seem kind of confusing about what the law is and how it's going to be enforced. Anyone who wants to answer that? I know. I think Britt says it's going to answer live, but I'll leave it to anyone.

>> I've already talked and I think Jay might be interested. I don't know.

>> Well, this is Jay. I can just say that the Americans with Disabilities Act is 36 years old this month. Title II, what it did, the Title II rule did, was put in writing what has already been done in the court for the last 25 years because the ADA was written before the Internet came around. So, when the Internet came around, they started interpreting the ADA into the digital space. And so, the Department of Justice in general said, "Hey, [inaudible] provided accommodation assets, in the digital world as well." And they were using WCAN 2.0, but again with case law. So, what Title II just simply did was codified that. And that's a good thing because now there's no confusion about what are we using to define accessibility. Is it 508? Is it 2.0? Is a European app? [Inaudible] 2.1. So, it helps clarify what you should aim for and how to do it. So, I would say keep your foot on the gas, don't stop. Keep doing what you need to do because it will be the law and it already is the law. It's been the law for 36 years.

>> Yes. I cannot think of a better way to end today's session, especially during Disability Pride Month. That was perfect, Jay. Thank you. Thank you so much to our presenters who have been here today. Thank you so much to everybody who stuck with us for this full hour and a half. You can move to the next slide. Just a reminder that the Lead Center is available.

Oh, go, keep going. Next slide. Sorry. The Lead Center offers technical assistance. And if you go to our website, leadcenter.org -- actually you can move to the next slide if you would like, please, because we got to move quick. We have a QR code there. We also have a web link that'll be put in the chat. Hey, if your workforce program or if you're a state that's interested in, "Hey, how do we start working on this? Like, we haven't really thought about digital accessibility before. We do a lot of more digital work at our job centers. Are we, you know, doing what we need to do to be as accessible as possible?" We would love to support you. We would love to give you resources and help you out. So please, look -- go to our website. We have a form you can fill out to get technical assistance. We would love to hear from you. And again, we will have this available within ten business days, so be on the lookout for that. But if you're interested in what we talked about today and the work of the Lead Center, why don't you sign up for updates? Go to the next slide, please. Go to leadcenter.org and I think we'll put in the chat the direct link for signing up for our updates. Also, you follow us on all of the social medias. We are available there where you can get updates. And on behalf of the Lead Center, I want to thank you all for being here today. I really want to thank the Office of Disability Employment Policy and the Civil Rights Center and especially Colorado and Minnesota for joining us today. Learned so much in this jam-packed hour and a half. I probably could have stayed on another hour asking questions, but I really appreciate everyone being on. I wish all of you great rest of your week. Thank you.