



FACT SHEET | ADA

Unlocking the Power of Accessibility: The Value of Conducting an Annual ADA Website Audit

Undertaking an annual Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) website audit represents more than regulatory compliance — it is a forward-thinking investment in the organization’s sustainability and reputation. This proactive approach aligns with organizational values, enhances public perception, and delivers substantial financial and risk mitigation advantages.

Why You Need to Conduct an Annual ADA Website Audit

Legal Compliance

Compliance with ADA and accessibility requirements is widely considered to be a legal requirement in the industry. Noncompliance can lead to significant legal repercussions, including fines and lawsuits. By conducting an annual ADA website audit, we can proactively identify and address any areas of noncompliance, thereby mitigating potential legal risks.

SEC Guidance and Behavior

The SEC stated in the Tailored Shareholder Reports Rule (page 118): “We agree that accessibility is an important issue for investors. Funds are required to comply with all applicable accessibility-related requirements under the ADA or otherwise.” The final ruling posted online was also tagged for accessibility. Additionally, recent updates to the Open-End Fund (OEF), Closed-End Fund (CEF), and Variable Insurance Product (VIP) taxonomy guides were also tagged for accessibility, as is any ruling, proposal or taxonomy guide that the SEC releases. These measures demonstrate that the SEC is “walking the talk” on accessibility, and illustrate their evolving perspective on ADA.

Elements of a Comprehensive ADA Website Audit: Creating a Closed-End Compliance Loop

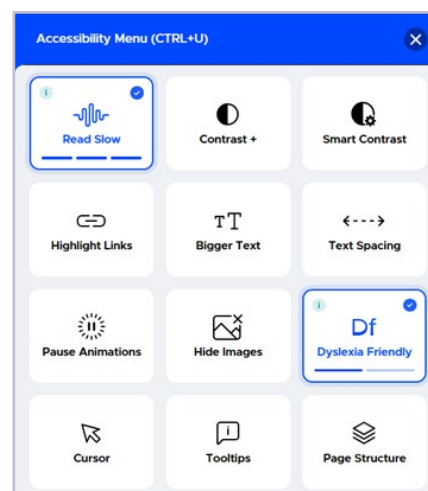
An annual third-party website audit is a valuable element of a broader ADA and accessibility compliance program. The website audit is more comprehensive than ADA document tagging as it covers all WCAG criteria (versus PDF tagging, which incorporates a subset of WCAG criteria, applicable to PDFs). An annual ADA website audit provides a closed-end compliance loop when used in conjunction with ADA PDF tagging. Doing one without the other leaves potential gaps in a fully compliant posture: A comprehensive accessibility compliance program must include both the website and the documents available on that website. Website ADA elements (as well as the remediation of items identified in the audits) allow things like screen readers and braille readers to navigate the sites and provide the text to the users in a logical reading order. They also describe images and linking options. Sites that are not created with ADA elements make the use of accessibility tools much more difficult, sometimes impossible, and the navigation of the site less intuitive, creating barriers for certain individuals.

The high-level annual ADA audit elements, incorporating both automated and manual usability testing approaches, are as follows (there are several tests within each topic):

✓ Wave/AXE Tool Testing	✓ Color Contrast Testing
✓ Screen Reader Testing	✓ Text Spacing Testing
✓ Keyboard-Only Testing	✓ Target Size Testing

It is very important that both manual and automated testing is incorporated, to cover cases where technical requirements are satisfied but screen reader usability may be subpar. A 2023 article from the Economist on accessibility stated, “Experts say there is no substitute for auditing sites, designing fixes, and manually testing them.”

Additionally, the Userway “widget” on the landing page (that is included as part of the annual site audit program) enables the user to customize their experience as they interact with your site to meet their exacting needs, such as providing magnification or reading guides, or highlighting hyperlinks that may not be visibly obvious. The widget alone does not satisfy ADA compliance, but offers a different set of tools; for example, dynamically changing the color contrast or changing the font to a dyslexia-friendly font, which some users find beneficial. Collectively, this functionality provides access to the required hosted information regardless of the visual and tactile abilities of the investor and prospective investor base.



Advantages of Conducting an Annual ADA Website Audit

It is highly recommended that organizations evaluate the strategic benefits of an annual ADA website audit and prioritize the necessary actions to ensure that all regulatory landing pages and documents remain accessible and inclusive to all users. Key advantages include:

BRAND AND VALUE ALIGNMENT

Demonstrating commitment to accessibility not only fulfills regulatory requirements, but also reinforces your organization's reputation as an ethical, purpose-driven brand dedicated to equity and social responsibility.

EXPANDING ACCESSIBILITY AND YOUR INVESTOR BASE

An ADA site audit can identify barriers that may affect individuals with disabilities from accessing products and services, which may have implications for investor relations.

ENHANCED REPUTATION

Proactively addressing accessibility requirements can substantially strengthen your organization's reputation. Stakeholders and the broader community will recognize your commitment to inclusivity and responsible business practices. This dedication fosters increased client loyalty and positive recognition, ultimately contributing to the long-term success and credibility of your brand.

ALIGN WITH INDUSTRY STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES

Numerous investment companies have already implemented DFIN's ADA audit and tagging protocols to adhere to industry benchmarks. By implementing an annual ADA audit, your organization ensures compliance with industry standards and demonstrates a proactive commitment to accessibility for all investors.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

In 2024, over 4,000 website accessibility lawsuits were filed in federal and state courts by individuals with visual, hearing or other disabilities, alleging that companies' websites and mobile applications failed to comply with Title III of the ADA¹. Performing an annual ADA website audit allows organizations to proactively detect and resolve accessibility concerns, thereby mitigating potential risks before they escalate.

FUTURE-PROOFING

As accessibility and audit standards continue to evolve, it is essential that you stay ahead of the regulations. An annual ADA site audit will help you to future-proof, saving time and resources in the long run. By addressing accessibility issues now, you can avoid the need for costly and disruptive modifications in the future.

¹Source: <https://www.saul.com/insights/blog/ada-website-accessibility-risk>

Why DFIN?

DFIN has been delivering accessibility solutions since 2018, supporting compliance with the ADA in the U.S. and the AODA in Canada. We are focused on compliance, regulatory and marketing documents and provide expertise and guidance for color issues. DFIN has the scale, expertise and infrastructure to meet the demands of ADA compliance.



Over 300K
Accessibility-Tagged
Pages Annually



Over 100
ADA Customers



20%
Year-Over-Year
Growth

Ultimately, when you choose to work with DFIN,
you are preparing for the future.

You're buying into something bigger than a single software solution; you're partnering with an established market leader that is forward leaning and thinking — which, in turn, will help your organization be better prepared for what is to come.

About Donnelley Financial Solutions (DFIN)

DFIN is the leading global provider of compliance and regulatory software and services, fueling end-to-end investment company regulatory compliance needs, complex capital markets transactions, and essential financial reporting at every stage of the corporate lifecycle. Our mission is simple: to empower clients with the software and support they need to stay ahead of public company filings, investment company filings, private reporting, and beneficial owner reporting, while enhancing workflow efficiency. We bring deep expertise to every engagement, driving transparency and collaboration built on confidence and reliability.

Learn about DFIN's end-to-end risk and compliance solutions

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