Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Compliance for Digital Accessibility

If your organization has a presence within Ontario, it must design, deliver, and procure goods, services, and facilities with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in mind

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) identifies, removes, and aims to prevent barriers for people with disabilities - including physical and digital environments encountered in day-to-day life.

Is Your Industry Affected?

Public Sector: Any organization funded or controlled by the Ontario government must comply: all levels of government, from provincial ministries and agencies to municipalities, school boards, hospitals, and public libraries.

Private Sector: For-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, and charities must comply if they have 50 or more employees.

However, smaller organizations may be indirectly affected through supply chain requirements or partnerships.

Types of ICT Covered by the AODA:

- Websites
- Web Content
- Software
- Mobile Applications
- Hardware
- Social Media Content
- Archived Digital Content and Documents

How Do You Comply with the AODA?

WCAG 2.0 Level AA: The AODA mandates WCAG 2.0 Level AA as the minimum standards for compliance. These widely recognized guidelines offer a comprehensive set of success criteria for making web content perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust, catering to a wide range of disabilities.

Success criteria for web content is based on these principles:

Perceivable - e.g. Creating text alternatives for meaningful images

Operable - e.g. A site is completely navigable with keyboard commands

Understandable - e.g. A web page functions in a way that is predictable and logical

Robust - e.g. A website accepts keyboard commands, regardless of which browser or operating system it is being accessed from

WCAG 2.0 AA consists of:

38
Success Criteria

~74
Manual Tests

~63
Automated tests

Try Accessible Web RAMP free for 14 days to start testing for WCAG violations. Explore plans

Your Additional Compliance Requirements:

- **Establish Accessibility Policies:** Organizations should publish a comprehensive digital accessibility policy in a visible spot on their website. This policy should outline a commitment to accessibility, define roles and responsibilities, and provide procedures for addressing issues.

- **Provide Feedback Mechanisms:** Users should be able to report issues or request accommodations by email, online forms, or phone.

  Tools like Accessible Web's Compliance Center streamline these processes.

ACCESSIBLE **WEB**

- **Continuously Test:** Organizations should conduct regular accessibility testing throughout digital asset creation and development. This includes automated testing, manual testing, and user testing with people with disabilities.

- **Maintain Documentation:** Keep track of your accessibility efforts, including policies, training records, testing results, and remediation plans.

  Tools like Accessible Web RAMP automate testing and documentation for you.

- **Provide Accessibility Training:** Regular training should be provided to all staff involved in the creation, management, or delivery of digital content and services. Training should cover accessibility principles, WCAG guidelines, assistive technologies, and accessibility testing methods.

  Accessible Web Academy offers training as a supplemental service, or as part of our Pro+ Plan.

- **Prepare for Reasonable Modifications:** Organizations must be willing to modify some policies, practices, and procedures to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to their goods, services, and facilities. This may include adjusting deadlines, providing alternative formats, or offering personalized assistance.

- **Facilitate Effective Communication:** Consider the needs and preferences of individuals with disabilities. Are you providing plain language, visual aids, and offering sign language interpreters, or using assistive technologies where needed?

  Our certified accessibility specialists can help you identify these.

When Do You Need to Comply?

The AODA is being implemented in stages through a series of standards. Each standard addresses a different area of accessibility, intending to achieve province-wide accessibility by 2025.

2025

Compliance Timelines and Deadlines

- **Ongoing Responsibility:** While the January 1, 2021 deadline was a significant milestone, compliance is an ongoing process. Organizations must confirm that all new digital content and updates to existing content continue to meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
- **Future Requirements:** Stay informed about potential WCAG standards updates. For example, WCAG 2.1 and 2.2 introduce new criteria that may become relevant for compliance in the future.

Enforcement:

- **Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO):** The ADO plays a central role in enforcing the AODA. They provide guidance and support to organizations, investigate complaints, and have the authority to issue compliance orders and financial penalties.
- **Complaint Process:** Individuals can file complaints with the ADO if they believe an organization is not complying with the AODA. The ADO will investigate the complaint to take appropriate action.

Exceptions to the Law

- **Specific Exclusions:** The AODA outlines specific types of content exempt from certain requirements, such as live captions for pre-recorded audio-only content published before January 1, 2012. These exemptions are limited and should not be broadly interpreted.
- **Legacy Content:** While older content may not need to be immediately updated to meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA, organizations should still make reasonable efforts to make it as accessible as possible and prioritize accessibility when redesigning or updating legacy content.

What to Do if You Can't Achieve Compliance by These Deadlines

- **Undue Hardship:** In rare cases, organizations may claim "undue hardship" if achieving full compliance would cause significant financial or operational difficulty. However, this claim must be carefully documented and justified, and efforts should still be made to provide the most accessible experience possible.
- **Temporary Exemptions:** Temporary exemptions may be granted for specific content or features if accessibility cannot be immediately achieved. However, a plan must be in place to address accessibility issues within a reasonable timeframe.

- **Reasonable Accommodation and Effective Communication:**
  - **Individualized Needs:** Be prepared to provide accommodations and communication supports tailored to the specific needs of individuals with disabilities. This may include providing documents in alternative formats, offering sign language interpretation, or adjusting service delivery methods.
  - **Proactive Approach:** Don't wait for accommodation requests. Proactively communicate your commitment to accessibility and make it easy for people to request accommodations and provide feedback. Include an accessibility statement on your site and a way to contact easily.
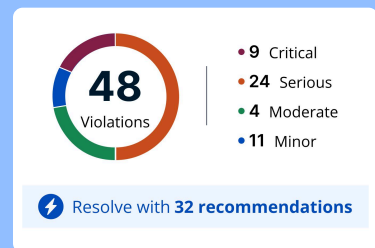
How Can You Comply?

Navigating the complexities of AODA compliance can be daunting, but with Accessible Web, you're not alone. Contact us today to explore how our expert services and innovative tools can help your organization achieve and maintain compliance, and prepare for the upcoming deadlines and evolving expectations. Accessible Web offers:

Software

Accessible Web RAMP

Our easy-to-use suite of accessibility testing software helps you automate and facilitate continuous compliance with updated accessibility standards.
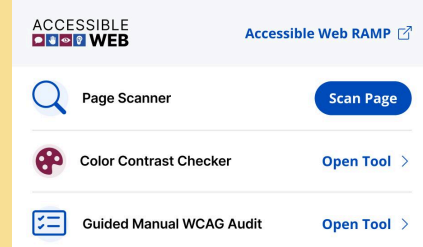
Start a free 14 day trial

48 Violations
- 9 Critical
- 24 Serious
- 4 Moderate
- 11 Minor

⚡ Resolve with 32 recommendations

Accessible Web Helper

Our free Chrome extension contains a page scanner, color contrast checker, and a Guided Manual WCAG Tool. Launch it directly from a violation or task in RAMP to highlight the affected elements directly on your website.

Download for free

ACCESSIBLE WEB   Accessible Web RAMP ↗

🔍 Page Scanner   Scan Page
🎨 Color Contrast Checker   Open Tool ›
✔ Guided Manual WCAG Audit   Open Tool ›

Guided Manual Audit Tool

A tool within our extension (included with RAMP subscription) that walks you through a series of tests to comprehensively audit for all WCAG success criteria. Pair it with our audit grid in RAMP to audit your site at your own pace while automatically quantifying your progress.
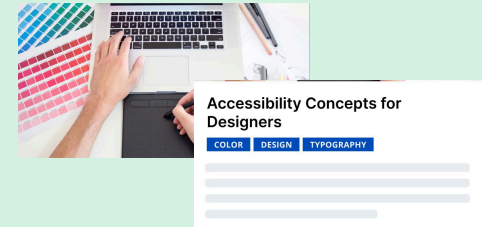
Start a free 14 day trial

Success Criteria	Home	About	Contact
1.1.1 Non-Text Content WCAG 2.0 · Level A · 2 Tests · 20 min	✓ ›	✓ ›	≣
1.2.1 Audio-only and Video-only (Prerecorded)	⚠ ›	— ›	✓
1.2.2 Captions (Prerecorded)	⊘ ›	✓ ›	✓
1.2.3 Audio Description or Media Alternative (Prerecor...	≣ 5 ›	⚠ ›	✓
1.2.4 Captions (Live)	✓ Completed testing & tasks	⊘ ›	≣
1.2.5 Audio Description (Prerecorded)	✓ ›	✓ ›	✓

Accessible Web Academy

With topics such as accessible design, code-specific best practices, and assistive technology, you can enable your team to contribute to the ongoing accessibility efforts and ensure that all content produced meets the accessibility standards. Level up your team today!

[Browse course catalog](#)

Accessibility Concepts for Designers

COLOR | DESIGN | TYPOGRAPHY

Services

WCAG Manual Audits

Automated scanning can only detect a portion of WCAG violations; manual evaluation is required. Our team of certified specialists will comprehensively evaluate your platform to identify compliance gaps.

[Get in touch](#)

Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPATs)

Our certified specialists will document how your platform meets accessibility standards, essential for procurement processes.

[Explore your options](#)

Assistive Technology Testing

Testing sessions with our team of real assistive technology users to confirm your digital solutions work seamlessly for all users.

[Schedule your first session](#)

Expert Consultation

Remediation support is an ongoing process in which a certified specialist helps you meet your accessibility goals with support, best practices, trainings, and more!

[Get in touch](#)

Regulations Comparison Table

Guidelines	ADA Title II	ADA Title III	Section 508	EAA	ACA	AODA *
Deadline	Large Governments: April 2026 Small Governments: April 2027	No specific deadline, ongoing	No specific deadline, ongoing	New content: June 28, 2025 Existing content: June 28, 2030	2040	**2025**
Affected Industries	Public services, state/ local government entities	Private businesses operating a place of public accommodation	All branches of the government and contractors and grantees	Public and private sector bodies	All orgs under federal jurisdiction; including private sector bodies	**Public and private sector bodies**
Affected Regions	United States	United States	United States	European Union	Canada	**Ontario, Canada**
Standards for Compliance	WCAG 2.1 AA	WCAG 2.1 AA	WCAG 2.0 AA	WCAG 2.1 AA EN 301 549	WCAG 2.1 AA EN 301 549	**WCAG 2.0 AA**

Additional Info & References

- **Official AODA website:** Find comprehensive information about the legislation, its regulations, and related resources.
- **Accessibility Standards Canada website:** Learn about the development of accessibility standards, including those related to digital accessibility. It also offers guidance documents and technical resources to support organizations in their compliance efforts.

We're here to help you navigate AODA and other laws. Reach out to Accessible Web with your accessibility project.

Legal Disclaimer

The information provided in this document is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice. While Accessible Web has made every effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information contained herein, accessibility laws, regulations, and guidelines vary by jurisdiction and are subject to change.

Accessible Web strongly recommends consulting with qualified legal counsel or compliance professionals to understand the specific requirements applicable to your organization and ensure compliance with accessibility laws, such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

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