Accessible Communication

This document provides guidance to help ensure that all DOT communications are accessible.

# **Reasonable Accommodation Statement**

* All communications inviting people to meetings/events should have a reasonable accommodation statement to ensure that participants know how to request assistance. A suggested statement is:

“*We are committed to providing equal access to this <meeting/event> for all participants. If alternative formats or other reasonable accommodations are needed, please contact <meeting/event organizer’s name> at <phone number> or via email <email address> by close of business <deadline>.”*

* Meeting/event organizers are encouraged to set the deadline for requesting accommodations 8-10 business days before the event so that requests for interpreting and/or captioning services can be submitted well in advance of the industry standard 5-day minimum notice.

# **All Visual Communications**

## Emails, Documents & Presentations

* Use high contrast. Avoid colorful and/or busy backgrounds and wallpaper.
* Use a 12-18 point, sans serif font, such as Arial or Verdana.
* Add meaningful and concise alternative (alt) text to all images and graphics to describe their contents.



Alt Text example: “Logo says U.S. Department of Transportation, DRC, Disability Resource Center”.



Alt Text example: “The five values of the U.S. DOT are Excellence (award badge icon), Trust (handshake icon), Fairness (scales of justice icon), Empathy (heart icon), and Imagination (human brain with lightbulb icon).”

* Use plain language so that people have a full understanding the first time they read it. Avoid jargon and uncommon words.

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| --- | --- |
| **Plain Language 👍** | **Instead of 👎** |
| Use | Utilize |
| Recommend | Advise |
| About | Approximately |
| Make sure | Ensure |
| So | Accordingly |
| Take part in | Participate |
| Did not | Failed to |
| Expect | Anticipate |
| Many | Numerous |
| Help, aid | Assist |
| Enough | Sufficient |
| Carry out, do | Accomplish |
| Finish, end | Finalize |

* Make social media hashtags accessible. For multi-word hashtags, capitalize the first letter of each word #LikeThisExample.
* Always caption videos and make a transcript available. Add audio descriptions (i.e., voice overs) for displayed text and images that are not otherwise accessible to someone who is blind. Visit [508 Accessible Videos – How to Make Audio Descriptions](https://digital.gov/2014/06/30/508-accessible-videos-how-to-make-audio-descriptions/) for more information and examples.
* For email, use Outlook’s tools for formatting (e.g., numbering, bullets) to ensure screen reading software users have access.
* Use descriptive text for hyperlinks instead of vague language. Example: “Print certificate for <course name>” instead of “Click here”.
* If a QR code is added to a flyer or a business card as a link to more information and registration, ensure that the content is accessible.

# **Written Communications**

## Memos, Policies, & Other Word Documents

* Use the “Check Accessibility” feature found under the “Review” tab in Microsoft Word.
* Use Heading Structures, which support screen reader users with document navigation.
* Create and verify PDF accessibility using [Adobe Acrobat Pro](https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/create-verify-pdf-accessibility.html).
* Provide a document in Microsoft Word if the content is requested in a larger font.

# **Voicemail Communications**

* If you attach a voicemail to an email, include a full transcript of the message.

# **Verbal Communications**

* Speak clearly and not too fast.
* Each new speaker should announce themselves and describe their appearance as part of their introduction for those who cannot see. This also helps interpreters and captioners identify who is speaking.
* Give an ample amount of time for questions so that everyone is able to participate, including individuals who have auditory processing delays (i.e., [the 5 second rule](https://www.lucidmeetings.com/glossary/5-second-rule#:~:text=The%205%20Second%20Rule%20(as,silence%20becomes%20a%20little%20uncomfortable)). This also assists interpreters and captioners with accurately relaying spoken content.
* One person should speak at a time to avoid cross discussion and interruption.
* If someone asks for clarification, reword the statement instead of repeating yourself verbatim.
* Ensure everyone who speaks during a meeting uses a microphone. If this is not possible, repeat the questions/responses into a microphone so that all attendees have access to the information, whether participating in-person or remotely.

# **Accommodations**

* Reasonable accommodations are adjustments to a job and/or work environment that enable a qualified person with disabilities to perform the essential functions of their job and have equal employment opportunities. A wide variety of accommodations exist to make a job more accessible, such as improving physical access to a workspace or meeting room, providing written communication in an alternate format, and ensuring breaks during meetings.
  + Adding a [Reasonable Accommodation Statement](#_Reasonable_Accommodation_Statement), as detailed above, is key to receiving and fulfilling accommodation requests in a timely manner.
* DOT employees and applicants who require sign language interpreting and/or captioning for internal events should provide advance notice to the event organizer, who is responsible for requesting services through the Disability Resource Center. Event organizers making interpreting and or captioning requests on behalf of identified consumers should complete a [Request for Sign Language Interpreting and Captioning Services form](https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-04/Interpreting-captioning-request-form-4-2-2024_0.pdf). In cases where an event organizer has not been identified, DOT employees who need services are encouraged to submit a completed request form directly to the applicable DRC mailbox.
* For external events and trainings, employees needing services should notify the event organizer or training provider directly.
* For DOT-sponsored public meetings and external events, it is the responsibility of the organizing program office to provide interpreting and/or captioning services through a vendor listed on the [GSA Schedule](https://www.gsaadvantage.gov/advantage/ws/main/start_page?store=ADVANTAGE).