

Self-Evaluation

Website adherence to Section 508

1.0 Executive Summary

The FLRA has performed a self-evaluation of its website as it pertains to external customers and Section 508 compliance. The agency passes the self-examination but the conclusion is that the scope and testing rigor needs to increase as the agency improves accessibility. The methodology examines the Federal guidelines and evaluates a selection of its pages to determine compliance. Methodology and results are discussed.

2.0 Introduction

This document attempts to examine the efforts of the agency to provide accessible information as determined by federal regulations. This effort is timely in that the FLRA has a new design to its web page. The redesign takes advantage of an “open source” framework using the Drupal Content Management System (CMS) to help the agency provide accurate and timely information. Additionally, the site has a fresh look and feel that aims to provide ease of use to the public and internal customers. Some new features for the site include a searchable FLRA Decisions database, Solicitor’s Briefs and Opinions, and FSIP Decisions.

Drupal provides the ability for content providers to quickly and easily add and modify information. The look and feel of Drupal is found in its *themes* and *modules*. Themes provide the ability to maintain the integrity of the information while easily changing the look of that information including color and pagination. Modules control the functionality of Drupal such as search ability and the loading of pictures. One of the ways Drupal speeds up website development tool is through its inherent ability to allow creation and editing of information at the component or workgroup level. Furthermore, Drupal allows content providers with little or no knowledge of webpage development to contribute without a significant learning curve. If one has some knowledge of a computer word processor, subjects of the website can be assigned to corresponding component representatives and hit the ground running. Any new or changed information can be reviewed prior to publishing to add consistency in terms of formatting and affirm the veracity of the information.

The FLRA wants the information to be accurate and timely while also being accessible to all. “In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Inaccessible technology interferes with an individual's ability to obtain and use information quickly and easily. Section 508 was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, to make available new

opportunities for people with disabilities, and to encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals. The law applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. Under Section 508 (29 U.S.C. § 794d), agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access available to others. ¹

The 508 standards apply to Federal web sites but not to private sector web sites unless a site is provided under contract to a Federal agency, in which case only that web site or portion covered by the contract would have to comply. Accessible sites offer significant advantages that go beyond access. For example, those with "text-only" options provide a faster downloading alternative and can facilitate transmission of web-based data to cell phones and personal digital assistants.

A Federal website must follow § 1194.22 to be considered Section 508 compliant. A Web content developer must satisfy this guideline otherwise, one or more groups will find it impossible to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint is a basic requirement for some groups to be able to use Web documents. The section § 1194.22 has sixteen points labeled a thru p and apply to web-based intranet and Internet information and applications.

3.0 Methodology

The method of self-evaluation is to select key pages and examine compliance to federal statute and to compare performance to other accessibility leaders in the public and private sector. This effort is to be continuous and will be repeated at the determination of the agency and posted within the website.

3.1 Criteria § 1194.22

- (a) A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content).
- (b) Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.
- (c) Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.
- (d) Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.
- (e) Redundant text links shall be provided for each active region of a server-side image map.

- (f) Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.
- (g) Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables.
- (h) Markup shall be used to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers.
- (i) Frames shall be titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation.
- (j) Pages shall be designed to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz.
- (k) A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to make a web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes.
- (l) When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by assistive technology.
- (m) When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with §1194.21(a) through (l).
- (n) When electronic forms are designed to be completed on-line, the form shall allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.
- (o) A method shall be provided that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links.
- (p) When a timed response is required, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.

3.2 Selected Pages

For this self-evaluation, four pages have been chosen:

1. front page found at <http://www.flra.gov/> ,
2. recent decisions at http://www.flra.gov/authority_decisions,
3. FLRA contacts page at <http://www.flra.gov/contact>
4. About the FLRA page: at <http://www.flra.gov/introduction-flra>.

3.3 Initial testing and tools

First, each page will be examined by using criteria from §1194.21(a) through (l). Next, the page will be examined using Wave found at <http://wave.webaim.org>.

4.0 Results

4.1 Criteria Evaluation

4.1.1 Front Page

- *Manual exam*

There are four remarks that deal with graphics and alternate text in criteria **a** and **k**.

- i. Does not explain the shield on top left of window.
- ii. Does not explain syndicate icon.
- iii. Does not explain full-details found in the pictures of the rotor-banners.
- iv. Uses “read more” at the end of articles which may be a confusing command for reader.

Other criteria are not germane to evaluation.

- *Using WAVE*

Wave finds the same errors, found manually. Additionally, WAVE finds several errors related to WCAG recommendations such as the heading tag for the syndicate link and the read more text mentioned above.

4.1.2 Recent Decisions

- *Manual exam*

The organization, that is the method of sorting, is not explained in the text leaving a reader dependent customer confused. Additionally, the case numbers are not preceded by a heading marker enabling readers to skip from one case to another. View and PDF are text therefore not providing a reference to the meaning of these labels.

- *Using WAVE*

Wave identifies search form items that ostensibly match criteria **n**. These form labels are present with an associated form, that is, a reader would have no clue about what to do with these items.

4.1.3 FLRA contacts

- *Manual exam*

The Section 508 criteria appear to be successfully met.

- *Using WAVE*

WAVE finds problems with redundant links on the page,

4.1.4 About the FLRA

- *Manual exam*

The Section 508 criteria appear to be successfully met.

- *Using WAVE*

The Section 508 criteria appear to be successfully met.

4.2 Benchmark Evaluation

Future evaluations will use best practices of other agencies to include the Department of Justice.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Remarks on performance results

The agency successfully passes this self-examination. These findings should be addressed in the near future but none are critical. On 4.1.1, these findings can be addressed by providing more verbose alt text entries. For 4.1.2, added text can provide information about the presentation of the field and perhaps an optional reader-sensitive page can be created. There are no problems with 4.1.3 and 4.1.4.

Future testing should include more pages and increased vigor by using more diverse accessibility tools.

5.2 Remarks on approach

The approach needs an expanded scope to review more pages and try other accessibility evaluation tools. Consideration of employees and accessibility issues should be addressed in the future.

6.0 References & Notes

6.1.1. Access *link and date*

www.section508.gov accessed on October 13, 2009. Actual link was
<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=3>