# Making Minnesota Documents Accessible

Improving State Operations
State of Minnesota
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Executive Summary

Integral to MN.IT Services, Minnesota's state agency information technology provider, is the right of all citizens to have access to public information. MN.IT is committed to providing access to all individuals – with or without disabilities – who wish to use its websites, documents, applications or services to obtain information or resources.

Some users may not be able to see, hear or process information in particular formats; may have difficulty reading or understanding text; or may not be able to use a keyboard or a mouse. MN.IT developed its information, website, and web content to ensure compatibility with common assistive technologies and strategies by using the State of Minnesota's Accessibility Standard, which is based on Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (as amended) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.
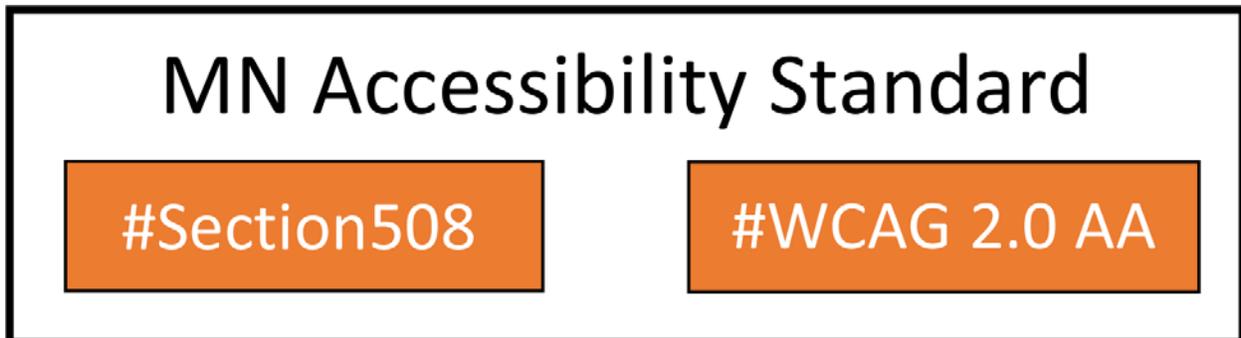
Document accessibility in Minnesota applies to all documents created for citizens or state employees, whether they are posted to a website or file sharing application (such as SharePoint), or distributed through email. When developers and content creators follow accessibility standards, everyone can access the information. Creating accessible documents is a simple process when you have the right tools, but not all state employees understood their roles in accessibility.

To help employees understand the importance of accessibility, their role, and how to create accessible documents, MN.IT assembled a marketing campaign. During last year's Global Accessibility Awareness Day (on every third Thursday of May), accessibility experts staffed information tables at several state agencies. Employees had an opportunity to have accessibility questions answered and pick up some tips on how to make accessible documents in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, and Adobe PDF.

Since creating the cards, there has been demand for them from state employees, private organizations and other states. Many want to use or replicate the helpful tips and simple design.
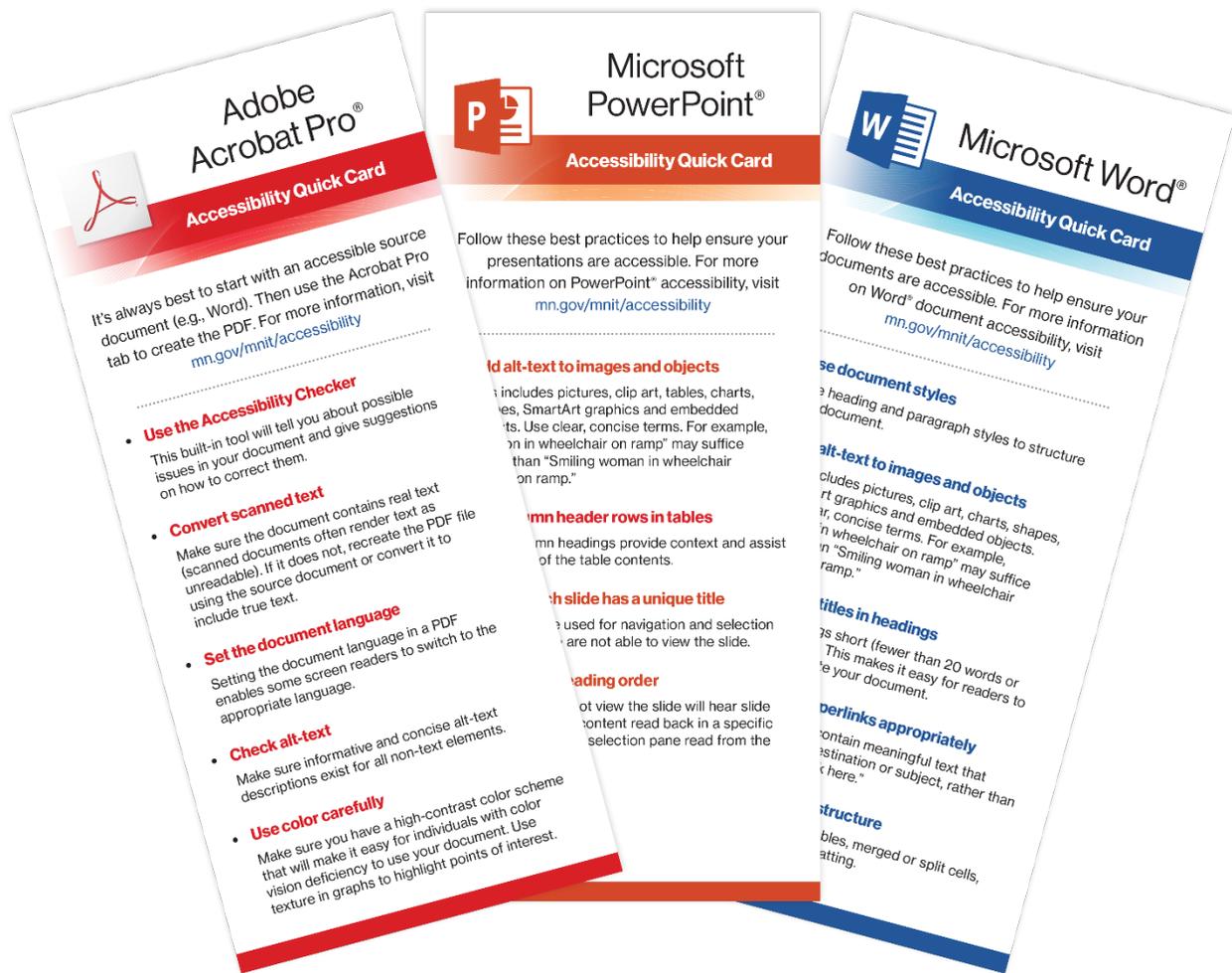
Concept

Accessibility is a fairly new concept for most state employees. Many have never needed to create an accessible document. Now that the laws have changed to assure everyone can read the documents the state publishes, state employees need to learn how to perform this task.

In January 2015, MN.IT created a marketing campaign to help employees understand what accessibility is and how to perform the steps to make a document accessible. As part of the campaign, MN.IT designed accessibility tip cards that explained how different documents could be created so everyone can read them.

The concept of the tip cards was two-fold: provide a step-by-step checklist of things needed to create an accessible document, and provide a visual reminder that documents need to be created with accessibility in mind.

The cards were unveiled during a celebration of Global Accessibility Awareness Day (the third Thursday of May), which included several activities:

- Pre-event, event-day and post-event stories

- Flyers posted around the capitol complex to invite employees to the event

- Tables at different state agencies with accessibility experts on the day of the event

- An accessibility challenge to show how some people with disabilities navigate through a document or website

A team developed the content, then a staff designer developed the visual concept and design. The cards were printed and laminated through a local vendor at a cost of about 18 cents per piece. The cards were laminated so they would be used without concern of damage; they were hole-punched so they could be pinned up or put on a key ring to keep on-hand near an employee's desk to encourage use.

The team also posted the cards online in a tagged, accessible PDF format for easy download. The more this information is made available to employees, the more documents will be created in an accessible way that is beneficial to all Minnesota citizens.

The series of quick tip cards included:

- Microsoft Word quick card: http://mn.gov/mnit/assets/AccessibilityQuickCard-Word_tcm38-62118.pdf
- Microsoft PowerPoint quick card: http://mn.gov/mnit/assets/AccessibilityQuickCard-PPT_tcm38-61574.pdf
- Microsoft Excel quick card: http://mn.gov/mnit/assets/AccessibilityQuickCard-Excel_tcm38-61932.pdf
- Adobe PDF quick card: http://mn.gov/mnit/assets/AccessibilityQuickCardPDF_tcm38-61717.pdf

Significance

In August 2014, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton signed Executive Order 14-14, providing for increased state employment of individuals with disabilities. The tip cards support the governor's executive order by teaching state employees how to create an environment where all employees can exchange information between themselves and with citizens.

Impact

On Global Accessibility Awareness Day 2015 alone, nearly 6,600 cards were distributed. Throughout the year, MN.IT provided cards upon request, as well as at

meetings and presentations, which resulted in distributing an additional 800+ cards.The cards have been so successful that other states and entities have asked for copies. Some comments include:

> *I have given the tip cards out to the directors and senior staff here at MMB. Everyone liked them with the result being that I have been asked to provide them to all MMB employees. We will provide them to all employees when we have our upcoming "accessibility policy roll-out" day.* **- Accessibility Coordinator at Minnesota Management**

> *Thank you to MN IT Accessibility Department for developing the accessibility quick cards. They are a great resource that I have shared in trainings throughout the region. People love the clear and easy to understand tips to make electronic resources more usable.* **- Janet Peters, Great Lakes ADA Center**