



Washington State

Enterprise Accessibility Initiative: Advancing Digital Access Across Washington State

CATEGORY: Digital Experience: Enterprise Solutions

PROJECT TIMELINE: October 2025 - Current

Submitted by:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the U.S. Department of Justice finalized new ADA Title II accessibility requirements, Washington state agencies faced a significant challenge: ensuring government websites and digital services complied with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards by April 2026.

Many agencies lacked the internal capacity, tools, and expertise needed to identify and remediate accessibility barriers across complex web environments. Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech) recognized that accessibility compliance could not be solved agency by agency. It required an enterprise approach.

Beginning in October 2025, WaTech's Web Team launched a statewide accessibility initiative using Siteimprove to scan, assess, prioritize, and remediate accessibility barriers across agency websites. WaTech created a shared accessibility service that centralized technology, expertise, and remediation support to help agencies move faster, reduce costs, and improve compliance readiness statewide.

To date, 91 state agency websites have been scanned, including agencies outside WaTech's direct customer base. Approximately 75% of WaTech-supported websites improved to between 90% and 100% accessibility compliance levels. WaTech absorbed the cost of the enterprise platform and invested more than 500 staff hours supporting statewide remediation efforts.

The initiative created more than a compliance program. It established a scalable statewide framework for improving digital accessibility, reducing barriers for residents with disabilities, and modernizing how Washington delivers digital government services.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

What problem or opportunity does the project address?

Washington residents increasingly rely on digital government services to access benefits, licensing, healthcare information, permits, emergency updates, and public resources. Yet many government websites still contain accessibility barriers that prevent residents with disabilities from fully accessing those services independently.

The challenge became urgent following the [Department of Justice updated ADA Title II requirements](#), mandating that state and local governments comply with WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standards by April 2026.

For many agencies, compliance presented a major operational challenge. Websites have evolved over years across multiple platforms and content management systems. Many agencies lacked the staff capacity and technical expertise needed to assess and remediate accessibility barriers at scale.

Without a coordinated strategy, agencies faced:

- Increased legal and compliance risk
- Duplicated costs and fragmented remediation efforts
- Inconsistent accessibility standards statewide
- Continued barriers for residents accessing government services online

WaTech recognized an opportunity to create a centralized enterprise solution that would help agencies meet federal requirements while improving digital access statewide.

Why does it matter?

For residents who rely on screen readers, keyboard navigation, or other assistive technologies, inaccessible websites can block access to public information, services, forms, and benefits. As more government services move online, accessibility directly impacts whether residents can participate fully and independently in civic life.

Accessibility is fundamental to equitable digital government.

WaTech approached accessibility as both a compliance issue and a customer experience issue.

Rather than requiring agencies to independently procure accessibility tools and build separate remediation programs, WaTech centralized the effort through a shared enterprise model. **The agency absorbed the costs of the Siteimprove platform and invested more than 500 staff hours supporting agencies ahead of the federal deadline.**

This approach:

- Reduced duplication across state government
- Accelerated compliance readiness
- Lowered costs for agencies
- Standardized accessibility practices
- Improved statewide digital service delivery

By centralizing expertise and support, Washington created a more efficient and scalable approach to meeting federal accessibility requirements.

What makes it different?

WaTech treated accessibility as a statewide digital service challenge rather than a collection of isolated compliance projects. The agency combined centralized tooling, enterprise governance, shared expertise, and hands-on remediation support into a coordinated statewide initiative.

Most accessibility efforts occur agency by agency. Washington created an enterprise-scale model.

Beginning in October 2025, WaTech deployed Siteimprove to scan agency websites and identify common accessibility barriers affecting assistive technologies. WaTech's Web Team then worked directly with agencies to remediate issues, prioritize fixes, and improve accessibility performance.

The initiative extended beyond WaTech-supported agencies. In total, 91 agency websites were scanned, including 13 agencies outside WaTech's direct customer base.

Most importantly, Washington shifted accessibility from a reactive compliance effort to a coordinated statewide operational practice.

What makes it universal?

Washington's approach addresses universal priorities shared across states, including:

- ADA Title II compliance
- Digital equity and inclusion
- Customer experience modernization

Every state government is facing the same challenge: how to modernize digital services while meeting new federal accessibility requirements.

- Enterprise governance
- Shared technology services
- Cost efficiency and operational scalability

The initiative aligns directly with State CIO priorities focused on digital government, accessibility, customer experience, and enterprise service delivery.

Most importantly, the project demonstrates a scalable model other states can replicate to reduce agency burden while improving accessibility outcomes statewide.

IMPLEMENTATION

What was the roadmap?

WaTech aligned the initiative with its broader enterprise digital experience strategy focused on accessibility, consistency, and resident-centered government services.

The roadmap included four phases:

Phase 1: Enterprise Assessment

WaTech deployed Siteimprove to scan agency websites and establish a statewide accessibility baseline.

Phase 2: Prioritized Remediation

WaTech's Web Team corrected code and configuration issues directly while providing agencies with detailed remediation reports for content-related fixes.

Phase 3: Continuous Monitoring

WaTech established ongoing monitoring and reporting practices to track progress and identify emerging accessibility issues over time.

Phase 4: Enterprise Service Evaluation

WaTech began evaluating Siteimprove as a long-term enterprise accessibility service available statewide.

WaTech prioritized rapid statewide assessment first, followed by targeted remediation and long-term governance.

Success was measured through:

- Increased accessibility compliance scores
- Reduced critical accessibility barriers
- Expanded statewide participation
- Improved readiness for federal deadlines

Who was involved?

The initiative was led by WaTech's Web Team under the leadership of Chief Digital Experience Officer Wendy Wickstrom and Web & User Experience Manager Dan Heisel.

Key partners included:

"This work is not just about compliance. It's about access. For people with disabilities, inaccessible websites can block access to public information, critical services and benefits that others can use freely."

Wendy Wickstrom
Chief Digital Experience Officer

- State agency web teams
- Communications staff
- Content owners
- Digital service leaders
- Accessibility stakeholders across government

WaTech built buy-in by framing accessibility as both a compliance requirement and a resident access issue.

The team worked collaboratively with agencies through:

- Sharing accessibility reports
- Providing remediation guidance
- Supporting technical fixes
- Communicating federal requirements and timelines
- Helping agencies prioritize high-impact improvements

This collaborative enterprise approach accelerated adoption and strengthened accessibility awareness statewide.

How did you do it?

WaTech deployed Siteimprove as an enterprise accessibility platform capable of scanning and monitoring websites across state government.

The platform identified accessibility barriers affecting residents who rely on assistive technologies. WaTech's Web Team then:

- Remediated technical issues directly
- Prioritized fixes based on impact
- Shared actionable reports with agencies
- Tracked improvements over time
- Provided ongoing consultation and support

The centralized model allowed agencies to benefit from shared expertise, enterprise oversight, and standardized accessibility measurement without independently procuring tools or building separate remediation programs.

The technology mattered because it enabled scalable statewide visibility into accessibility performance and created a repeatable framework for continuous improvement.

IMPACT

What did the project make better?

The initiative significantly improved Washington's statewide readiness for federal accessibility compliance while reducing barriers to digital government services.

Before the initiative:

- Agencies worked independently with inconsistent accessibility practices.

- Many websites lacked visibility into accessibility barriers.
- Accessibility remediation was reactive and fragmented.
- Compliance readiness varied significantly statewide.

After implementation:

- 91 agency websites were assessed through a single enterprise effort.
- Agencies gained centralized expertise, reporting, and remediation support.
- Accessibility barriers were identified and prioritized systematically.
- Approximately 75% of WaTech-supported websites improved to between 90% and 100% compliance levels.
- Residents experienced more accessible digital government services statewide.

The initiative transformed accessibility from an agency-by-agency compliance challenge into a coordinated statewide digital service strategy.

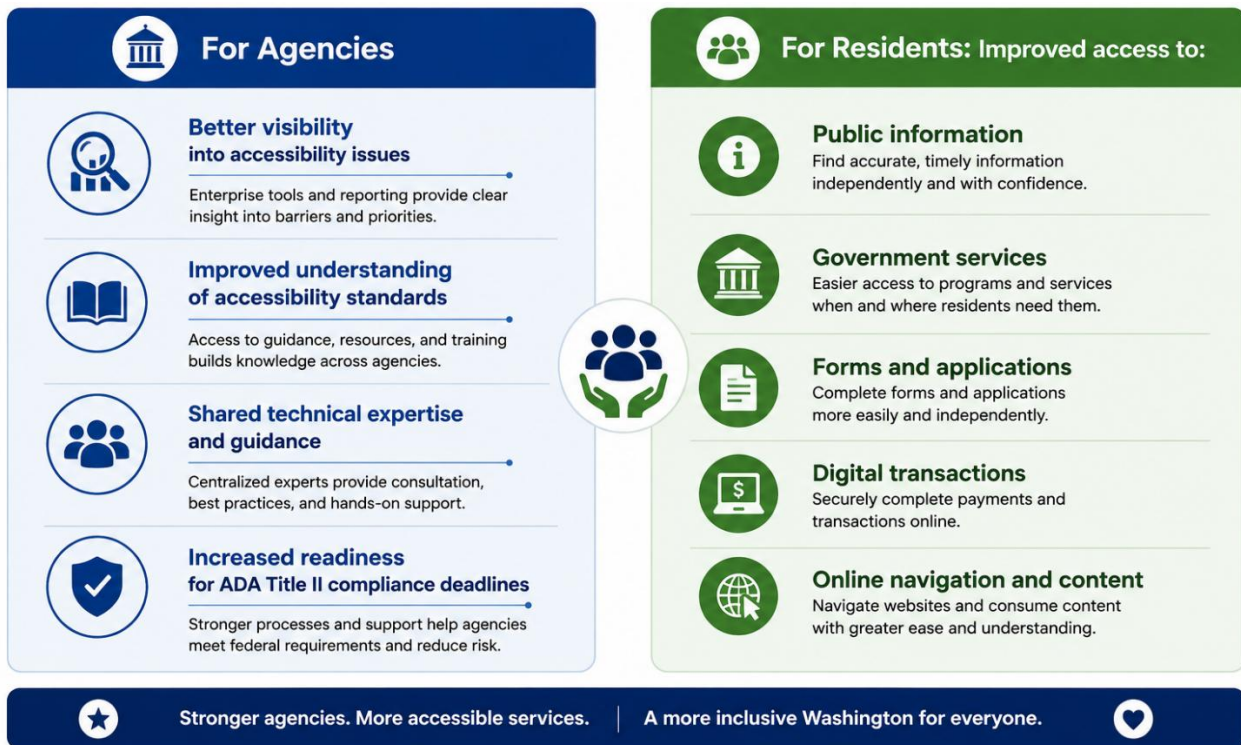
How do you know?

The project produced measurable statewide improvements in accessibility readiness and remediation progress.

Quantitative Results



Qualitative Results



What now?

WaTech is exploring how Siteimprove can evolve into a permanent enterprise accessibility service for Washington state agencies.

Future plans include:

- Expanding continuous monitoring statewide
- Strengthening accessibility governance practices
- Increasing agency training and support
- Sustaining long-term compliance readiness
- Embedding accessibility into future digital service delivery standards

The initiative is worthy of continued investment because accessibility is not a one-time project. It is an ongoing commitment to ensuring every resident can fully access government services in an increasingly digital world.

CONCLUSION

Washington's enterprise accessibility initiative proved that compliance can drive transformation. By centralizing tools, expertise, and support, WaTech helped agencies move faster, reduce risk, and improve digital access for residents statewide.

The result is more than improved compliance scores. Washington created a scalable model for delivering more accessible, equitable, and resident-centered digital government services statewide.