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Tips for Creating Accessible Materials

RESOURCES

Text

- Place text over a solid background (not over an image or a patterned or transparent background)
- Use sans serif font with hefty weight that provides good contrast with the background. Note that Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Tahoma, Times New Roman, and Verdana are considered accessible fonts.
- Select a text colour that provides high contrast with the background (e.g., do not use yellow text on a white background)
- Do not use underline to emphasize text; underline should be used for hyperlinks only
- For a PowerPoint presentation, use at least 18 pt text
- Avoid using images of text; if an image of text must be used, ensure there is an alternative text format available

Lists

- Use the applicant's built-in tools for creating bullet lists and numbered lists
- Use a bullet (unordered) list when the order of the listed items does not matter
- Use a numbered (ordered) list when the order of the listed items is important and should be read in a particular order (e.g., instructions)

Headings

- Use headings to organize content; each heading should describe the content that follows the heading
- Apply headings using the built-in styles in the application you are using (e.g., MS Word)
- Use the Heading 1 just once; this heading should describe what the document/page is about
- Apply heading levels in a way that creates a logical hierarchy from the top down
- Do not skip heading levels
- Headings should not be applied simply to change the size or appearance of a block of text

Use of Colour

- Do not use colour as the only way of differentiating information
- Use sufficient colour contrast between the text and the background
- Do not use yellow as a colour for text that is placed on a white background

Links

- Use concise link text that describes the destination of the link – do not write "click here" as the link text

- For external links, let the user know that the link opens in a new window
- Specify the format of the destination of the link (e.g., [PDF], [website], etc.)

Tables

- Use tables to display information that is suitable for presenting in rows and columns
- Designate table row and column headers
- Include a caption
- Do not leave any table cells empty

Images

- Include alternative text for images that convey meaning
- For decorative images, indicate this in the image alt text
- Describe complex images in surrounding text or include a long description of the image

Multimedia

- Provide closed captions for multimedia, wherever copyright allows, and correct errors in audio-generated captions
- Provide transcripts for multimedia, wherever copyright allows, and correct errors in audio-generated transcripts
- Provide a descriptive video option or another alternative format to allow those who cannot see the video display to know who and what is being shown
- Allow the user to control multimedia features (e.g., captions, when and how fast to play a video)
- Do not use effects (e.g., flashes, motion) that can provoke unwanted physical reactions such as seizures or nausea

Navigation and Design

- If a built-in accessibility checker is available in the application you are using to create your file, use it to identify and correct accessibility issues
- Ensure that users can operate any interactive elements by keyboard alone (e.g., selecting a response option on a survey)
- Reduce cognitive overload by 'chunking' information into sections, with appropriate headings
- When creating bulleted lists and numbered lists, use your application's built-in tools to create these lists
- Allow users to control functionality of multimedia wherever possible (e.g., ability to turn on/off closed captions; start, stop, adjust the speed; pause a video)