



State of Maine
Standing Accessibility Committee
2003 Annual Report

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of why accessible technology is important to the State of Maine, as well as to report on accomplishments of the Accessibility Committee during this past year and initiatives planned for the upcoming year.

Also in this document are some frequently asked questions that highlight current resources available within state government in the area of accessibility. These FAQ's highlight the information the Committee has pulled together to date in order to provide "one stop shopping" for individuals and agencies who need information or assistance in this area.

Should you have any questions and/or comments on this report, please communicate them to Kathy Record in the Office of the CIO. (kathy.record@maine.gov or 624-7573)

The Committee wishes to thank those who have served as full time members and will be moving into advisory capacities in the upcoming year.

Richard B. Thompson, Chief Information Officer

Gil Whitmore, Department of Education

Laurie Wills, Department of Administrative and Financial Services

Betty Lamoreau, Division of Purchases

Jean Arbour, Division of Purchases

Mary K. Silva, Office of the CIO

We thank you for all the time and effort during the years you participated on the Committee and we look forward to the opportunity to continue to benefit from your expertise in the area of accessible technology.

Table of Contents

What is Information Technology Accessibility?	1
Why is Information Technology Accessibility Important?	1
The Standing Accessibility Committee	3
History.....	1
Charter.....	3
Functions.....	3
Responsibilities.....	4
Committee Membership.....	5
2003 Accomplishments (by focus areas)	6
Operational Work Plan Outline for 2003-2004.....	9
Summary.....	14

What is Information Technology Accessibility?

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 defines accessible information technology in the following manner:

Information Technology Accessibility is ensuring that technology is such that individuals with disabilities have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use by those who are not individuals with disabilities.

Why is Information Technology Accessibility Important?

In 2001 it was estimated that with the aging population in the United States, 35% of our population may have some type of impairment and/or disability that would require some type of accommodation. State of Maine 2000 Census figures show that almost 30% of Maine's population was 55 or older, and this does not take into account those individuals who are dealing with physical and mental challenges.

Statistics show that a third of individuals with disabilities are underemployed and require assistance due to their unemployment or non-independent living. Costs of support (estimated to be in excess of \$200 billion dollars nationwide) can not be solely based on cost of their assistance, as we must also factor in the loss of these individuals' productivity (such as loss of tax revenues, contributions to society and creation of wealth).

President George W. Bush signing the New Freedom Initiative stated that this initiative would help Americans with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, increasing the ability of Americans with disabilities to integrate into the workforce, and promoting their increased access into daily community life.

This additional/improved access to technology and related information is critical to Maine, especially with our aging population. Accessible e-government services for our citizens means that those requiring assistance in traveling can obtain services from the State without relying upon outside intervention. Additionally, through Maine's portal, they can obtain information that may improve the quality of their lives in many areas, such as ordering large print library books through the mail, receiving air quality notices, updates on legislative issues and current events within their community, and eligibility for services and medical information, all without having to leave their homes.

Obviously, the same pertains to those with physical or mental challenges who may not be a part of our aging population. Accessible technology can allow a blind student to obtain the same data on the internet that his peers can; provide a mentally challenged individual the ability to receive information in a format that he/she can more easily filter; and provide someone with limited mobility technology that will allow them to perform the same job as fully mobile counterparts.

Eric Dibner, ADA Coordinator for the State of Maine states that “Access to electronic and information technology for employees and members of the public will increase productivity and, for people with disabilities, access is required by state and federal regulation. Each State worker is responsible for removing discriminatory practices. When we send a document attached to an email, design a web page or site, post a document on the web, or arrange the purchase of electronic equipment or software, we have a responsibility to understand and implement standards of accessibility to ensure the materials are readable by people with sensory, cognitive, and mobility impairments.” He makes it clear that accessibility is not only the right thing to do, but it’s mandated by law.

The Standing Accessibility Committee

Committee History

The Information Services Policy Board recognized the State's commitment to meeting the needs of its employees and citizens with disabilities and adopted a resolution in January 1998 that fully supported the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding reasonable accommodations in the workplace. The Policy Board authorized the establishment of a standing accessibility committee to evaluate and advise the Board regarding technological developments and products to ensure compliance with the ADA and other relevant laws. The subcommittee's charge was broadened in November 1999 and their charter outlined as follows:

Accessibility Committee Charter

- Propose and maintain standards for information technology accessibility
- Expand and maintain an evaluation methodology for current and future information technology endeavors
- Prepare periodic updates on technology, ADA compliance, and other legal requirements
- Complete an annual report on previous year's accomplishments and proposed future work plan
- Work in partnership with the Accessible Information Technology Coordinator on identifying issues and providing technical assistance and solutions

Functions of the Committee

The Committee provides oversight to chartered sub-committees and project teams that work in specific areas related to accessibility, while the Chair and Staff perform the administrative tasks related to managing the workflow of the Committee.

The Committee may establish project related work groups to address specific issues identified by the ISPB or the Committee.

The Committee is responsible for designing an ongoing process for membership recruitment, selection and decision making criteria that meet the ISPB policy mandate. The process shall include the review and approval of the ISPB.

Committee responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Evaluate current and future technology and workarounds using the testing lab and independent verification and validation.
- Facilitate accessibility demonstrations of products being considered for purchase or development by Maine State Government.
- Evaluate national consensus standards to include but not be limited to: software applications and operating systems; web-based Intranet and Internet information and applications; telecommunications products; video and multimedia products; desktop and portable computers; information, documentation and support.
- Review and stay current with standards being developed by nationally and internationally recognized public and private groups, to ensure they meet Maine's needs and provide recommendations to the ISPB.
- Maintain and monitor procurement proposal for evaluation criteria in RFPs and vendor contracts.
- Develop a process for monitoring progress toward information accessibility statewide.
- Manage, expand and update the accessibility site and links.
- Provide ongoing information on new products, techniques and other changes related to accessibility in a variety of formats, such as articles in the Maine IS Technology newsletter.
- Review and stay current with federal and other states' legislation, policies, rules and regulations.
- Review and provide ongoing lists of accessibility tools and resources.
- Arrange for and provide information technology accessibility training for State employees, vendors, developers and buyers.
- Provide technical assistance for Departments as requested.

Committee Membership

The Accessibility Committee membership shall include expertise in all of the major disability, accessibility and information technology specialty areas. Major core areas represented on the Committee should include deaf and hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired, mobility and speech impaired and cognitive considerations. Members must have a vested interest in accessibility and represent a broad spectrum of skills and knowledge including legal, policy, national perspective, human resources, purchasing and various technologies.

Roles as defined by Membership Sub-Committee*

<u>State and Community</u>	<u>Disability Seats</u>	<u>Technology Seats</u>
CIO, Staff Support	Cognitive	Assistive Technology
ISMG Representative	Hearing	Application Development
University System	Mobility	Webmaster/Designer
BIS (Central IT)	Visual	Telecommunication
Community		Hardware
Vocational Rehabilitation		

**It's understood that one member may fill more than one role on the committee.*

2004 Committee Members

Committee contact: Kathy Record, Office of the CIO, DAFS - Accessible Information Technology Coordinator for the State of Maine, Staff to the Accessibility Committee 624-7573 or kathy.record@maine.gov

Valton Wood, Bureau of Information Services, DAFS, Committee Chair

Carolyn Bebee, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, DOL

Pauline Lamontagne Esq., Department of Education

Kathleen Powers, Statewide Assistive Tech Project, MaineCITE Coordinating Center, University College, University of Maine System

Floyd White, Bureau of Information Services, DAFS

Jan DeVinney, Rehabilitation Services, Division of Deafness, DOL

2003 Accomplishments Reported by Focus Area

The Committee has documented six focus areas and identified initiatives that would support each one of those. No one area is weighted any higher than another as it is felt all are critical to the objective of equal access to information and technology.

Accountability

Ongoing monitoring and follow up when accessibility policies are breached

- The OCIO reported three clear violations of accessibility policies in the area of both web and application accessibility. They documented the specifics of each instance and then met with the agencies and responsible vendors to ensure the issues were addressed immediately.

Compliance testing of state websites

- The Committee sponsored web accessibility pilot tested sites at random during the summer of 2003 and reported back to agencies on issues their pages had. Additionally, individuals who have found problems with sites have reported them to the Office of the CIO, who then has worked with the appropriate state agencies to address and correct the issues.

Updating web accessibility standards

- The Committee chartered a sub-committee which reviewed the current policies and standards. The sub-committee first updated the Application Policy to include current technology. The Web Policy was rewritten in a new format which made it easier for webmasters to quickly identify issues, better understand the impact of them and, most importantly, how they can correct them. Both changes were approved by the ISPB in 2003. The same team drafted a letter and presentation for vendors to give them a high level overview of what IT accessibility means.

Software testing (Internal and Vendor)

- Committee members (Floyd White, Gil Whitmore and Pauline Lamontagne Esq.) have continued to provide testing of software for internal and external development groups. The effort has included testing with screen readers, voice recognition software and testing of websites for compliance.

National Policy

Communication of national efforts

- Kathy Powers continues to be the liaison between the State and national accessibility efforts. She represents Maine on accessible information technology issues to the Northeast Region ADA Technical Assistance Center, Boston MA, as well on a national work group of Information Technology and Training Technical Assistance Center (ITTATC) that identifies issues and develops resources related to accessible electronic and information technology for states and the federal government. She updates the Committee on a monthly basis, including Maine staff in efforts as appropriate. She requested Maine be a panelist on an ITTATC audio cast which will highlight progress

states have made in the area of accessibility, as well as challenges they face. The planning began for this in December of 2003 and the audio cast is currently scheduled for the end of January.

Sharing status of current private and public sector litigation

- The Committee has multiple resources for the sharing of private and public sector litigation, the most visible to the Committee being Pauline Lamontagne Esq., who is a member. Public sector litigation is highlighted in the Cabinet presentation that the CIO will bring to the Governor in the first part of 2004.

Resources & Support

Identify testing resources (software and hardware)

- Testing resources identified are still limited to staff within the Committee. It is the goal that in 2004 that through community outreach we will expand these resources.

Publish best practices on website and in MIST

- The summer intern identified best practices for the accessible design of state web sites. These practices will be reviewed by a sub-committee charged with giving final approval to all recommendations included in the report and published upon completion of this effort.

Create list of expertise in accessibility to assist as needed

- The accessibility website has continued to be updated throughout the year with additional links that provide webmasters with resources that will assist them with accessibility training and best practices. The information can be found at www.maine.gov/cio/accessibility/. Again, through outreach efforts in 2004 it's expected that this list will be expanded.

Telecommunications

- The Committee chartered a telecommunications sub-committee in the latter part of 2003. This Committee, chaired by Jan DeVinney from the Department of Labor, identified the issue of TTYs not being answered in a consistent manner within the state and took that on as their first project. After some research into the issue it was noted that much of the problem related to the fact that TTY calls were relatively infrequent in some areas, so when there was a TTY call often staff were unsure of how to answer it correctly. The Bureau of Information Services recommended that the state look into NexTalk, a product which would allow TTY calls to be received on a desktop PC, which all staff were familiar with. The sub-committee has performed a pilot to test the functionality of the product and is now moving forward with an implementation plan for 2004.

Training

Targeted product training on accessibility

- The Committee sponsored Dreamweaver training for state agencies and has worked with State Training to ensure that accessibility was highlighted during

this training. The Committee also sponsored LIFT training (a tool that assists webmasters with accessibility) which included purchasing the software for those agencies who participated.

Accessibility awareness in mandatory management training

- Accessibility awareness training was presented to State of Maine business managers at the Maine Technology Conference in the summer of 2003. We have also incorporated awareness training into Maine Management System's training program.

Accessible web design

- Several training opportunities were provided during the summer of 2003 through the summer web accessibility pilot. While it was originally planned for only those participating in the pilot, it was then opened to others who didn't have the time to commit to the full pilot, but could benefit from individual sessions.

Visibility and Awareness

State of Maine accessibility website

- The website www.maine.gov/cio/accessibility has had additional training links posted this year. The Committee continues to encourage individuals to take advantage of free on line training, especially in the area of web accessibility.

Annual report on accessibility to Cabinet

- The presentation to the cabinet has been prepared and will be presented in late January or early February by the Chief Information Officer.

Awareness Conferences/Seminars sponsored by the Committee

- Web Accessibility awareness training for business managers was presented at the 2003 Maine Technology Conference held in Augusta Maine. The focus was to demonstrate the cost when we do not make web sites accessible to all citizens.

MIST newsletter

- Several articles that focused on web accessibility were published this year. They highlighted the work planned and accomplished by the summer pilot sponsored by the Committee that gave a new tool to webmasters to assist with accessibility (LIFT); surveyed them to better understand what they saw as obstacles to their success; and worked with other states to document best practices.

CIO's monthly report to Governor includes accessibility section

- The OCIO continues to include this section in the monthly report to the Governor. The reports are published on the OCIO website, www.maine.gov/cio.

2003- 2004 Accessibility Committee Work Plan

The 2003 – 2004 work plan is framed around the six focus areas and required administrative functions identified by the Committee. This year each focus area was assigned a lead, who may not be charged with accomplishing the tasks in the work plan, but will monitor progress of all efforts. The areas and leads are as follows:

Accountability	Floyd White
National Policy	Kathy Powers
Resources and Support	Val Wood
Telecommunications	Jan DeVinney
Training	Laurie Wills
Visibility and Awareness	Mary K. Silva

Administration **Kathy Record**

The work plan was drafted during an all day planning session and refined during a subsequent session. Some items were identified as a low priority, but left on the plan in order to keep them visible should time allow them to be done.

The final objectives are as follows:

Accountability (Floyd White)

Complete contract/accountability subcommittee work and develop implementation plan for new procedures. This sub-committee has drafted additional documentation that will be provided to vendors when bidding on technology contracts to ensure they understand Maine’s policies and standards. One issue that needs to be highlighted to vendors that accessibility is not achieved if we do not have usability.

Establish a web sub-committee. The Committee hired an intern during the summer of 2002 to review web accessibility in the State of Maine. The deliverable was a report where she had documented her findings and made recommendations. This year the Committee will charter a web sub-committee to review and implements these recommendations as appropriate.

Publish a summary of lawsuits to show the cost to comply vs. the cost of non-compliance. This effort will be to demonstrate to those responsible for compliance to the accessibility policies the consequences other states have faced for failure to provide equal access to technology.

Sponsor a State of Maine Best of the Web accessibility competition. In order to recognize those who have worked very hard to bring their web sites into compliance, the Committee, with the support of the Commissioner of DAFS, would like to sponsor a contest for state webmasters. It’s hoped that this type of positive recognition will encourage all webmasters to strive to be number one.

Publish article recognizing efforts by those who participated in the summer web pilot program. This is another effort the Committee feels is important in order to

provide positive feedback for those who have put out extra effort to improve the accessibility of their sites.

National Policy (Kathy Powers)

Increase Maine attendance and visibility at national accessibility events. The Committee recognizes that national conferences on accessibility are valuable ways for Maine staff to learn of other efforts, as well as promote progress that Maine has achieved. This year the Committee will work to increase the number of events Maine attends, as well as the number of individuals who get the opportunities to attend and/or participate. Additionally, the Committee will require those attending to report out on what they were able to gain from their attendance. Two opportunities already identified are a National web cast in Washington DC in December and the International Assistive Technology Conference in LA in March.

Draft articles on a quarterly basis on what other states are doing in the area of accessibility and publish them in existing state newsletters. While this was identified as a low priority item, the Committee felt if resources could be identified to take on this task it would be education for state employees to be able to hear about other state's efforts in this area.

Resources and Support

Determine how best to get dedicated resources to meet objectives in the 2003-2004 Work Plan. The Committee has been challenged with getting dedicated resources to assist with initiatives to improve the accessibility of IT throughout the state. It was agreed that the Committee will look at contracting out some work and/or pursue opportunities for interns that can assist with work over school breaks.

Telecommunications

The goal of the full committee is to have consistent/reliable methods of communication for the deaf and hard of hearing in State Government. The Telecommunications Sub-Committee has determined that NexTalk will provide one solution to meeting the goal given the number of TTY calls that currently go unanswered. By July of 2004 the State of Maine will have purchased NexTalk and the Committee will have developed an implementation plan.

Training (Laurie Wills)

Charter a training sub-committee. The Committee will charter a training sub-committee, with representation from state training organizations, to work all the objectives within the training focus area.

We must identify target audiences for specific training opportunities, and work to integrate accessibility training into all technology training offered. The Committee recognizes that with time a premium for all employees; accessibility training must be relative to an individual's position and responsibilities so it's important that we identify training opportunities this year and who the audience is we need to reach. We also feel it's important to work with the training organizations within state government to ensure that all technology training includes accessibility.

Review the feasibility of developing individual accessibility training modules that would be scheduled by State Training.

Visibility and Awareness (Mary K. Silva)

Involve state business partners in accessibility efforts. This task highlights the overarching objective of the Committee to integrate accessibility awareness into our everyday business processes and practices. Making outside contractors aware of our accessibility policies even before they may actually win a contract will ensure that expectations are set before any work is actually begun.

Develop best practices web sites. We must provide our webmasters with information on resources that will assist them in creating accessible websites. We currently have resources posted, but this year we plan on getting out to speak more often to the webmasters to remind them of what is available and find out if we may wish to augment what is already available.

CIO to do Cabinet presentation on Accessibility. This presentation will be a demonstration of what IT accessibility actually means and the impact when an application and/or website is not accessible. The goal is to educate those at the highest levels about this most important endeavor.

Accessibility presentations at Bureau Director's meetings. The Committee will conduct accessibility presentations at senior management levels throughout state government with the goal being education of those in senior management positions.

National recognition of individuals/organizations who lead the way for accessible technology. Nationally there has been a push to recognize accessibility efforts. The Committee will look to give Maine visibility by submitting efforts where appropriate demonstrating Maine's commitment and progress in this area.

Administration (Kathy Record)

Provide administrative support as required to full Accessibility Committee.

Ongoing Membership Sub-committee work. Membership committee responsibilities go beyond the scope of ensuring members meet all of the seat requirements developed by the Committee. They have also been working on ideas of how best to provide outreach to disability advocates and communities and this work needs to continue throughout the year.

Draft annual accessibility report in December of 2004.

Frequently Asked Questions:

If I have a question about accessible technology but am not sure who can assist me, who should I call?

If you're not sure of who can provide you with the resources you require start by contacting Kathy Record (kathy.record@maine.gov or 624-7573) in The Office of the Chief Information Officer. As staff for the Accessibility Committee, she can provide you with the assistance you need.

When does the Accessibility Committee meet, and can anyone review their minutes?

They meet the 3rd Monday of every month and all notes are posted on the website: <http://www.state.me.us/cio/accessibility> *(This time is subject to change. Please contact Kathy Record if you plan on attending a meeting.)*

What is the best resource to help me understand the requirements of Section 508?

While there are numerous resources to on this topic, the Department of Justice website provides an excellent overview.

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/508/508home.html>

How do I find out the schedule of training sponsored by the accessibility committee?

There are multiple ways to get this information:

The accessibility website <http://www.maine.gov/cio/accessibility/>

Contact Kathy Record in the Office of the Chief Information Officer (624-7574 – kathy.record@maine.gov who serves as staff for the Committee.

Check with your agency technology officer as training notices are often sent to the ISMG membership.

I need training on making my web site accessible; where would I begin to look for resources?

You can begin by going to the accessibility website training link at:

<http://www.maine.gov/cio/accessibility/training.html>



Summary

The Accessibility Committee identified their overarching objective this year was to integrate accessibility into our everyday business processes and practices. It's recognized that with ongoing budget constraints, many involved with deploying technology simply do not have time to take on any additional workload. That fact makes this effort even more critical because when accessibility is simply a part of our regular business processes, it does *not* mean more work, it simply means we do it right the first time.

We will continue to move forward with the idea that through education and example, we will build our culture such that accessibility is no longer a mandate, but simply part of how Maine does business.

Maine: The Way Life Should Be

STATE OF MAINE STANDING ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE
STAFF: KATHY RECORD
624-7573
KATHY.RECORD@MAINE.GOV