Summary: Office of Accessibility 2019 Strategic Plan

This is a summary of the Office of Accessibility five-year plan from November 2018.

Aligns with state priorities

The Office of Accessibility was started because of state statute 16E.03, subd. 9. Most of its funding is allocated by the Minnesota Legislature. There are two full-time employees housed in the Office of Accessibility at Minnesota IT Services (MNIT).

The plan follows the current priorities set by the legislature, Governor's office, and Minnesota IT Services. **These priorities are set because everyone should be able to use state services and opportunities. This includes people with disabilities.**

General description

The plan has specific goals. It covers all executive branch agencies, boards, and commissions. It also covers citizens.

The plan impacts:

- Statewide software and services used by all state employees and citizens
- Agency websites and digital content
- Internal programs for employees
- Documents and forms created by state employees to be used by other state employees and citizens
- Any other digital programs and content created by or for state agencies

The plan presents 15 major strategies. Each strategy has one- and five-year actions. Some require resources that are not currently available such as funding, staff, and equipment. Those actions are marked as "high risk" in the plan. Addressing these risks will be key to success.

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Key components

Some of the plan's actions overlap. For example, the following have overlapping actions:

- Action 4 (Build accessible applications and websites),
- Action 5 (Buy accessible systems and services), and
- Action 11 (Enterprise resources for testing and remediation).

Main concepts of the plan include:

1. Raise the level of responsibility of the accessibility coordinators. This will include leading agency accessibility teams.

2. Increase the number of people who know what an accessibility coordinator is and what they do. Both agency and MNIT partners should have at least one coordinator on staff.

3. Increase communication and planning between coordinators, agency leaders, and chief business technology officers (CBTOs).

4. Improve agency leaders' understanding of their accessibility risks and their options to reduce that risk.

5. Build a culture of accessibility with employees who build, buy, and maintain digital technology.

6. Provide tools and trainings for all agencies and their employees.

7. Develop practices within agencies to make sure that all digital content (such as electronic documents, web pages, SharePoint sites) are accessible.

8. Boards and commissions should have access to the same resources as the larger agencies.

9. Continuous testing and fixing of programs, apps, and documents.

10. Help more state employees understand accessibility and their shared roles in making sure state services are accessible to employees and citizens.

Success will require change in many areas, from defining accessibility coordinator jobs to how agencies buy technology. To make that change possible will require agencies to support allocation of funds, people, and other resources.

Conclusion

The accessibility law applies to all agencies. It provides agencies with a key tool to ensure that digital products and services are usable by all. Without an effective accessibility program, the state is at risk of providing content and services that are not usable by all employees and citizens. Such a situation also places the state in legal and financial jeopardy.

This plan lays out a roadmap toward an inclusive, effective, well-run state government.