



A Benchmark for Digital Accessibility in Government

What resident interactions reveal about trust, service delivery, and confidence in local government



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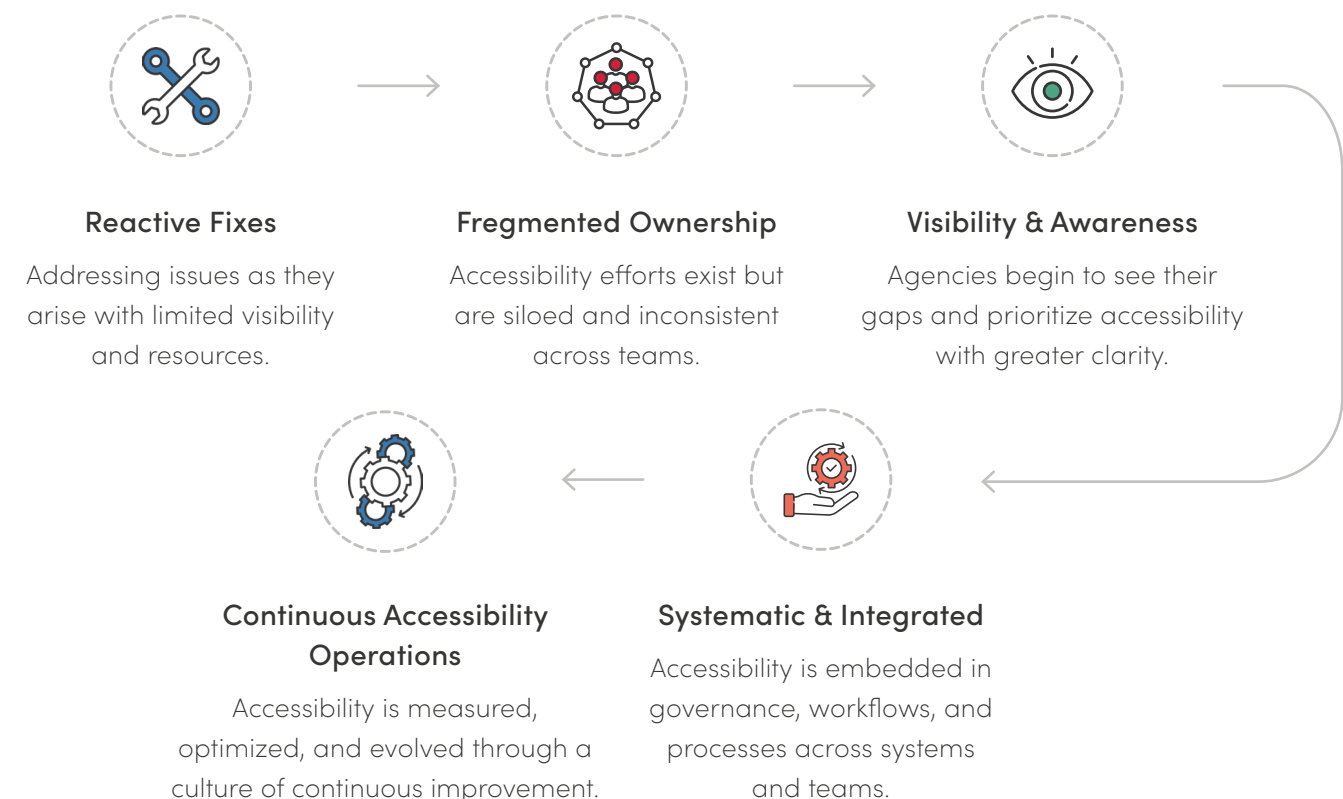
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INTRODUCTION: ACCESSIBILITY AS A MEASURE OF DIGITAL GOVERNMENT READINESS

Digital accessibility is often measured through compliance, but residents experience accessibility as service quality. Accessibility determines whether someone can find a service, read a public notice, complete a form, follow a public meeting, search for a decision, or receive information in a format they can use. For government leaders, accessibility should therefore be seen as more than a narrow web standard. It should be a measure of whether digital government can be used consistently by the people it is intended to serve.

This report uses data gathered by Granicus as part of the [2026 State of Digital Government](#) report to examine accessibility across the operating areas where residents experience government: websites, content workflows, documents, public meetings, communications, and organizational readiness. The data shows multiple signs of progress, including agencies actively reviewing accessibility, exploring PDF remediation, expanding digital communications, and improving public meeting access. It also shows that many agencies still rely on manual workflows, staff-driven review, and uneven governance practices that make accessibility harder to sustain.

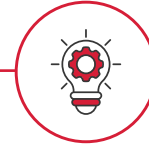
Accessibility is an Ongoing Responsibility



The report is organized around the Granicus Accessibility Maturity Model, which positions accessibility as an ongoing responsibility across systems, people, and content. Agencies move from reactive fixes and fragmented ownership toward visibility, systematic remediation, governance, workflow integration, and continuous accessibility operations. That framework matters because the benchmark findings alluded to earlier are not isolated statistics. Website testing policies, usability review schedules, content management processes, PDF remediation practices, meeting captioning, and communications reach all come together to show where agencies sit on the maturity curve.

Read through that lens, accessibility becomes a leadership discipline. The goal becomes reducing repeat issues, clarifying ownership, building accessibility into daily workflows, and improving the reliability of public services. Through various customer examples, the report shows that maturity along this path produces measurable outcomes: greater findability, stronger engagement, more transparent meetings, fewer manual workarounds, and digital services that better align with how residents need to interact with government.

The maturity model is more than a theoretical ladder. Early-stage signals appear when agencies rely on staff discovery, one-time fixes, or disconnected tools. More mature signals appear when accessibility expectations are built into publishing workflows, review schedules, meeting operations, document strategy, and audience engagement.



The report therefore uses each data point to ask a larger question: Across the public sector, is accessibility being managed as an after-the-fact obligation, or as part of how digital government is designed and delivered?



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ACCESSIBILITY IS NOW A LEADERSHIP DISCIPLINE

Internal Granicus data shows a public sector landscape in motion. Agencies increasingly recognize accessibility as a requirement for trustworthy digital government, but recognition has not yet translated into consistently governed operations. In an accessibility maturity poll, 50% of respondents placed their organizations in either “Ground Zero” or “Finding Your Footing,” while few selected the most advanced stages of staying ahead of regulation changes and public needs. In a separate readiness poll, only 9% said they were immediately ready to put accessibility solutions into action — either internally or with vendors — while 64% were either hesitant on the right path forward or new to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and unsure of plans.

The operational datasets show why that maturity gap matters. In Granicus’ Website benchmark data, 68% of respondents reported no ongoing website testing policy, and 68% reported no set usability review schedule. Website upkeep also leans heavily on staff discovery, with 76% saying accessibility is managed as issues are found by staff. In the meetings data, 68% reported no video closed captioning, while 62% of respondents with in-house video production reported doing no editing before posting. In Granicus’ communications benchmark data, 56% of respondents reported difficulty connecting with segmented audiences, and 27% selected inequitable distribution of and access to information.



Taken together, these findings point to a practical conclusion: Accessibility, as a practice, is a cross-channel operating model. Website governance, content workflows, PDF remediation, meeting accessibility, and communications reach combine to effect whether residents can access government services and information. The strongest path forward is governance-led accessibility through clear ownership, repeatable review practices, accessible content before publication, meetings that are searchable and usable, and communication strategies that reach the audiences government intends to serve.

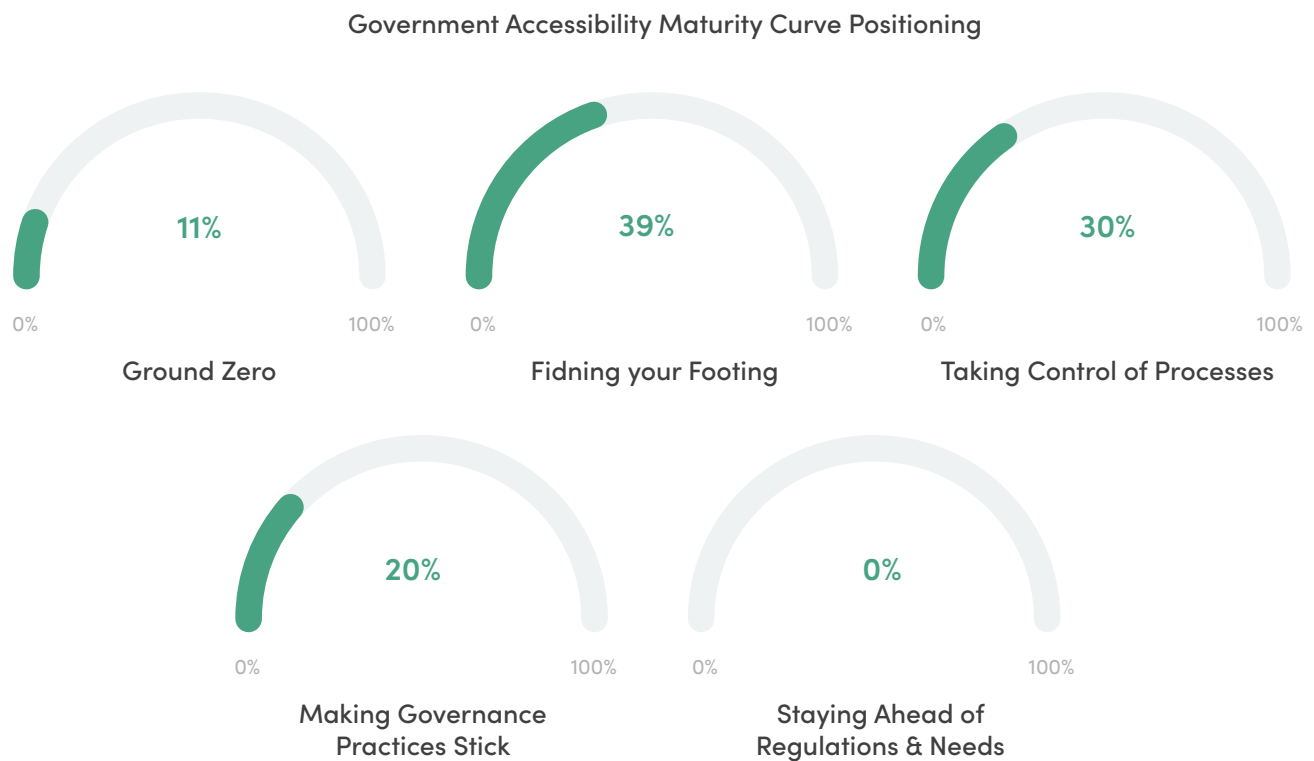
Granicus customers show that this shift produces measurable outcomes. **Gainesville, Florida**, improved website traffic, mobile traffic, findability, and WCAG AA compliance through a redesigned digital presence. **Union County, North Carolina**, reported 94% accessibility compliance alongside content governance and contributor support. **Franklin County, Ohio**, consolidated 25 websites from 14 agencies into a resident-focused digital front door, demonstrating how access improves when agency structure gives way to resident need.

The data shows organizations moving through a maturity transition. Many agencies have begun identifying issues, discussing WCAG, considering remediation tools, and improving access to information, but they still need structures that make progress repeatable. This report helps to identify where current practices are creating risk, where they can create opportunity, and the outcomes agencies can realize when accessibility becomes part of governance rather than an isolated technical task.



ACCESSIBILITY MATURITY IS BECOMING OPERATIONAL READINESS

Many agencies are moving beyond awareness but have not yet reached a state of continuous accessibility across their operations. When government practitioners were asked to place themselves on the maturity curve, 39% of respondents selected “Finding Your Footing,” 11% selected “Ground Zero,” 30% selected “Taking Control of Processes,” and 20% selected “Making Governance Practices Stick.” No respondent selected “Staying Ahead of Regulation Changes and Public Needs.” That distribution suggests agencies are working through the transition, moving from issue discovery toward governed practice, with the largest share still in stages where visibility, ownership, and repeatable processes are under construction.



The Granicus maturity framework gives those percentages meaning. Early-stage agencies often describe accessibility as patchwork fixing of what is flagged, with fragmented ownership and reliance on audits, tools, or one-time remediation. Agencies in the middle stages begin scanning, prioritizing, and fixing more systematically, but the work can remain episodic if findings do not connect to workflows. More mature agencies embed accessibility into publishing and service delivery so accessible service design becomes part of how government operates, not a separate program.

The data points toward operational readiness as the key benchmark. Agencies that remain in early stages might know where issues exist but still experience recurring problems because ownership, training, and workflow integration are incomplete. Agencies moving into stronger maturity are better positioned to reduce rework, align teams, apply accessibility standards before content reaches the public, and create more consistent resident experiences across channels. That is the difference between awareness and readiness: one identifies exposure, while the other creates the capacity to act.



Union County, North Carolina, illustrates the operational side of maturity. The county reported 94% accessibility compliance and 96% quality assurance compliance while building website governance, content guidelines, contributor resources, and an expanding digital ecosystem. That example reinforces the benchmark insight that accessibility maturity isn't just a declaration that work is finished, but the ability to manage accessibility as part of everyday digital service delivery and keep improving the systems that make access reliable.

The maturity model also helps explain why different accessibility issues appear across the sector. Website testing, PDF remediation, public meeting captions, and communications segmentation might seem like separate topics, but each show whether accessibility is visible, owned, repeatable, and embedded. A low-maturity organization may tackle each issue separately. A more mature organization connects those practices into one operating model.

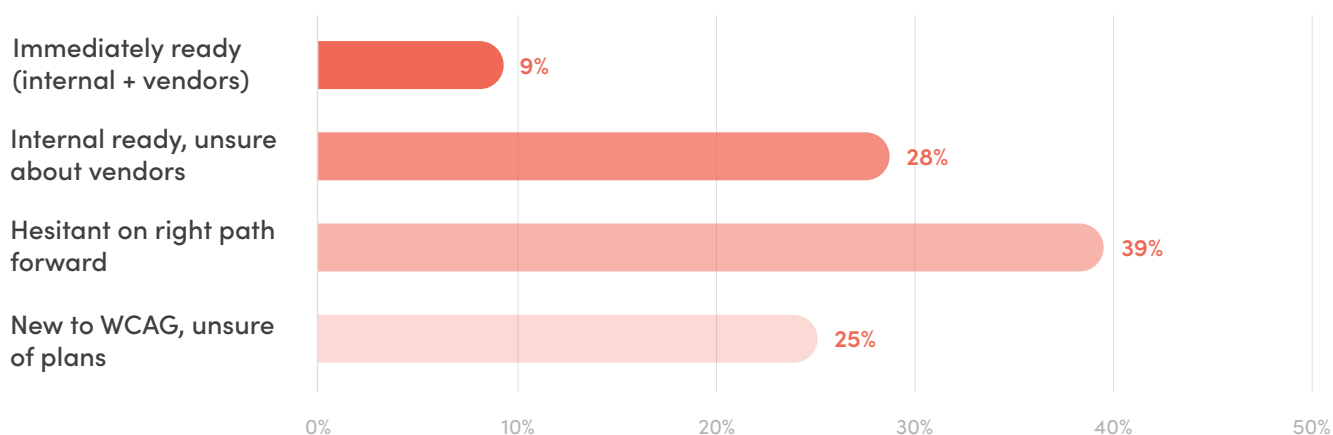
Accessibility maturity is not measured by the presence of one tool; it is measured by the organization's ability to sustain accessible service delivery across systems, people, and content.



READINESS DEPENDS ON OWNERSHIP, NOT AWARENESS ALONE

The readiness data shows that accessibility progress depends on clear ownership as much as awareness. Only 9% of respondents said they were immediately ready to action accessibility solutions both internally and with vendors. Another 28% said internal stakeholders could action solutions but were not sure about vendor contribution. Meanwhile, 39% were hesitant on the right path forward, and 25% were new to WCAG and unsure of plans. Those findings indicate that many agencies understand the importance of accessibility but need better pathways from identifying a problem to resolving it.

Government Accessibility Maturity Curve Positioning



This challenge highlights the importance of ownership and coordination across an organization. Accessibility findings rarely live in one place. Some issues are content issues that agency teams manage daily, such as text, images, documents, tables, links, and page structure. Some are implementation issues tied to design decisions, templates, page layout, contrast, navigation patterns, or site configuration. Others are product issues related to core functionality or system behavior. When these layers are not separated, teams can lose time determining who should act, duplicate effort, or allow findings to remain unresolved.

Stronger ownership leads to faster resolution and less rework. Agencies that define who owns each category of finding can turn accessibility reports into action plans. Content teams can fix what they control directly. Implementation teams can address scoped design or configuration issues. Product teams can evaluate platform-level behavior. This layered approach also clarifies vendor alignment, which the readiness data suggests is still a point of uncertainty for many respondents. A mature accessibility program identifies the issue, then defines the path to resolution.



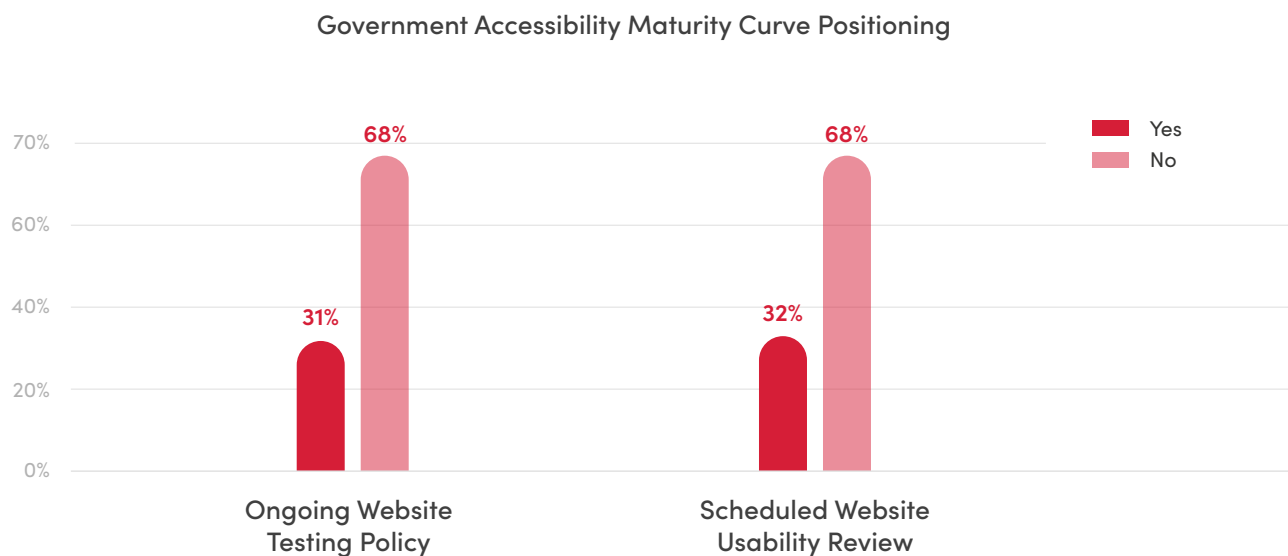
Franklin County, Ohio, shows the value of ownership and alignment at a broader scale. The county consolidated 25 websites from 14 agencies into one resident-focused digital front door, moving from agency-centered navigation to service-centered access. Digital service outcomes improve when teams align around what residents need rather than how government is organized internally, creating a more coherent experience for the public and a clearer operating model for staff.

The readiness data also shows why vendor relationships matter. A significant share of respondents expressed internal confidence but uncertainty about vendor contribution, which suggests that agencies may understand what staff can do but lack clarity on the parts of accessibility that require implementation, product, platform, or partner support. That gap can slow progress if not addressed directly. A mature operating model makes the handoff visible before work begins: what the agency can update, what requires scoped remediation, what belongs to the platform, and what must be governed to prevent the same findings from returning.



WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY REQUIRES CONTINUOUS GOVERNANCE

Website accessibility is one of the clearest indicators that many agencies need stronger governance. Only 31% of respondents reported having a policy for ongoing website testing, while 68% said they do not. Only 32% reported having a set schedule for website usability review, while 68% said they do not. These two data points show that many agencies maintain public websites without recurring structures that make accessibility and usability review part of normal operations.



The data also shows that upkeep often depends on staff discovery. Some 76% of respondents said they maintain website accessibility as issues are found by staff. Staff-driven review is a useful signal of commitment, but the operating model remains reactive when it's the primary mechanism for accessibility maintenance. A staff member has to notice the issue, know why it matters, understand what to fix, and have the time or authority to resolve it. That is not the same as a governance system designed to prevent issues from recurring.

The goal is service reliability. Ongoing testing helps agencies identify barriers before they become public service failures. Usability review helps teams understand whether residents can complete tasks, not just whether a technical requirement has been checked. Governance creates confidence because teams know what to review, when to review it, who owns remediation, and how improvements are measured over time. It also supports long-term efficiency because issues are less likely to build silently across pages, templates, and departments.



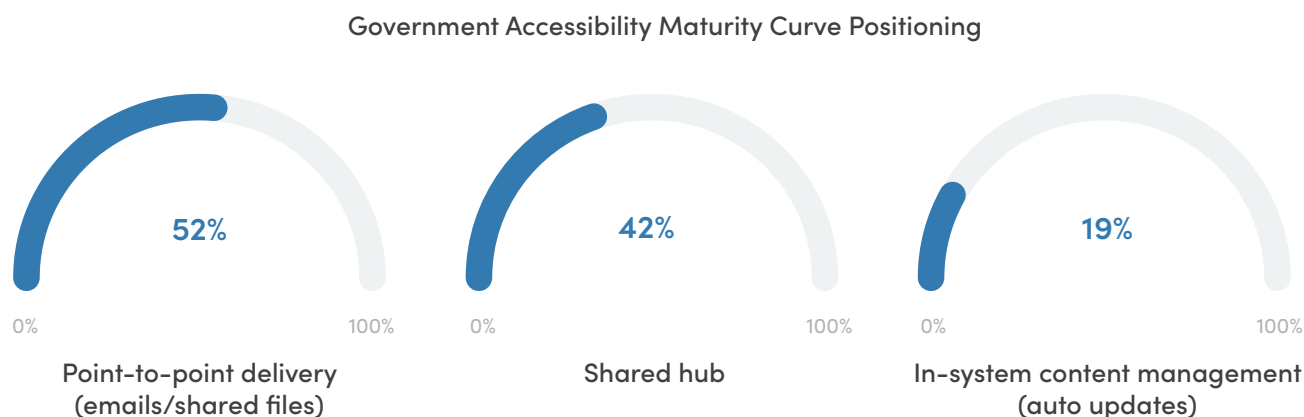
Gainesville, Florida, shows how accessibility and user experience can translate into measurable outcomes. The city redesigned its digital presence with accessibility, multilingual usability, and resident experience as goals, resulting in a 30% increase in website traffic, a 12% increase in mobile traffic, and 73% of users saying they could find information easily.

Websites are often the front door to every other digital service. A resident who cannot find a service, understand a page, use a form, or navigate on a mobile device may never reach the program designed to help them. Testing, usability review, staff training, content standards, and publishing governance work together create websites that are easier to maintain and more dependable for residents.



CONTENT WORKFLOWS CREATE ACCESSIBILITY RISK BEFORE PUBLICATION

Accessibility risk often begins before content reaches a public website. Survey data shows 52% of respondents use point-to-point delivery such as emails and shared files for cross-departmental content management. Another 42% use a shared hub. Only 19% use in-system content management that automatically updates changes. Those findings suggest that many public-facing content workflows remain manual, distributed, and difficult to govern consistently.



That matters because accessibility is shaped upstream. A webpage, PDF, public notice, form, agenda, alert, or service update might pass through multiple departments before residents see it. Accessibility checks can become inconsistent if the workflow depends on email attachments, informal review, or disconnected handoffs. Version control, plain language, heading structure, alternative text, table formatting, link quality, document remediation, and approval standards can all depend on the practices of individual contributors rather than an organization-wide process.

The outcome-driven insight is that accessibility should be built into content operations. Agencies can reduce downstream remediation by applying accessibility expectations when content is created, edited, approved, and published. That means templates, guidance, training, content governance, and publishing workflows are not secondary details. They are accessibility infrastructure. When accessibility begins at the source, agencies reduce repeat issues, make accessibility less dependent on individual memory, and make public-facing information more dependable.



Union County, North Carolina, developed website governance and content guidelines, supported contributors across departments, and reported 94% accessibility compliance. The success story also notes ongoing work to convert frequently used PDF forms into more accessible digital experiences, connecting content governance directly to accessibility outcomes and showing how content operations can become a practical lever for better service access.

This insight also connects directly to systems, people, and content. A manual workflow might appear to be a process problem, but it becomes an accessibility problem when content standards are not enforced before publication. If one department creates a PDF, another uploads it, and another owns the destination page, no single team sees the full resident experience. Stronger workflows reduce that fragmentation and help agencies identify which content should be remediated, converted, archived, rewritten, or moved into a more accessible service format before residents encounter barriers.

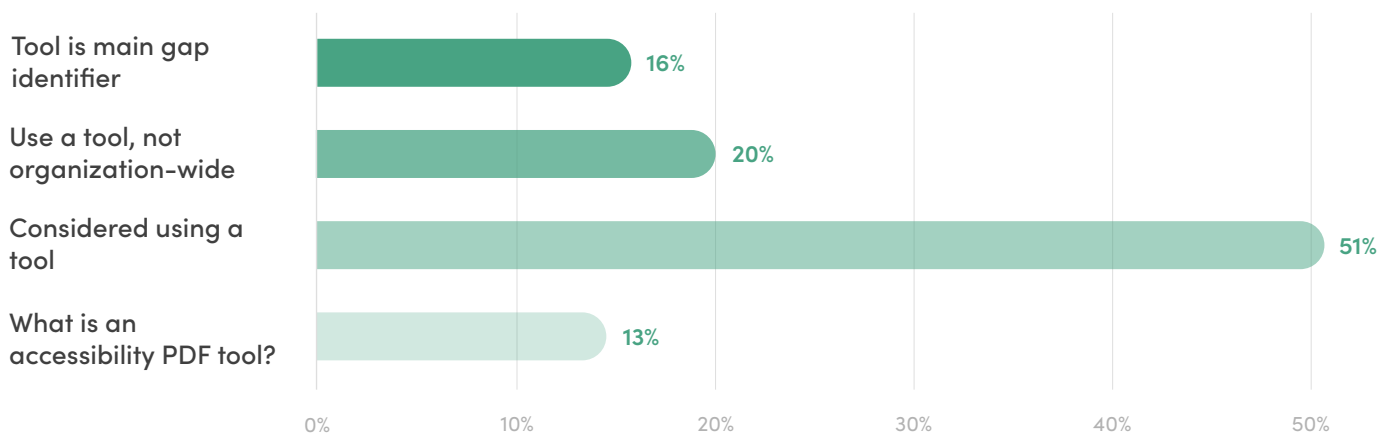
Mature agencies use workflow design to make accessible choices the default path, not a final review requirement added after staff have already invested time in the wrong format.



PDF REMEDIATION SIGNALS WHETHER ACCESSIBILITY IS EMBEDDED OR EPISODIC

Document accessibility remains central to digital service delivery because agencies rely on PDFs for policies, forms, meeting materials, public notices, applications, records, and service information. The internal PDF remediation poll shows that remediation is on the radar but not yet embedded across many organizations. Around 16% said an accessibility PDF remediation tool is their main gap identifier, and 20% said they use a tool but not across the entire organization. The largest group, 51%, said they have considered using a tool, while 13% asked what an accessibility PDF tool is.

Accessibility PDF Remediation Tool Adoption



Those results show why PDF remediation should be treated as a maturity signal. In early stages, agencies may identify and fix individual documents after an issue is flagged. In later stages, agencies begin asking whether the document should remain a PDF at all. Some may be better as structured web content; some may need to become a form, a workflow, or an archived record. The more mature question is not only how to fix a document but how to prevent inaccessible documents from becoming the default delivery model.

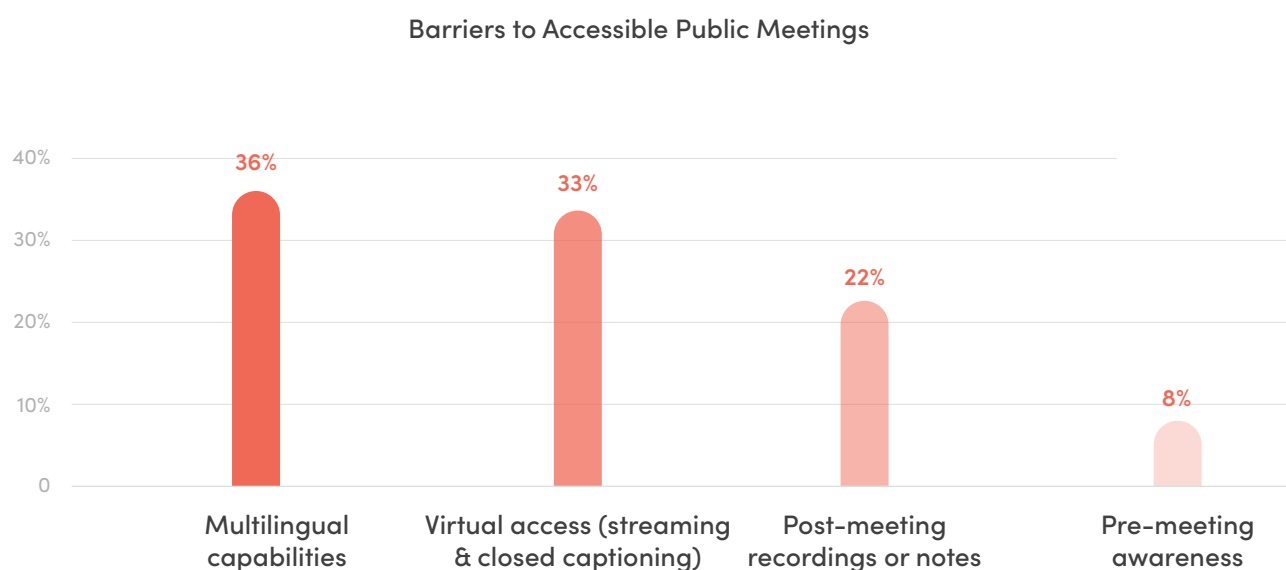
The outcome is reduced accessibility debt. Agencies that evaluate PDFs by purpose, risk, audience need, and service value can prioritize high-impact content and avoid spending resources remediating low-value files without a broader strategy. They can also create guidance for staff before new documents are published, reducing repeat work and making public information easier to maintain. This shifts document accessibility from a backlog exercise into an ongoing content governance practice.

The internal survey data is especially useful because it separates interest from operational adoption. Most respondents have considered a tool or are unfamiliar with the category, while only a smaller share uses a tool as a main gap identifier or across part of the organization. That distinction helps position document accessibility as a governance opportunity. Agencies can use remediation tools to understand the scale of the problem, but the higher-value work is deciding how documents should be created and maintained going forward, so accessibility debt does not continue to grow.



PUBLIC MEETING ACCESSIBILITY EXPANDS PARTICIPATION

Public meetings put accessibility at the center of transparency and participation. Granicus survey data shows that respondents identify multiple barriers to accessible public meetings: 36% selected multilingual capabilities, 33% selected virtual access such as video streaming and closed captioning, 22% selected access to post-meeting recordings or notes, and 8% selected pre-meeting awareness. These responses show that meeting accessibility is not limited to whether a meeting is available online but whether residents can understand it, search for it, revisit it, and follow decisions over time.



Data from the [2026 Trends in Public Meetings](#) report reinforces that point. In the closed captioning question, 68% reported no video closed captioning; only 18% reported English-only captioning, 6% reported Spanish-only captioning, and 6% reported English and Spanish captioning. Among respondents with in-house video production, 62% reported doing no editing before posting, while 12% reported adding closed captioning and 6% reported adding video transcription. These data points show that many public meeting workflows do not yet consistently include the accessibility features that make meetings easier to follow and revisit.

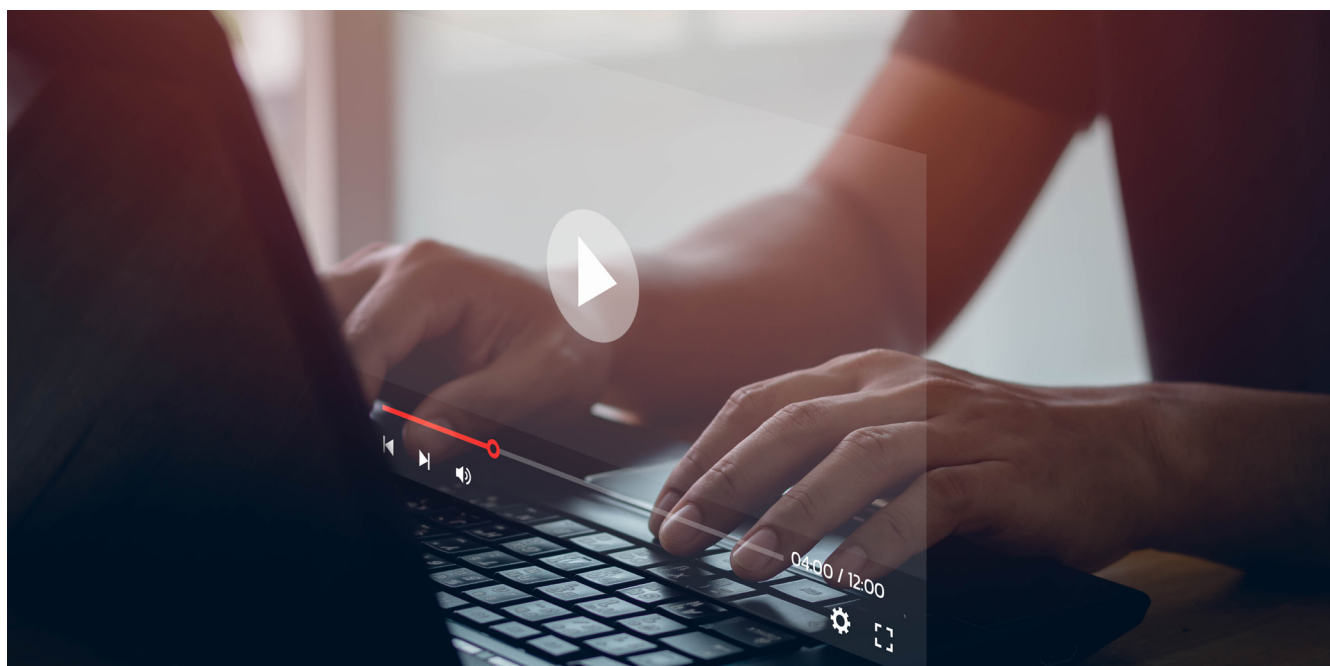
Captioning, transcription, translation, searchable recordings, agenda indexing, and posted notes determine whether residents can understand what happened and engage with decisions after the meeting ends. Public meeting accessibility is therefore a transparency issue, a participation issue, and a trust issue. When meetings are easier to search and review, residents can engage on their own schedules, staff can respond to questions with clearer records, public decisions become easier to verify, and public participation becomes meaningful.



Idaho Falls, Idaho, used Granicus meeting video, captions, Spanish translation, transcription, and searchable archives to expand public access. The city brought two years of backlogged records current and reduced the time to summarize four-hour meetings to less than 25 minutes.

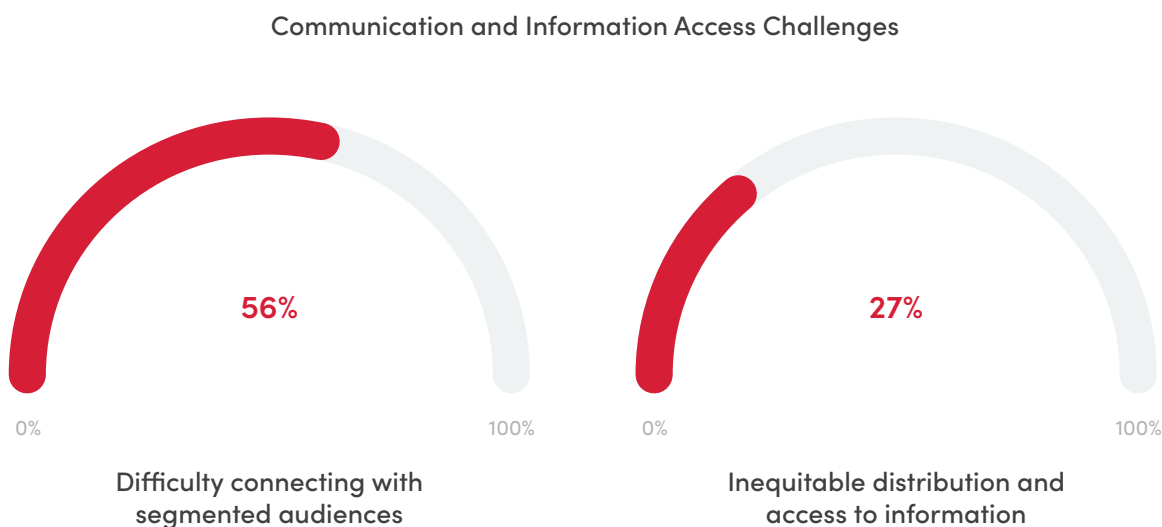
The public meeting data also shows how accessibility creates operational benefits for staff. Captions, transcripts, searchable archives, and agenda-linked recordings do more than help residents with specific access needs. They help staff respond to questions, prepare records, summarize decisions, and reduce the burden of manually reviewing hours of video. That dual value shows how accessibility improvements can expand resident participation while also making internal processes more efficient and defensible.

For agencies, this is also where accessibility becomes visible to the public. A resident may never see the internal work behind website governance or document remediation, but they do experience whether a meeting is captioned, translated, searchable, and available afterward. That makes meeting accessibility one of the strongest proof points for whether digital government is actually expanding participation.



ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION DEPENDS ON REACH AND RELEVANCE

Accessibility is often discussed through technical standards, but communications data shows that access also depends on whether information reaches the people who need it. In the communications benchmark data, 56% of respondents said they have difficulty connecting with segmented audiences. Additionally, 27% of respondents reported inequitable distribution of and access to information as a challenge.



Residents cannot act on information they do not receive, cannot find, or cannot understand in context. While this is not a direct measure of WCAG compliance, it is central to human-centered accessibility. Access begins with reach. Government communication must account for audience needs, preferred channels, language, service context, urgency, and the ability to act on information once it arrives.

The result is more equitable participation in services and decisions. When agencies improve segmentation and distribution, they reduce the risk that important information reaches only residents who are already highly connected. Better reach can support better form completion, higher meeting participation, stronger public program input, and more effective service use. In this sense, communications reach is one of the practical measures of whether accessibility is producing real-world outcomes and whether digital services are connecting with the communities they are meant to support.



Manchester, Connecticut, moved 70% of services online, reduced website bounce rate by 30%, reduced time to find information on the website by 50%, and achieved a 100x increase in engagement response for public programs, leveraging digital engagement and reach to provide easier access and more inclusive resident participation.

A technically accessible message still fails if the intended audience never sees it, does not recognize its relevance, or cannot connect it to a service action. The data points to a need for communications strategies that are targeted, measurable, and audience-aware. Segmentation, subscription management, plain language, channel selection, and feedback loops become part of accessibility maturity because they determine whether public information reaches residents in ways that support action.

This also creates a bridge between communications and every other service and function talked about in this report. Website improvements, meeting access, and document remediation all depend on residents knowing that information exists and understanding why it matters. Communications strategy turns accessible content into accessible outcomes by connecting the right information to the right audience at the right moment.



CONCLUSION: MATURE ACCESSIBILITY OPERATIONS IMPROVE DIGITAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

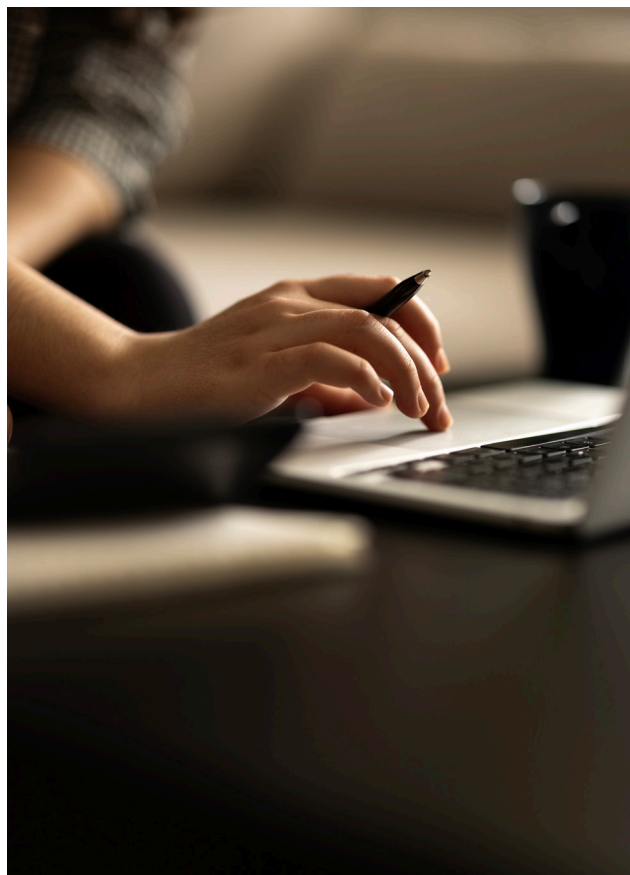
The surveys and data used to develop this benchmark show a clear leadership message: Accessibility is a measure of digital government performance. Federal and state regulations require agencies to meet technical expectations, but users are also asking them to deliver services, information, documents, meetings, and communications that can be used reliably across channels. That makes accessibility a practical test of digital maturity, operational readiness, and resident-centered service delivery.

Taken together, the data in this report shows why accessibility must move into everyday operations. It belongs in publishing workflows, website governance, public meeting production, document strategy, vendor coordination, communications planning, and continuous improvement. The goal is not only to fix what is flagged, but to reduce repeat issues, make ownership clear, improve service reliability, and strengthen trust through experiences residents can actually use. This is where accessibility becomes the performance standard for modern government.

Agencies that move accessibility into everyday operations can reduce the cost of late fixes, make staff responsibilities clearer, improve resident participation, and create public services that are easier to trust. That is why

accessibility belongs in the same conversation as digital transformation, resident experience, and service modernization.

By empowering agencies to frame accessibility as both a resident outcome and an operational discipline, residents will benefit from services and information that are easier to use, while agencies will have less conformance work and preventing accessibility debt from accumulating.



Data and insights are just the beginning. Our experienced public sector consultants, AI-powered tools, and purpose-built software help governments identify the best paths to success and act with confidence. Granicus solutions bring government organizations closer to the people they serve — driving meaningful change for communities around the globe.

WE ARE

- ✓ Trusted by more than **7,000 public sector organizations** worldwide.
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- ✓ Focused exclusively on the public sector and supported by experienced professionals who know how government works, including how to **protect sensitive data and comply with applicable regulations**.
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