



**Office of the Mayor**  
**City of Seattle**  
Bruce Harrell, Mayor

## **Executive Order 2025-03: Making Information Inclusive in Writing and Design**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Seattle (City) uses tools, like websites, forms, and flyers, to communicate information with people who live, work, or visit Seattle; and

**WHEREAS**, the City is committed to providing information in ways that are accessible and inclusive of our diverse communities, including those with limited vision or other disabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the City must follow the 2024 [Department of Justice rule](#) on accessible web sites, content, and applications by April of 2026; and

**WHEREAS**, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA are the technical standards for government web sites, content, and applications to ensure accessibility; and

**WHEREAS**, the City may need to provide information to an individual in an accessible format to comply with existing obligations under other regulatory provisions implementing Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and

**WHEREAS**, the City already requires all public-facing web content and web applications to be compliant with digital accessibility guidelines to serve people with disabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the City has made significant efforts to educate staff on the equity and legal issues surrounding digital accessibility; and

**WHEREAS**, writing in plain language makes information easier to understand, reaches more people, helps with translations, saves time and money, and improves services; and

**WHEREAS**, plain language requirements have been established at both the federal and state levels through legislation and executive orders such as:

- **U.S. Plain Writing Act of 2010**: requires federal agencies to use clear communication that the public can understand and use;
- **U.S. Executive Order 12866**: requires federal agencies to use clear language for new regulations, updating existing regulations, and developing legislative proposals;
- **U.S. Executive Order 13563**: reaffirms E.O. 12866 and reiterates that regulations are written in plain language that is accessible, consistent, and easy to understand;
- **WA Executive Order 23-02**: requires state agencies to use plain language and highlights the need for clear communication in serving a diverse and multilingual population; and

**WHEREAS**, Seattle will host hundreds of thousands of visitors in the summer of 2026 for the FIFA World Cup including many with limited English who will rely on clear or translated information to find their way, attend events, and be safe in case of emergencies; and

**WHEREAS**, using plain language makes it easier and faster to translate information and helps residents and visitors participate equally in City services, promoting equity and inclusion; and

**WHEREAS**, writing in plain language makes content more accessible to people who use assistive tools like screen readers or captioning devices, helping the City meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

**WHEREAS**, the City already requires plain language for all public-facing web content, City staff have been trained on how to create clear, inclusive content using plain language and effective content strategies; and

**WHEREAS**, clear and accessible communication is essential for ensuring that all residents, including those with limited English or limited reading skills can access and use city services effectively; and

**WHEREAS**, updating public documents to use plain language will require employee training, new resources, and the thoughtful use of technologies like readability tools and generative AI;

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor of Seattle, order the following actions to address these concerns,**

- A. The Seattle Information Technology Department (Seattle IT) will launch a Digital Accessibility Interdepartmental Team (IDT) with support from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services, and as advised by the City Attorney's Office. The IDT will begin work in January 2025 to meet Department of Justice accessibility requirements by April 2026. The IDT will include a representative from every department to attend meetings and address issues with their department's websites and web content.

The Digital Accessibility IDT will work to inventory and map responsibility for all current City websites, web applications, mobile apps, documents, images, videos, and web content to determine compliance levels. The IDT will help departments develop plans to bring their existing materials into compliance. The Seattle IT applications division will help support critical services that serve the most vulnerable populations.

The Digital Accessibility IDT will develop or procure training materials for City staff to help them understand and meet digital accessibility requirements in their work. The IDT will also assist in updating department processes to incorporate digital accessibility requirements and expectations. The IDT will help coordinate use of any vendors needed by individual departments to make most efficient use of resources.

- B. The Mayor's Office Communications Team will launch a Plain Language IDT with support from the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) and the Department of Neighborhoods, the Seattle IT Digital Engagement Team, staff with experience in plain language, and representatives from department communications staff to attend meetings and support projects. The IDT will begin work in January 2025 and develop and implement a plain language plan citywide by April 2026, in advance of FIFA World Cup events in Seattle.

The Plain Language IDT will work with OIRA and translation vendors to create plain language standards that support improved translation and interpretation. The IDT will pursue editorial assistance tools including but not limited to generative artificial intelligence, used consistently with City policy, or other editing tools to support City staff in meeting new standards.

The IDT will create internal communications resources including a SharePoint site, City writing style guide, trainings, and other education materials to facilitate compliance in future content aligned with existing digital experience requirements and resources. The IDT will develop strategies for departments to prioritize updating and simplifying existing content and create a plain language plan for the City of Seattle based on the guidelines of plainlanguage.gov and the City of Seattle Digital Style Guide.

- C. The Mayor's Innovation and Performance Team will launch a Coordinated Communications project in collaboration with Department of Neighborhoods, Mayor's Office Communications Team, and Seattle IT. The project team will conduct a review and evaluation of City digital communication and information platforms and tools to identify gaps, overlaps, and other areas for improvement. The goal of the team is to unify and improve public communications systems and tools so that everyone who lives, works in, and visits Seattle can easily access and understand City information and services.

This project will build upon the work of the Digital Accessibility IDT and Plain Language IDT, which focus on improving information in existing channels. The Coordinated Communications project will create a report with recommendations on changes to City communications channels, enterprise tools, and/or practices to help integrate new information standards with City processes. The Mayor's Office Communications Team and Seattle IT will work together to set the communications work roadmap, update standards to that roadmap, set platform technology direction and support requirements, plan corresponding budget, and coordinate departments to this plan.

Questions about the implementation of this Executive Order should be directed to Ben Dalgetty, Internal Communications Manager.

Dated this 21<sup>st</sup> day of February 2025.



Bruce A. Harrell  
Mayor of Seattle