



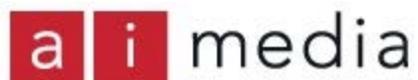
The 2017 Accessibility Conference:
**Becoming a Catalyst
for Inclusion**
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Accessibility, Compliance and Useability - eLearning in the Ontario Government

Transcript from the 2017 Accessibility Conference

Kristy Macintosh Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs, &
Thel Simpson, Ontario Ministry of Government and Community Services



Transcripts are available courtesy of [Ai-Media](#) who provided live captioning at the 2017 [Accessibility Conference](#).

Note: The following text is taken from a live transcription of the speaker's presentation and, as such, may not be wholly accurate. Please contact the speaker first before publicly attributing remarks to them based on this transcript.

THEL:

Kristy and I are going to deliver this presentation, we're going to try as much as possible to do a demonstration and to tell a story about the e-learning project that we are both involved in. Hopefully this works.

We are feeling very optimistic.

We do have one slide, including the title of our presentation and our contact information. Note that the title references the Ontario Government. Our presentation is going to be specific to work with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Our project was specific

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to our clients and stakeholders, but we have an aspiration of taking over the world.

Both of our contact information is on the slide, we are hoping that this presentation will begin the representation of this and the issues that we have been doing with the last few years. Feel free to contact one or both of us after the presentation.

Kristy Macintosh, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs:
Kristy.macintosh@ontario.ca

Thel Simpson, Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services:
thel.simpson@ontario.ca

I will say that 45 and it is a very short period of time to cram all this essential information into your head is. And for you to experience all that we want you to. Apology is in it that if we do not allow enough time for conversation. But this is also our hope.

We set this presentation up to be story based, we will probably interrupt one another so feel free to interrupt us if you have questions in real time. One of my reasons that I am holding the mike in my hand is that I can come to you because the bulk of the presentation will be Kristy talking to you.

So, I would like to tell you a little bit about the group that we worked with on this project.

The ministry of agriculture's environmental management branch has really interesting and high-quality learning education resources for clients (farmers, food processors and farm businesses). And in 2015 an opportunity came up for us to use a new methodology. But it was a little bit ground-breaking in the Ontario agriculture education process, and develop and deliver a suite of eLearning courses. The idea was pitched and it was raised by our managers and decision-makers including senior managers to pilot this idea.

So we really wanted to take the opportunity to experiment with bringing a diverse group of ministry stakeholders together around some content and technical content on based learning. So we have a group of people across the province.

Our presentation will talk about how the pilot process worked. It will cover the usability and access in all senses of the word.

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You will learn about how we delivered the learning strategy and the result of that strategy. That we hope is going to become the model in the OPS.

The strategy in broad strokes included, internal capacity building and in saying that we do not have a lots of internal capacity in the ministry. Especially not in the ability to cover accessibility. That is changing now. But it has been a really, quick and long journey the same time.

We had to develop a lots of job aids in the internal capacity, we also had to do a lot of communicating and be able to speak freely and persuasively to senior management in a fiscally restrained environment.

Some of you will understand when I say we had to continue to watch what we did and spent. Especially when dealing with the government and you're on the leading and front edge. You need to beware of how much you spend. There were lots of challenges.

Of course, we're going to talk about some of the challenges, and what we learned.

So Kristy was the lead instructional designer on this project. I came onto this project to develop an evaluation strategy and to manage the user testing which went a little sideways, but that is okay. User testing so frequently does, that is why you do it.

But it was great fast to try and reach all these processes and farmers and talk about risk management and assessment management.

The project was framed around 11 module based courses to be built in. It was designed to be an in software design, when I say 11 I should actually say that we mean 22. Since we deliver all our materials in French and English simultaneously.

Conceptually, the courses were designed to give learners important information to help them in a business operation.

They will be related to food traceability and farm to fork, so people that are interested in tracking the, the food distribution system, talking about traceability so you not talking about when we say that. And also management practices.

Clients are spread across the province. Some have a lot of staff that do not have English as the

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first language. We decided that the pilot was necessary and that in order to try to reach people who could not otherwise access it at the workplace or on their schedule, until now they could not been able to access it, so this was pretty exciting for us.

We had a lots of content in these 11 courses, so it was quite difficult to talk to subject experts to make sure it was accurate and timely. And because this job was so big, we also contracted a lot of people external to the government to build courses. Part of that was to develop and share with those vendors a very stringent development standard that reflected the best practices in education and structural design along with interactivity.

That's where we get into a lot of irony, for those of us adult educators who are committed inclusive and accessible education, we thought we had accessibility covered. But on January 1, 2016 came the compliance date for the provincial government. We were first to have the obligation to adhere to WCAG Level 2.0 AA. As of January 1, 2016 all web-based information under the ADOA had to be compliant to those guidelines. What we realised a few months before this was that our courses were not to those guidelines. We had relied on the standardised procurement language in our template that required vendor's to be AODA compliant as was written in our guidelines. But we were well behind. We had a series of challenges ahead of us.

We decided we needed to push forward with this, we wanted to meet the challenge for the client but also for making sure that the mandate and the vision that we had for this pilot was actually able to get off the ground.

We could not launch our courses even though many had been developed before January 1, 2016 until we were compliant. So we had to go back and we had to learn ourselves.

So the teachers became the learners are that was quite an interesting thing. We will talk a lot about that.

We had a lot to learn about the impact of the AODA on e-learning specifically, and we're still learning frankly. So we just want to be really clear about the fact that we have come a long way and we are very excited. We also have resources will like to share with you at the end of the presentation that will hopefully help you.

But we are continuing on this progression.

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We had to make sure as the government that we were demonstrating this practice and compliance, but we also wanted to make sure that learners have the best experience. So we had a lot to learn about digital accessibility but also about the tools that allowed us to host and deliver the training courses. We needed for example an external LMS because we did not have that technical capability.

A host that had to be compliant and available in both languages, and we had this huge learning journey and as we learned more we got more passionate about making sure this would work. One of the things that we will come back to over and over again was that one of the things we felt about and we had lots of conversations about was that this was our liability, we had the responsibility as adult educators to do the right thing in the compliant thing and the most effective thing.

So we had to not rely on our vendor is to tell us that they were making sure that they were compliant, we are to make sure of that ourselves. Kristy will talk a lot in her demo about how functionally she made that happen.

I also want to say that one of the things we had as a challenge was the financial pressures, we spent a lot of money on developing these courses in the first place. We had a series of conversations on whether or not we built from the ground up or whether we remediate them. We had to make those decisions on financial responsibility. We decided on a model that mixed internal capacity and involvement.

A couple of students also helped us, they should be here now and we'll talk to them about that later. We were able to leverage them as very great resources. We frequently have in our work unit one or two co-op students that work with us on various projects and students that we have now have been functionally making sure this works. So they get kudos for that.

I will turn it over to Kristy and she will launch into some of the technical stuff I will be watching for some questions.

Thank you.

KRISTY:

We had to step back and think about what this meant for us in e-learning in particular. It's not a

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very clear guideline. So we had to try and work through the LMS what we wanted for our courses.

We looked at the cost and the resources, the limitations and abilities that different e-learning tools that we had use and the overall needs of our clients. From that we decided to get this training out to people since possible. We really wanted to launch the pilot and decided that this was a good program to do that.

It consisted of two phases, phase 1 covers the models that were already created, the English and French courses, basically 22 courses.

We created compliant PDFs that were the equivalent of the standard versions of the courses. They contained all the content and all the videos were captioned and had all the knowledge check items and were accessible so that learners could gauge their knowledge.

These can be downloaded, printed or saved for later use.

We did make some later changes to them to make them more compliant where we could so if we could change colour of the fonts we did, but there was a challenge again of whether or not it was keyboard accessible and if it was confined to a computer.

To go on a bit of a side tangent we actually realise on moving to these PDFs that we had a broader range for this course we had one client that would go back to a group of people and would then train people, so it also worked for a lot of retraining. It worked for people in lower band with areas of Ontario, so they may not have been able to run such interactive courses of LMS.

It's very easy to print these documents out.

Phase two. I won't go into phase two write now, because were still trying to work through phase I at the moment. It's focusing on integrating courses with usability from the ground up and that's not where we thought we would be when we started these courses. We decided to have a transcript for the videos and the course, we needed all this to be compliant with the course and that was not the case.

We try to have a more integrated approach for the final product. The elements we were initially in promoting was not compliant, so we had to go out and procure or obtain another LMS that

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would allow us to alter these courses.

So I will actually move into the demo, if you would like the background and the strategy and to find out more about what we did reach out to us and we'll try to discuss as best we can.

So I'll just take a minute to go through a bit of a demo, I will do my best to explain what's on the screen as I come up, I will just try and talk through a few elements.

Although our focus is not on the LMS, I will discuss the elements so that you can get more of an understanding. You can find this through navigating the website on the screen and you're more than welcome to go and take these courses. There are currently only three courses on there at the moment as we work on making more accessible versions of these courses.

KRISTY:

(note that a live demonstration of the course host LMS begins at this point. The url is "Ag and Food Education is: <http://www.agandfoodeducation.ca/>)

When you log on you have one of two options, this will give you the accessible version or the interactive version. We're going to change the name of it to the standard version. People can choose to do either version, that's how it has been set up they can take either version and they can start one and then jump over to another, however they would like to do it.

From there they complete one or the other or both if they would like.

They can always go back to the course at a later date and take it again, however they would like to access the content.

Sorry I am just scanning my note to you, making sure I did not miss anything.

The title screen for this course is currently up on the screen, this is the standard version that was developed with the e-learning author tools this was developed using Articulate Storyline, initially Storyline one and then converted over to Storyline 2.0, there are some elements as I mentioned that are not accessible. One of the big things is a drag-and-drop item. So the line in this case has just learned about the safety hazards and what they are and why they would they want to teach this.

On the screen I have a question that is asking them to drag-and-drop an example of a hazard

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and then there is a picture with examples. Unfortunately, you cannot control this with a keyboard so it's not an accessible item regardless of what you do. I'm trying to figure out how to make an accessible drag-and-drop. At the moment this is not accessible. So at the moment it has become a multiple-choice question. And they would receive feedback straight away. Other options we did explore was to have them activate a button that would then give them a multiple-choice format, which would be keyboard accessible.

From there, we have videos also in a lot of our courses. Depending on the course some have a lot of videos others have one or two videos. Originally what we did with the videos was create a text based transcript of the video so they could read through while watching the video my but we needed to caption them because they were not fully accessible without those captions. So had one of our Co-op's caption these videos. She came back the next day with fully caption videos which was great.

So we have remediated options where we could. In designing the courses overall, we tried to really keep them clean. When we first started we had in mind what would make an accessible course and we tried to keep them clean so they were not overly cluttered on the slides and we tried to have consistent navigation. The next button is always called the next button on every single course and it's on the exact same location all the time. The resources are resourced as hotlinks. The ability to download the transcript of the course which we're now updating to be accessible on the accessible version of the course.

Some of the audios have full transcripts; we're trying to make it so that everything is transcribed.

I'm now going to jump over to the accessible version and the challenges that we worked through to create those. As well as some of the opportunities that we had for learning.

When I mention accessible or compliant I am referring to something that is compliant with the guidelines and those are outlined under the AODA so to create the template we had to adhere to certain height and coloured font.

So even if you have an accessible version of a Word document, it does not necessarily mean that it will be accessible. There is a lot of use of control things that could alter the accessibility of that. So if you try to change colours, you could have colour contrast, you need to be able to do that as being the author. The sizing of fonts, some of the context of the content. Once we

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created these courses in word we then converted them to PDF and changed some of the specifics in the tidying and a few other areas there.

Once again we worked with a great vendor to get us to understand what we needed to do to get completely compliant in that version. At that point where we done? No we were not done. We needed to step back and make sure that everything we did in that document was done correctly.

It wasn't one thing to say that it was compliant and ready to go, but we needed to test it and make sure that it was compliant. So we needed to test documents that we got back from vendors and then we needed that skill set to actually test those documents for compliance.

I'm not going to go through the extent that we did for testing, we have not actually visually documented that, but we are close to doing so. The high level testing that we went through involved three types of testing, the first was automated testing so using colour contrast checkers, then we also did manual testing and used heading structures, reading order, the layout all of those things needed to be reviewed. With and also did a review with assistive technologies.

Each document that we create is put through all three levels of testing and they are put through until they do not come back with errors. If there is an error we go back and fix it and we go back through the testing process from the start. Just in case that fix change to something else somewhere.

The good news is that after you go through this process a few times it gets easier and easier to speed up. But it did initially take a bit of time to get through those three levels.

I would like to mention that testing with a screen eater was very valuable for us. So we went out and got a version of JAWS and started doing that testing.

There are things such as heading levels, why is that important? So having JAWS we are able to see how important that is. Things like this we would not have known is not easy to compared JAWS to NVDA, but they do things very differently. So JAWS read every single entry twice if it covers two lines.

The ability to learn those types of things was very helpful.

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I will pull up an accessible version here, this is an accessible version of our e-learning course which is in the LMS. I opened this in Adobe DC and it starts with the heading of the course, a welcome to the course statement. If a learner or anyone needs assistance with it or another format, all the contact information is there.

There is a short Table of Contents so that people can jump through the documents. These are very large document depending on the course. We wanted to get to give people a way to jump through to where they were required. We also added a table of contents at the top of each module so they could jump through individual modules. Because this higher level heading structure does not give it much justice but to get a three-page table of content at the front was a bit too much.

Then we have a page to tell people how to use the document. So they understand how to use it and that they are the exact same.

It also explained that it has been tested and that it's a resource that can be printed, downloaded, saved or shared over the Internet.

The glossary is also located at the end of the document if they find a term that they are not familiar with as well as an appendix.

Then we get into all of the course content.

There was a session I was just in about people using screen readers, they use different guidelines for heading levels, and we tested with our screen readers. When we open a document we see that something is a bold within the context before and after the headings, we can jump around and figure out where we want to go, but those people using a screen reader want to be able to get a similar way to heading structure is another way they can do that.

So you need to make sure that the headings are in a meaningful structure so that people are able to jump through to places that they need. So you need to provide context.

A lot of the speakers of the last two days have discussed similar things. I will just have to go through this again.

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Don't use the click info buttons here, you need to find the more meaningful ones, such as the agricultural website for example.

For the accessible version we also had videos and different external resources. What we did for the videos is we had our co-op student caption them. In our accessible version we also have a link to the video. We found some inconsistencies in how they were embedded however. This one on YouTube actually has its own captions.

When people print this document they realise that this link was not accessible. So we also added the link so people could look it up if they needed to.

When we brought things into the accessible version they turned into multiple-choice questions for the most part, and shown on the screen at the moment is an example of a knowledge check. It's got a chunk of information upfront saying that this has three questions and each question is followed immediately after an option for the question. But mission one of three, and asked the question and gives the potential answers and then following gives the answer to the question.

They can then click through and read whether or not they were correct. And it will tell them the reasoning as to why it was a practical answer.

We did not eliminate all images or tables. I know images and tables have additional things that needed to be done to them. We did eliminate a lot of images that we did have when we were going through from the standard version to the accessible version because they were just providing visuals on the screen. They did not have any impact on the content. It really helped us to focus on what was the critical elements in what we're showing in the flowchart and images and things like that.

This looks like a watermelon, a cantaloupe? It looks like a watermelon. It shows it being dyed so that when you cut it open the dye is present. So we added some alt text to this so you can see what happens.

So when we added a table, it was not just for labelling content it was because it was needed.

All of our courses had to be reviewed for a lot of colour only references and for inconsistencies. These courses as I've mentioned have become quite technical so we have added a bit so people can understand what is coming in their cognitive area. So we had to explain it a little bit more.

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So we needed to explain how to do the activities and when there was a case study we needed to move back the content.

As we try to create the accessible versions there was a lot of challenges that we came across it was not a simple copy paste, copy paste.

One example of this was the self-assessment, people had to go through and self assess the current practices and that was not really accessible.

In the interactive version it was automated so people could answer and would automatically come back with a summary. In the PDF the assessment was not accessible. So we created it as little mini courses. We created a successful little mini version that has the automation and you get your summary at the end and you can come back to the PDF to finish your course. That's just one example of the challenges that we came to.

For the most part that's the end of the demo, we could go on for days about the stuff but we only have 45 minutes, and we want to spend some time on what we learned through our whole process.

THEL:

This has been a great acquisition of technical knowledge in order to enable the learning modules.

A lot of these things can fall under the catalyst for learning inclusion.

We had to be really strategic and careful about our language when talking to decision-makers. We had many subsets of super-secret committees to help develop these materials, we developed alliances across branches and divisions to make sure that we were penetrating into the internal groups of people that we needed in order to make us the changes that we needed to make.

So that was taking control of the process. But what it has also done is clarified our thinking in the way that our product is able to help and extend and apply and share with what we have also learnt in a way.

We had to spend a lot of time explaining to people why HTML 5 was not situationally appropriate for us. That meant that in a way, we were justifying our decision but we came to

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the decision based on a lot of research and information on audience need and on technical and operational needs as well.

So that was a bit complicated. We had to explain what e-learning was as well, so it was a challenge that surprised us. And also had to not challenge or contradict the guidelines, but try to explain our own view of why HTML 5 was not applicable fast and how and why PDF was the smarter option.

We also needed to talk to our vendors about their moral obligation and we did have lots of conversations with internal decision-makers and we had to say “no we are the government, just because it's there we don't need to sign it off, we need to make sure that it is there and it is correct and it is effective.” We needed to find the balance between doing this and being fiscally viable.

This was hard work, but we decided as a group that it was work worth doing. We believe very strongly that the learning material and the content that was developed for those learners will enrich them. It has been quite a journey, one of the things that I mentioned before is this is still a journey and we are still learning. We are training continuously. That is where we are at.

You had a couple of other points you wanted to make?

KRISTY:

Yes, there was no one way for us to do anything, we had to go to every training session and we tried to amass all of our knowledge, we needed to understand our entire learning process, it was huge for us. We spent the better part of a year tried to wrap our heads around this, and now were trying to share our experience and knowledge with others. Keep in mind that we are still learning ourselves.

So coming out of that, we have taken away a huge amount of learning. It takes a lot of work and thought when you remediate documents, it takes thought when you're looking at the word flow and the development. Things do get easier though, as we wrapped your head around things, it does get easier.

We did learn how to make things accessible and also why it is important that things be accessible. But what does it actually mean for someone that uses a screen reader or a keyboard for navigation is another thing.

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And even though this project was on e-learning and creating an accessible version we have also come up with documents and resources that we can share on how to create an accessible PowerPoint and Word document. So we have a lot of resources in a ministry and outside of our ministry, we also brought with us today a checklist is a three-page checklist on how to test your documents for accessibility. We do have online one that is also a little bit longer. So if you would like a copy of that just email us and we'll send you a digital copy.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

Thank you so much, what is the best way for us to contact you would like to be involved?

KRISTY:

Shoot me an email. We already have a list of people that are quite interested and we would love to continue building that. We would try to get some kind of working group within the broader OPS that could help us out.

THEL:

don't be shy about reaching out to us if you're not in one of the ministries. Before we go to the next question, increasing awareness in the ministry and in other ministries about requirements for external facing information, a lot of members of the government don't actually communicate with those outside of the government. We are working on sort of developing awareness about our internal obligation and what that obligation means in terms of accessibility and usability. And how it makes meeting the needs of diverse learners easier and that, faster, cheaper and more generally awesome. I'm going to come over here with the mic.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

I commend you on the PDF, I am grateful for being able to participate. I used to be able to do the same thing at my work, but I had to push to be able to be interactive. I am just wondering was your LMS, where the capability is not good enough to be able to be accessible or, what was the reasoning you want to PDF?

KRISTY:

There were other reasons why we went to PDF, one of the main reasons was you could not use a keyboard. So even if we had accessible courses it did not matter because somebody could actually launch them and use them. So we did a lot of different things, and in phase 1 we just really wanted to get these out and start testing for audience. Because this is a new method of

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learning for our clients. And we will want to know that there are not this was a method of learning for them. And this at that time was something that allowed us to get it done a little bit quicker.

Going from the e-learning of element with the huge costs and huge amount of resources, where is with the PDFs we are able to use one and a half the amount of resource estimate them done. The amount of considerations that we went into this worked great.

Moving into phase 2 we needed to really consider what it meant for us to make things accessible and remediate it fully so that it was accessible. So it was one thing to say that it was an accessible course and if it was still functional, and point out all the things that we needed a change. But these are all things that we will check over the next few months.

THEL:

I believe we had some difficulties with the functionality problems and so on. But the one we're using now is a temporary measure and that is 508, it the US equivalent of the AODA. It is currently in interim measure but we are aware that by having these conversations and opening it up with the APS that the will be able to find some additional resources and software that will catch up. We are hoping to have a large enterprise solution that will help us communicate with external clients.

KRISTY:

is the time for one more? People are getting a little antsy.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

Is there a way to change courses and is a way to tell how much time people have spent on each course?

KRISTY:

I believe we needed to understand this statistical evaluation and so we had to develop minimum standards and user profile information. So people do have to register for an account and this will allow us to determine the demographic. This will also help us track success in the standard version in self-checks, time spent in courses, number of times people return to courses and that kind of thing. So yes, recording was vital for us.

THEL:

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after this one just come up to us and we will answer them that way people don't have to hang around.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

Did you keep your LMS, you said there were two versions basically, I forget the names. He said one was accessible and one for those that did not need an accessible one, did you keep it for that version?

KRISTY:

We are currently using one from the US and the version of the elements that we decided not to use for financial reasons was built by learn flex, open text, the product was called learn flex. I don't want anyone to think I'm playing favourites but we did need to adhere to cost and timeliness.

ROB:

Thank you everyone for attending the session.

KRISTY:

We will continue to stand around so people can come up and ask questions.

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