



MEMO TO CITY COUNCIL

Request to Include Topic on the City Council Agenda

From: Dave Miles **Meeting Date:** May 28, 2025
Presenter: Dave Miles **Estimated Time:** 5 mins
Topic: Department of Justice New Rule on Accessibility Standards of Web Content

Recommended Council Action:

Approve budget amendment for \$80,020 to fund consulting services to review and evaluate web content and mobile apps, and provide solutions to ensure that the City of Meridian web content and mobile applications meets the necessary ADA rule.

Background:

The Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a new rule regarding web content accessibility in April, 2024 that all local government web content and mobile applications **shall** meet updated ADA guidelines, specifically Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2.1, Level AA. Per the DOJ rule, all cities with 50,000 or more persons shall comply with newly updated guidelines by April 24, 2026. Further details of the requirements are enumerated on the [DOJ Fact Sheet site](#).

Based on the issuance of the rule, over the summer and fall of 2024 staff reviewed the new rule and discussed its impact and necessary actions that are required to ensure Meridian is in compliance with updated guideline standards. A project team consisting of Communications, Legal and IT evaluated the rule standards, the staff expertise, other agency actions and available resources and tools. Staff also implemented a widget tool which runs a base level analysis and fixes errors found via AI. This is paid for out of the current FY25 operating budget with expenses of \$1,600 to date, with a predicted continued \$150 per month ongoing cost.

With results of the widget tool evaluated and the broader web content requirements identified, staff developed and issued an RFP to identify and engage experts who provide the identified services. Staff received and reviewed nine submissions with a range of scopes, qualifications and costs. Costs ranged from approximately \$24,000 to \$260,000, along with varying levels of experience, referrals and scopes of work.

Through the RFP process, staff selected a consultant to perform the scope of work to include:

- review and evaluation all publicly facing City web content, including internet browser, third-party programs and mobile device apps,
- prepare and deliver a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation report of the city web content and recommendations for solutions,
- staff training for ongoing compliance with laws and strategies to keep content compliant long-term.

Discussion:

Staff feel that consulting services are the best approach to ensure that Meridian is in compliance with the DOJ's new rule no later than April 24, 2026 to meet the rule making deadline for cities of 50,000 or more people. While some exemptions to specific technical standards exist within the rule making and may apply, there is no general, broad-based exception for Meridian to not have to meet this new rule. In addition, Meridian's goals to ensure transparency include access to transparent information and tools for everyone who utilizes Meridian services and sites. Meeting the required new standards and guidelines ensure that we are both compliant with Federal law and achieving our organization goals.

In addition, Meridian does not have any current staff that are "*the one*" resident expert in ADA standards. Rather, Meridian has multiple staff who are knowledgeable of broad requirements and needs based on their subject matter. In discussions among those staff members, the identified preferred option is that council approve this project based, one-time funding need so that Meridian can have a thorough review and report of the organization's systems; implement recommended fixes to ensure the immediate rule making needs are met with the DOJ's deadline; and also educate staff who interact with web content and tools on the guidelines and standards that will be required to be maintained over time.

<end>