

Information Design

For each Standard you are seeking certification in, you'll be given a questionnaire specific to that Standard to fill out. Most questionnaires will also request that you upload nonconfidential materials, such as examples of reports you have published or your standard operating procedures documents. This guide has tips to keep in mind when preparing for and filling out the Information Design questionnaire so that your office has a more seamless experience.

The Standard

Your election office uses design and accessibility best practices to format information so it is easy to find, understand, and use. To achieve this standard:

- You consider the voter journey as voters interact with the information you share, publish, and create.
- You follow accessibility standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) that are relevant to each publication format.
- You use design elements like structure, hierarchy, typography, visuals, and color to communicate meaning and help voters navigate materials.
- You produce materials that have a consistent look and include key contact information for your office.

Glossary

We've tried to keep jargon to a minimum, but some is unavoidable. Since many offices use different terminology, here are some terms used in the standard or questionnaire that may be unfamiliar or you may use in a different way:

- **Voter journey:** The experiences citizens have when interacting with your office, from registering to vote to finding out about election dates and materials to receiving and voting ballots to seeing the results of elections.
- **WCAG:** An international standard that explains how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Structure:** The way that you organize the content in a document. Good structure helps readers find the information they need easily by grouping related ideas, using clear headings, and presenting information in a logical order that matches when the reader will need it.
- **Hierarchy:** The visual organization of a document that signals what information is most important and helps readers find what they need. Hierarchy uses tools like font size, spacing, callout boxes, and placement on a page to make it easier to look over a document quickly and find what's relevant.

Who to include

You will get more out of the certification process and be able to complete the questionnaire more quickly if you involve the right staff in the process. Here are some suggestions for who to include for this standard:

- Staff who produce or review public-facing materials
- Staff who maintain your office's website

Materials requested

The questionnaire will request the following materials:

- A document showcasing your office's skill with information design.
- Two documents providing voters information about the voting process (e.g., voter guides, information about polling locations, election results).
- Materials that include accessibility features such as descriptions or alternate text for images, captions, or compatibility with assistive technologies.

You may not have documents with these titles or you may have reasons that you don't use some of these types of materials. In those cases, you can provide other documents that you use in these processes, or provide explanations for what you do instead.

Please provide only the versions or portions of these (or similar) documents that would be subject to public records requests in your jurisdiction. Do not provide any confidential documents or information. We encourage you to consult with your local counsel if you have questions about whether a document can be shared.

Example questions

Here are some examples of questions found in the certification questionnaire, to give you an idea of what you will be asked about:

In 3-5 sentences, please describe your process for creating and publishing materials that communicate information to voters.

Please explain your intentional usage of two or more of the following elements to communicate meaning and help voters navigate your materials:

- Structure
- Hierarchy– the arrangement of elements of a design to guide what the viewer focuses on in what order
- Typography– the arrangement and appearance of letters
- Visuals
- Color and patterns

How often do voters interact with information provided by your office? How does your office measure voter interaction with materials?

Please describe your office's process for testing and sharing materials for the implementation of accessibility and information design best practices. If you have a written document that outlines the process and/or instructions, please upload that as well.

Resources addressing this standard

If you are looking for ways to improve your processes in this area before applying for certification or to implement feedback you received about how to meet the standard, these publicly available, nonpartisan resources may help.

- [Toolkit for Designing Voter Education Materials](#): Simple tools to plan content, design with impact, and reach voters across different formats, languages, and levels of detail. It includes a how-to guide that explains some core concepts of information design.
- [Designing Election Websites](#): A guide with actionable strategies, directed especially toward small to mid-sized election offices, to make websites more accessible, trustworthy, and easy to maintain.

Using or reviewing these resources is not required for your office to be certified: certification is based on achieving the standard, not on using specific materials. These nonpartisan resources are provided for informational and educational purposes only.

Certification program information

For information on the certification program as a whole, as well as general advice on how to get the most out of the certification process, consult these resources:

- Our [guide](#) to the certification process
- [FAQs](#) about the Alliance certification program
- Go to [CertifyExcellence.org](https://certifyexcellence.org) to apply