Accessible PDFs for Disabled Arkansans

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Rhetorical Situation

The document included in this file is a grant application to the Blue and You Foundation. The goal is to persuade the Blue and You Grant awards team to approve funding for 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro for Arkansas county offices.

The software would enable county staff to assess and remediate accessibility issues in PDF files thus allowing them to comply with state and federal accessibility laws and, more importantly, reach a wider audience with Extension educational materials.

Each section of the document was written based on the submission criteria from Blue and You. The headings in **blue** indicate specific information required for the grant.

<u>Executive Summary</u>

In order to reach disabled Arkansans with our health-focused programming materials and comply with federal accessibility laws, The Cooperative Extension Service seeks to purchase 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 so employees can fix accessibility issues in PDF resources and improve the health of underserved, disabled Arkansans..

The mission of The Cooperative Extension Service (Extension, for short) is: We strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices.

Our project is named Accessible PDFs for Disabled Arkansans and we request $7,650 to purchase 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 to install in county offices.

Why undertake this project: The need

> It is critical that Extension employees have the necessary tools and training to ensure their online PDF files comply federal website accessibility laws, and to have the confidence that those files are readable by all clientele, including those with disabilities.

> PDF files are created by employees as supportive documentation for our cooking, exercise, and healthy-living programs. Many PDF files which may contain accessibility concerns are created outside of Extension but are necessary for our agents to supplement their programming. Our staff has no way to fix those files without access to the native Word or Excel format. This is where Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 can help. With the correct training and software, our agents will be equipped to remediate accessibility errors in all PDF files prior to posting online. Based on a recent survey of county agents, almost half of respondents (36) reported no copy of Adobe Acrobat Pro to check for accessibility problems.

> Lack of funding was listed as the primary factor most offices did not own a copy. When asked why federal funds aren't used to purchase the software, a Ouachita district agent said "I have asked for it several times and am always told to take it from my county M & O budget, which would be fine if it were large enough, but is not. Adobe Acrobat Pro has to take a back seat to paying travel, and office supplies which are vital to carrying out our educational roles."

> Another agent in the Delta district said "With county funding it is difficult to buy any items that are not in the budget. We have a thin line and it's hard not to exceed the budget each year. Funding availability is limited at all levels, including federal, is stretched and is difficult to make any additional purchases."

- **Primary condition or health topic targeted** - disabled Arkansans who have difficulty accessing PDF content

Many disabled Arkansans are also SNAP recipients who participate in health-focused Extension programming. SNAP is an evidence-based program that helps people lead healthier lives and our agents teach participants about good nutrition and how to make their food dollars stretch further.

SNAP-Ed participants also learn to be physically active. Extension FCS (Family and Consumer Science) agents market their SNAP-ed classes to qualifying participants (who are low income and many are disabled). Agents instruct clients on healthy food choices, exercising, and other disease-prevention lifestyle choices. Some of the SNAP-ed participants may have difficulty accessing content in our PDF materials due to a disability, therefore our agents need the software and training to fix accessibility issues before sending PDFs to clients.

Project objectives

The primary objective of *Accessible PDFs for Disabled Arkansans* is to give county agents and staff the tools and education needed to ensure their healthy living educational programs reach those that need it the most: underserved, disabled, rural Arkansans.

To that end, Extension seeks to purchase 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 for county offices so employees can fix accessibility issues in PDF files prior to uploading to the website or sharing via email. Fixing these accessibility issues will allow disabled Arkansans to better learn from our health-focused programming materials which are posted online.

Because many rural county Extension offices have poor internet connectivity, a one-time time purchase of an Adobe Acrobat 2017 license means our staff will be able to install the software locally without the need of an internet connection to Adobe's DC (document cloud) platform which incurs an annual renewal fee.

To better understand the difficulties faced by disabled individuals, we will use Mary B. in Chicot County as an example. Mary is a legally blind SNAP-ed client who tries to read an a Chair Yoga Fact Sheet PDF using her screen reader. The text is readable but the images, which illustrate how to perform each pose, do not include descriptions or "alt text" for the screen reader to read aloud to her. Without the necessary PDF remediation software, our agents are unable to fix the problem by adding descriptions to those images. So the screen reader merely says "image" aloud to Mary instead of "Woman sitting in a chair with arms extended overhead stretching, leaning slightly to the left". It is that type of clear descriptive text which would allow Mary to comprehend what is happening in the document in a similar way as a sighted person.

If the Chicot County agents had Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 and the necessary training to remediate the Chair Yoga PDF file, Mary would be able to benefit from the exercise program in the same way as her non-disabled neighbors.

Adobe Acrobat Pro is a user-friendly software most agents are familiar with, as they may already have a free version of Adobe Acrobat Reader, a software that is similar but more limited in features. Pro 2017, however, has accessibility-checking features to assess files for images that are missing descriptions, form fields that are missing descriptive/assistive tags, and tables without headers.

Extension IT staff does not have the bandwidth or personnel to fix accessibility issues on all PDF files. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Extension employees to ensure what they post on the website is accessible. With the purchase of the appropriate software and training our employees will be able to manage their digital library and ensure it is available to all clients, regardless of disability status.

Without the appropriate accessibility remediation software and training, the only alternative is to *not* post the PDF files at all in order to avoid violating federal website accessibility laws. This option means many of our health-focused PDF resources are unavailable to all Arkansans.

Along with programming-focused PDF resources, agents are often tasked with creating forms to gather registration information for cooking or exercise events. The fillable forms they create with programs such as Microsoft Word are not always accessible. To create and edit accessible PDF documents, you *must* use Acrobat Pro.

PDF files are created by employees as supportive documentation for our cooking, exercise, and healthy-living programs. Many PDF files which may contain accessibility concerns are created outside of Extension but are necessary for our agents to supplement their programming. Our staff has no way to fix those files without access to the native Word or Excel format. This is where Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 can help.

Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 Features to Support the Creation of Accessible PDFs

- Creation of tagged PDFs from authoring applications
- Conversion of untagged PDFs to tagged PDFs from within Acrobat Security settings that allow screen readers to access text while preventing users from copying, printing, editing and extracting text
- Ability to add text to scanned pages to improve accessibility
- Tools for editing reading order and document structure
- Tools for creating accessible PDF forms
- Ability to set document properties, including title, and expose them through the title bar of the application
- Though Acrobat Standard provides some functionality for making existing PDFs accessible, *Acrobat Pro must be used to perform most tasks — such as editing reading order or editing document structure tags* — that are necessary to make PDF documents and forms accessible

Activities or methods your project will implement

If awarded, the grant will allow Extension to do perform two objectives:

1. Purchase 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017. This version of the software does not need to be renewed and therefore has no recurring costs.

2. Educate county employees with two training methods:
   a. *Overview of Accessibility:* Accessibility law education for agents and how all digital media content should be made accessible
   b. *Adobe Acrobat Pro accessibility training:* IT staff will record and an Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 training video to demonstrate how employees can use the software to fix errors and accessibility issues in their PDF files.

   These courses will be done via in-kind donations of state office staff training and program evaluation.

Purchasing the software

In January 2020, IT staff will use grant money to purchase 50 licenses of Adobe Acrobat Pro from SHI direct, our third party contractor for $153 each.

Training

Merely owning the software does not ensure employees will learn how to use it to remediate PDF files for accessibility concerns. Based on a survey conducted in November 2018, 100% (50) of county respondents said they would be willing to attend a training to learn how to use their software to fix accessibility issues.

Members of the Extension IT (information technology) team will coordinate efforts to train agents on properly utilizing the Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 accessibility components. IT team members will include:

- Digital Media Program Director (training video host)
- Developer and Support Specialist (training co-host)
- Zoom Studio/distance Communication Specialist
- Zoom video editor

This *Overview of Accessibility* training will be conducted in our Little Rock State Office Zoom (video communications) studio. The session will be recorded and posted to the www.uaex.edu website for agents who are unable to attend the live training. The recording will be available from January 2020 and beyond. Attendees' names will be recorded for the live session, and those who access the recorded session posted online, will be prompted to register prior to watching the video to "Take attendance". This training will serve as the basis for the agents to understand why the laws should be followed as well as common accessibility errors that appear in PDF and other digital documents.

A second *Adobe Acrobat Pro accessibility training*, conducted by the same IT personnel, will be posted in our online Learn system www.learn.uaex.edu. Agents will log into Learn with their employee credentials and watch the video to answer questions at designated points during the recording. The video will not advance until the questions are answered correctly. Only agents who successfully take the *Adobe Acrobat Pro online course* and watch the *Overview of Accessibility* training video will be allowed a copy of the software for their computer.

Successful agents will receive a certificate of completion for their *Adobe Acrobat Pro online course* training. Extension IT staff will also receive a notification of successful training certificates awarded through the Learn system learn.uaex.edu and will work with the agents to install the software on their computer.

Extension Program and Staff Development Personnel involved in the Learn course creation and evaluation are:

- Online Learning Instructor/Course Creator
- Online Learning Technical Support/Program Manager

Regular monthly accessibility notifications sent to the agents who are awarded a copy of Adobe Acrobat Pro will serve as a reminder to check all files for accessibility prior to sharing or posting.

IT personnel will communicate monthly with all county staff on the importance of accessibility training and education through our Zoom-based monthly meetings and employee website notifications and newsletters.

Qualitative Evaluation

The evaluation process for grant success will be ongoing throughout 2020.

In January 2020 IT staff will send a survey to all county personnel to assess their existing knowledge of accessibility laws and gain an understanding of how they think they can contribute to Extension's success in reaching disabled audiences.

Once the *Adobe Acrobat Pro* online course is made live in the Learn platform (March 2020), assessment surveys will be sent to each *Adobe Acrobat Pro* course participant asking if the information was helpful while requesting feedback for content improvement.

A final program assessment survey will be sent in December 2020 to evaluate the skills and knowledge attained through the training and year-long accessibility awareness program.

Quantitative Evaluation

In January 2020, IT staff will scan the website (using website analytic software called Monsido) for PDF files which contain accessibility issues. In December 2020, another scan for PDF accessibility errors will be conducted with a goal of reducing issues by 50% or more. Currently nearly all PDF files posted to the www.uaex.edu website have at least one or more accessibility issue.

- Number of people impacted - Approximately 31.3% of Arkansans
- Target demographics - underserved Arkansans with disabilities
- Target geographic area - Statewide
- How you will use the grant funds requested (200 word max.) Extension will use funds to purchase 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 for Extension county offices who do not have the funds to purchase it themselves. The software purchase will be used as a springboard to train county staff to use Acrobat Pro to fix accessibility issues in their digital content and re-upload it to the website and educate them on federal accessibility laws and their role in making our files accessibility compliant.
- Project super summary (100 word max.)
  Cooperative Extension Service (Extension) requests $7,650 to purchase 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro to help county offices make their informational PDF files accessible to Arkansans with disabilities. Having this software will allow agents in underserved counties reach a disabled audience who currently are unable to benefit from all of our health-focused PDF content. All Arkansans, regardless of their disability status, have the right to access the free, unbiased, research-based content produced by Extension agents and specialists. With Adobe Acrobat PRO 2017, our employees will be better equipped to make their content accessible to everyone.

Project Details

Timeline: Milestones throughout the year needed to achieve success

We have two significant goals to achieve success:

1. **Goal 1: Educate Extension employees on their role with accessibility for digital content and how they can mitigate accessibility issues in PDF files.**

2. **Goal 2: Reduce the number of accessibility errors in PDF documents on the website by 50%.**

By January 31

Goal 1: Create and email online survey for all county agents to gain insight into their accessibility knowledge.

Goal 2: Use Monsido (website accessibility scanning tool) to scan Extension website for accessibility violations in PDFs.

By February 28:

Goal 1: Record training video for why and how Extension employees should comply with accessibility guidelines including Section 508, and WCAG 2.0 and how Adobe Acrobat Pro can assist with our document compliance efforts.

Create online course in learn.uaex.edu where employees watch an interactive video and answer questions and earn a certificate of completion prior to being given an Acrobat Pro license.

By June 30:

Goal 1: All 50 licenses of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 will be assigned and in use by counties and staff.

March - December:

Offer monthly as-needed training (via Zoom) for anyone who has questions or concerns using the software to remediate specific files prior to posting to the web or sharing on social media.

By December 31:

Goal 1: Email follow up survey to assess usage of Adobe Acrobat Pro to evaluate training and adoption of best practices.

Goal 2: Re-scan website for accessibility issues in PDF files. Goal is reduction of problems by 50%.

Geographic Region Served

All 75 Arkansas counties.

Target Audience

There are a myriad of issues that can cause a person to have difficulty accessing digital content in a PDF file such as low vision, blindness, poor motor skills, or cognitive disabilities. While

Extension does not gather data on the percentage of clients who are disabled, one way to assess the population will be to look at Arkansans who receive SNAP benefits. SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP-Ed requires participants to be 185% of the federal poverty level and [1]about two-thirds of SNAP recipients are not expected to work, primarily because they are children, elderly, or disabled. In 2015, 27% of SNAP households reported having a family member with a disability.[2]

Extension agents market their SNAP-ed classes to qualifying participants and instruct them on healthy food choices, exercising, and prevention of heart disease and diabetes. Some of the disabled SNAP participants may currently have difficulty accessing content in supporting PDF materials, therefore our agents need the ability to fix accessibility issues before sending them to clients.

These underserved and often overlooked Arkansans could benefit the most from our health-focuses initiatives including diabetes cooking classes, exercise classes, and personal-family well-being materials but may have difficulty reading inaccessible PDF.

Assumptions on which the project is based

Extension assumes we will reach an additional 1,000 potential clients with more accessible documents.

We are assuming we will have all 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 claimed by qualified agents by June of 2020 (qualified meaning they completed our accessibility training course). We anticipate more employees will request training and their own copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro after the grant year has ended.

We are assuming we will be able to fit more copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 into our operating budget for all counties by 2022 based on the success of this pilot program.

We are assuming that accessibility compliance laws will not change in 2020 and Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 will remain industry standard for remediating PDF files.

We are assuming that the price quoted by our contractor, SHI Direct, will remain at $153 per copy.

Barriers

If Adobe Acrobat Pro is given to Extension employees, it's possible their intention is to use the software for other purposes and not utilize the accessibility compliance features. Therefore accessibility training will be *required* prior to the software license being sent to the employee. The software will be awarded with the understanding that a primary use for the software will be PDF file accessibility remediation.

Another barrier is training. If agents learn to use the accessibility features of Adobe Acrobat Pro, will they utilize what they learn in their everyday practices? Regular monthly accessibility

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[1] https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap
[2] https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-provides-needed-food-assistance-to-millions-of-people-with

notifications sent to the agents who are awarded a copy of Adobe Acrobat Pro will serve as a reminder to check all files for accessibility prior to sharing or posting.

Turnover and attrition of employees is also an issue. Once a person is trained and is awarded a license there is still a possibility they may leave the organization. In this instance the software license will remain in that county and a new staff member will be appointed by the staff chair or District Director to undergo the accessibility training and utilize the license.

Accessibility training will be updated and readily available to employees as accessibility compliance laws change and new staff are hired.

Future funding for software in county offices is unstable. For the years following 2020, Extension IT staff will work with District Directors to reallocate funding away from printed materials to digital content which saves money on office supplies and postage.

Financial and human resources to be applied to the project, including expected support from the community or other organization

To ensure employees correctly utilize the accessibility features in Adobe Acrobat Pro, Extension IT staff will conduct training focusing on the capabilities of the software and how to check files for accessibility issues.

Two Training Modules and Program Assessment

Merely owning the software does not ensure employees will learn how to use it to remediate PDF files for accessibility concerns. Based on a survey conducted in November 2018, 100% (50) of county respondents said they would be willing to attend a training to learn how to use their software to fix accessibility issues.

Members of the Extension IT (information technology) team will coordinate efforts to train agents on properly utilizing the Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 accessibility components. IT team members will include:

- Digital Media Program Director (training video host)
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- Zoom Studio/distance Communication Specialist
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A second *Adobe Acrobat Pro accessibility training*, conducted by the same IT personnel, will be posted in our online Learn system www.learn.uaex.edu. Agents will log into Learn with their employee credentials and watch the video to answer questions at designated points during the

recording. The video will not advance until the questions are answered correctly. Only agents who successfully take the *Adobe Acrobat Pro online course* and watch the *Overview of Accessibility* training video will be allowed a copy of the software for their computer.

Successful agents will receive a certificate of completion for their *Adobe Acrobat Pro online course* training. Extension IT staff will also receive a notification of successful training certificates awarded through the Learn system learn.uaex.edu and will work with the agents to install the software on their computer.

Extension Program and Staff Development Personnel involved in the Learn course creation and evaluation are:

- Online Learning Instructor/Course Creator
- Online Learning Technical Support/Program Manager

Likelihood of project continuing after the grant period

If awarded, this grant will serve as a pilot project for formally teaching employees about accessibility by giving them the appropriate accessibility-checking and remediation software. Extension will leverage the grant from Blue and You to engage disabled Arkansans in our health-focused programming and ensure that our PDF files are accessible to everyone, regardless of their disability status.

The *Overview of Accessibility* training course will remain on our website after 2020 for employees to learn more about digital media accessibility. The videos will be updated regularly if new accessibility laws or digital media circumstances change.

Future potential funding sources for purchasing more copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro would be NIFA grants (National Institute for Food and Agriculture) or increased budgets for counties and program areas.

As employees come to rely on Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 and their role in maintaining accessible digital media they will be better equipped to advocate for future funding for the software. Budgets can be renegotiated, and if IT staff works with Extension state level finance personnel, more hard funding opportunities could be found.

Project Budget - CES Grant
We request funding to purchase 50 copies of Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 at a cost of $153 each. One copy will be installed on one computer in 50 Extension offices. Each license is perpetual, meaning they do not need to be renewed and therefore no costs after 2020 are anticipated for the licenses.

Extension personnel will train colleagues on two areas:

1. Accessibility laws and their role in complying with digital media and web accessibility. This training will be posted to the uaex.edu website.
2. How to check for and fix accessibility issues in PDF files and other documents using Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017.

This training will be conducted via online/video-based course with certification of completion required for employees to gain access to the software.

2018-2019 Organization Budget

Item	Cost
Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017 *One copy, one copy per computer*	$153 *Discounted, government, bulk rate. Market value is $449.*
Number of copies	50
Total	$7,650

2018-2019 Organization Budget - IN KIND

Donor Type of Donation	Amount
CES IT department: Accessibility Training -creation and presentation of training module, technical support, hands-on accessibility training January-December 2020 as requested.Transcribed video for posting on Extension training website. *In-Kind*	$2500
CES Program/Staff Development department: Online training - course creation, evaluation, and online technical support	$5400
Total	$7900

Evaluation of the Project

How success will be measured

Success for the CES Digital Media Accessibility Awareness project will be measured in two ways: Increase in employee accessibility knowledge and reduction in PDF and other digital files with accessibility errors.

We would see an increase in visitor downloads of fully remediated PDF files on our website.

An increase in employees asking questions and requesting additional one-on-one accessibility training/guidance would indicate an awareness of their responsibility to the process and a sense of ownership of their content. Without the appropriate training, employees continue to add images without captions and charts that use color to relay meaning.

By the end of 2020, we hope to see qualitative evidence of successful accessibility training.

Examples of successful accessibility awareness training include:

- More descriptive image captions
- Tables with descriptive headers
- Decrease in the use of charts that rely on color as data indicators (for example, a red/green line chart where red indicates a negative number. Red-green color blind individuals are unable to fully grasp the meaning in color-based charts).

Data or measurement tools you will use to verify success

Qualitative Evaluation

The evaluation process for grant success will be ongoing throughout 2020.

In January 2020 IT staff will send a Qualtrics survey to all county personnel to assess their existing knowledge of accessibility laws and gain an understanding of how they think they can contribute to Extension's success in reaching disabled audiences.

Once the *Adobe Acrobat Pro* online course is made live in the Learn platform (March 2020), assessment surveys will be sent to each *Adobe Acrobat Pro* course participant asking if the information was helpful while requesting feedback for content improvement.

A final program assessment survey will be sent in December 2020 to evaluate the skills and knowledge attained through the training and year-long accessibility awareness program.

Quantitative Evaluation

In January 2020, IT staff will scan the website (using website analytic software called Monsido) for PDF files which contain accessibility issues. In December 2020, another scan for PDF accessibility errors will be conducted with a goal of reducing issues by 50% or more. Currently nearly all PDF files posted to the www.uaex.edu website have at least one or more accessibility issue.

How project problems will be identified and corrected

If some counties do not want to participate in the program or learn about accessibility for digital files, District Directors can make accessibility training mandatory for agents and staff even if they do not receive Adobe Acrobat Pro training.

Timeline for evaluation

The evaluation process for grant success will be ongoing throughout 2020.

March 2020

Once the course goes live in the Learn platform, assessment surveys will be sent to each *Adobe Acrobat Pro course* participant asking if the information was helpful while requesting feedback for improvement.

November 2020

IT staff will send a survey to all Extension employees which will assess awareness of accessibility laws and their role in digital media accessibility compliance.

The survey will end in mid-December 2020 prior to employee holiday vacation.

A goal of 50% participation is expected and improvement of accessibility knowledge will be ascertained by likert scale question (example: On a scale of one to five, how much has your knowledge of accessibility laws improved based on this year's training?)