Government agencies are increasingly using social media to engage with citizens, share information and deliver services more quickly and effectively than ever before. But as social content, data and platforms become more diverse, agencies have a responsibility to ensure these digital services are accessible to all citizens, including people with disabilities.

5 Things
EVERY SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT MANAGER NEEDS TO KNOW

1. Make your contact information available on your social media account page.
List a primary phone number and email address where a user can reach your agency with questions, or provide a link to your agency website that lists the appropriate contact information.

2. Make your social media content available through more than one channel.
Provide easy points of entry for more information. Some of the most common ways are to post threads on your website, provide options to sign up for daily email digests of social media posts or to add a social media widget to your agency website.

3. Provide links or contact information to official social media support and accessibility teams.
Often, social media tools have their own accessibility tips and support help desks. Educate yourself about them and provide links to those resources for your constituents.

4. Keep it simple.
Good design and good content more often than not lead to accessible content. When possible, write in plain language, use camel case when appropriate (i.e., capitalize the first letters of compound words as in #SocialGov), and limit your use of hashtags, abbreviations and acronyms. The use of camel case is not only a common practice, but a helpful one as it makes multi-word hashtags easier to read, including for those using a screen reader.

5. Learn the accessibility requirements and periodically test your content for accessibility.
Read the Section 508 Standards and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 and other key resources that discuss them. Then test your social media content with a screen reader or other type of assistive technology.
5 Myths About Social Media Accessibility

1. For those individuals to whom social media tools are available, the tools are completely accessible to them and can be used without limitation.

   False. The reality is that there are some individuals who want to use social media but cannot (or are limited in how they can use it) because most social media tools are not fully accessible and usable “out of the box.”

2. For those organizations and entities that use social media to push content out to their stakeholders, they are reaching everyone they need and want to reach.

   False. Both the content managers and the intended recipients of the content miss out when people wrongly assume that using social media means that everyone who should receive the message actually does.

3. People with disabilities do not use social media tools on a widespread basis.

   False. Social media tools have fostered a greater connection among individuals with disabilities, and between those individuals and their peers without disabilities, than has ever existed before.

4. It is expensive and time-consuming to make social media content accessible.

   False. Social media accessibility involves only an openness to and appreciation for new ideas (including the philosophy of full inclusion) and undertaking basic steps to form and supplement the content so that it is usable by everyone.

5. Ensuring social media accessibility and usability only involves compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

   False. While Section 508 Standards and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 are vital to people with disabilities, they don’t necessarily capture entirely what it means to have completely accessible and usable content. Full inclusion extends above and beyond what any one statute, regulation, or set of guidelines might require.

About ePolicyWorks
Launched by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), ePolicyWorks is a Web-based approach to policymaking that engages citizens and stakeholders in new and innovative ways. The initiative leverages the latest technology to address barriers to employment for people with disabilities and fosters real-time collaboration and communication around key issues. Through this effort, multiple federal agencies work together to ensure that Americans with disabilities have equal access to employment and critical employment-related supports such as health care, education, transportation, housing and technology.