PRACTICAL ICT ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGIES IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Korey Singleton, Ph.D., ATP, RET
Assistive Technology Initiative (ATI), GMU

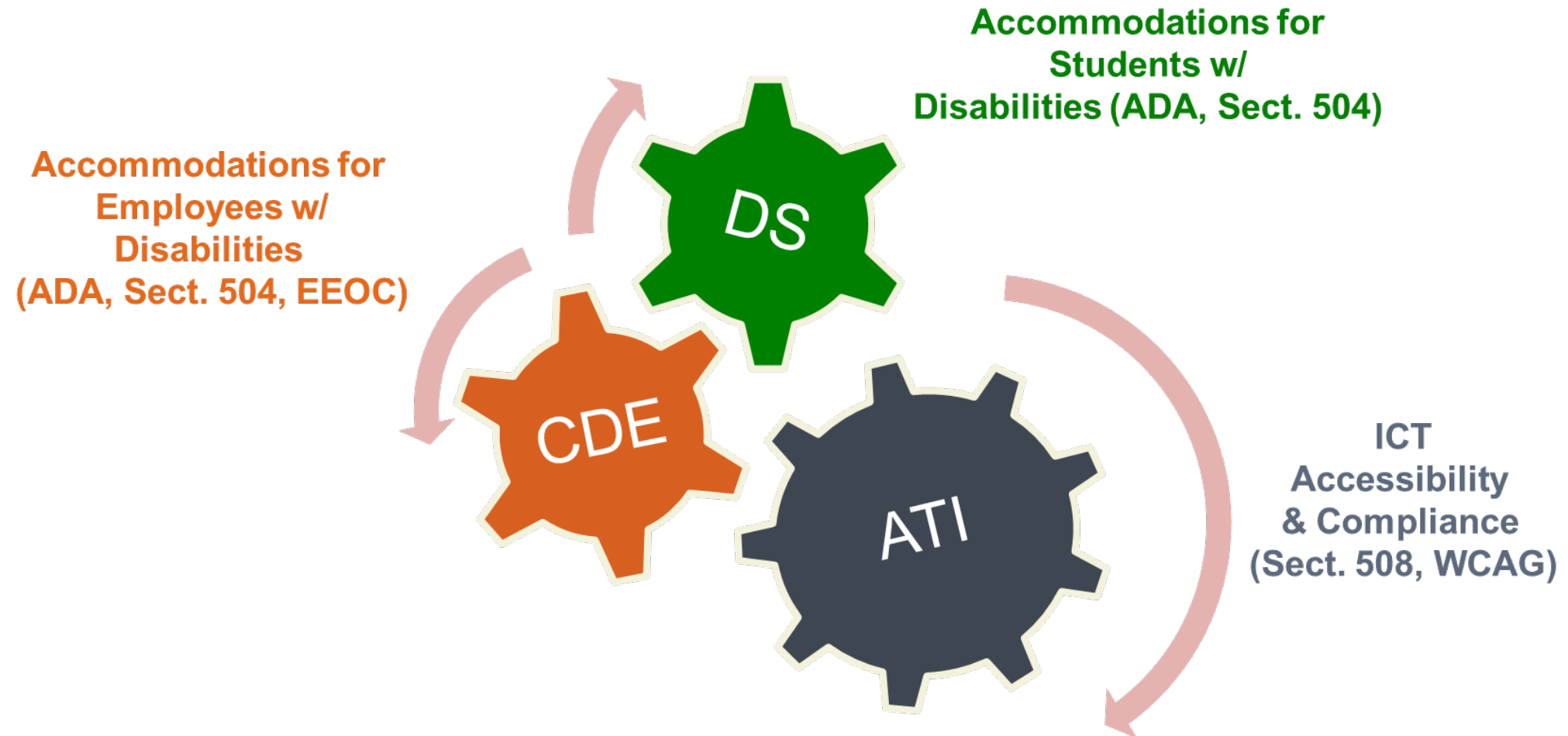*Postsecondary Disability Training Institute (PTI-V)*
June 2, 2021

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Today's Speaker

Korey Singleton, Ph.D., ATP, RET

ATI Manager

George Mason University

Accessibility@Mason:
A Collaborative Partnership

Accommodations for
Students w/
Disabilities (ADA, Sect. 504)

Accommodations for
Employees w/
Disabilities
(ADA, Sect. 504, EEOC)

DS

CDE

ATI

ICT
Accessibility
& Compliance
(Sect. 508, WCAG)

*POLL QUESTION:*
WHAT IS YOUR CAMPUS'
DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY?

POLL QUESTION Responses…

1. What is digital accessibility??

2. We **<u>only</u>** address DSS-related requests for technology accommodations.

3. We have a digital accessibility policy, but no real process for implementing what's required.

4. We have a digital accessibility policy and a process(es) for implementing what's required.

Session Agenda: *We are going to create a digital accessibility strategy for your institution*
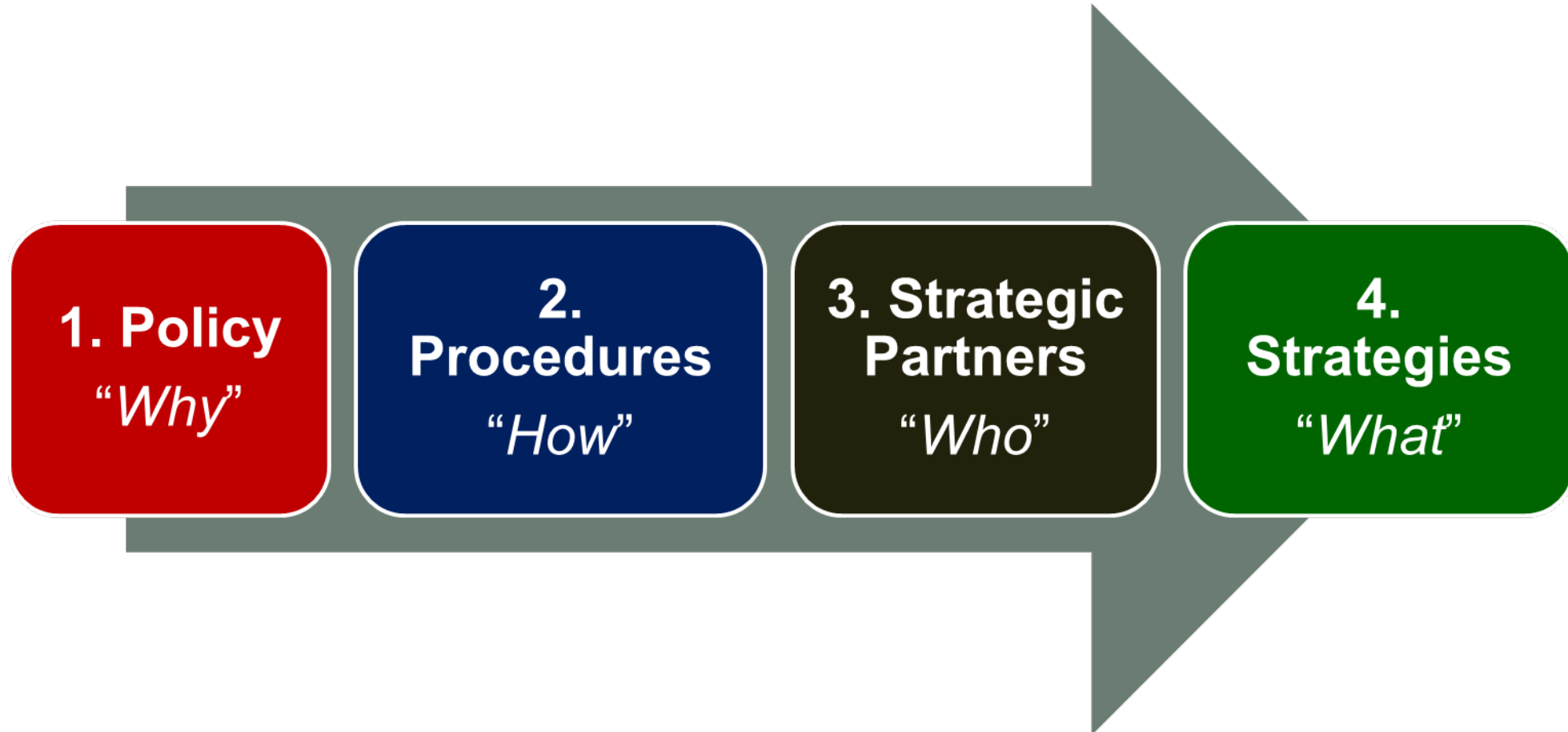
DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY POLICIES

The "*Why*"

Recognize Important Trends in Higher Education

Larger # of students with disabilities in HE

Growing role of online learning and web-based instructional resources

Legal challenges related to digital accessibility

Collective Findings from Complaints/Resolutions

- **Findings:** Inaccessible E-Learning technologies, websites, and web-based instructional resources

- **Who was impacted?** All involved individuals with some degree of sensory impairment (i.e., blind, low vision, deaf, and/or hard of hearing)

- **Main issue:** Timely Access

- **Guidance:** Policy, procedures for grievance, purchasing and procurement, and ongoing maintenance/monitoring, staffing, accessibility portal/website, training, audit, etc.
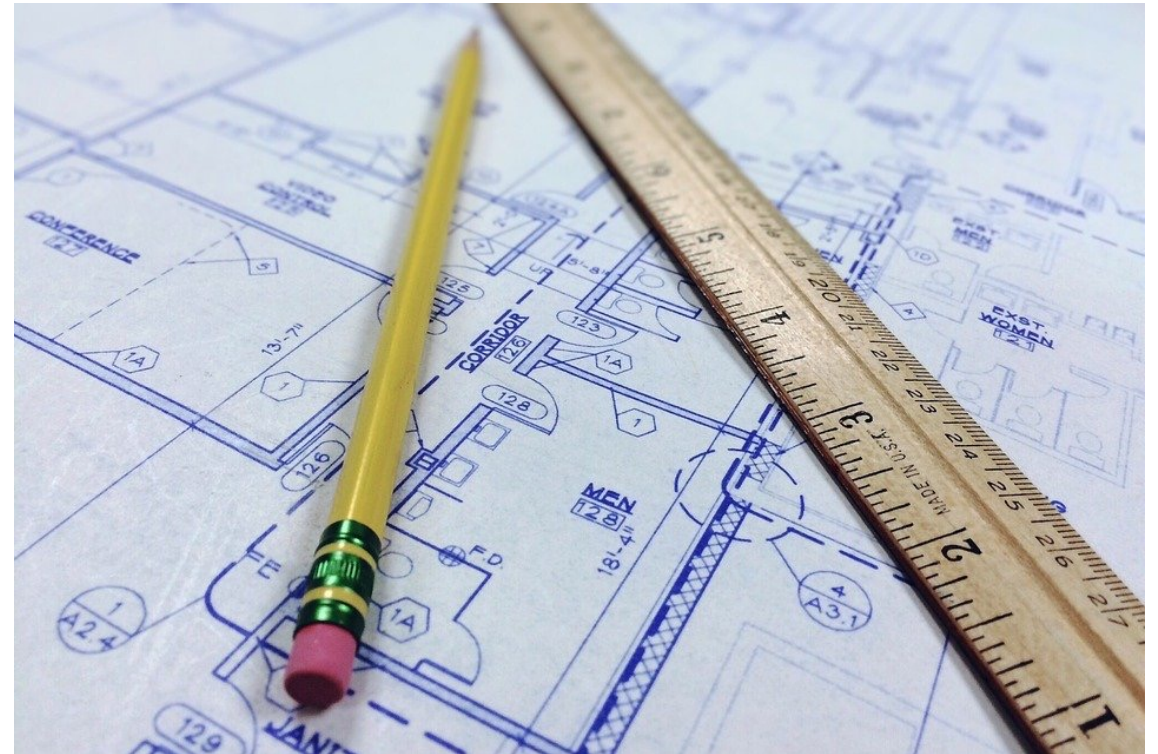
Identify an OCR Resolution to use as a model...

Example…

March 2014, *University of Montana*

- [**University of Montana OCR Resolution Agreement (PDF)**](#)
- [**Current University of Montana EITA Implementation Plan**](#)

They provide a *blueprint* (e.g., definitions) of sorts for what you should be doing at your institution!

Digital Accessibility Policy Considerations

- Why is it necessary?
- Who owns the policy?
- Who will help you write it?
- What does your policy say?
- What is the scope?
- Are procedural steps included?
- Who has oversight?

Sample Policies:

- [Univ. of Montana](#) – includes procedures
- [GMU](#) – references '*costs*' and '*Policy Procedure docs*'
- [Mt. Holyoke Univ.](#) – references '*exceptions*'
- [Michigan State Univ.](#) – references '*how complaints are handled*'
- [Stanford Univ.](#) – references '*Office of Digital Accessibility*'

ACTIVITY #1: Let's start policy planning…

Start laying the groundwork for your digital accessibility policy…*I have identified 2 sample questions that you can answer quickly*.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. **Who owns the policy?**

2. What will your policy say?

3. Who will help you write it?

4. What is the scope (i.e., general, web accessibility, captioning, etc.)?
   - **Answer: Web Accessibility**

5. Are procedural steps going to be included or separate?

6. **Who has oversight?**

Policy Questions?

YOU HAVE A POLICY. HOW DO YOU PLAN TO IMPLEMENT IT?

The "*How*"

Procedural Considerations

- **This is the "*How*"**…in other words, how are you planning to address your digital accessibility policy goals?

- **Start by asking yourself questions (*use flowcharts to help*)…**

  - **E.g., Document Accessibility** – If a document needs to be made accessible, who does it? What are the best practices? Are the documents outsourced or kept in-house? Who pays for it?

  - **E.g., Captions/Transcripts for Instructional Videos** – If a video needs to be captioned, who does it? Where does the video get hosted? What if the original video is not owned by the faculty member? Who pays for it? What's the turnaround time?

- **Build a process that is scalable!**
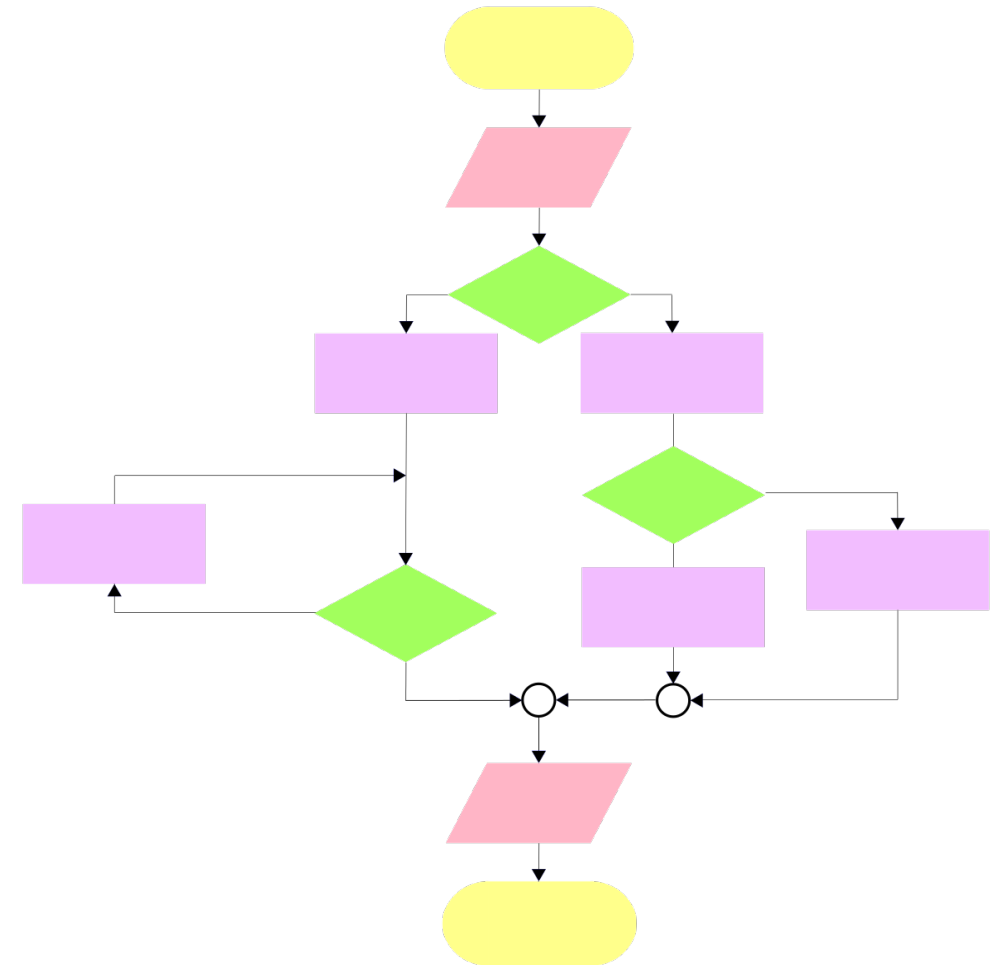
ACTIVITY #2: Let's review a scenario together…

Pick one area to develop a procedure for. Think of 2 questions related to your procedure and answer.

Examples:
- Document accessibility,
- Web accessibility testing,
- Purchasing/procurement
- Post-production captioning, transcription, and audio description
- Tactile graphics
- Live captioning for a campus event

Scenario: How will you handle requests for web accessibility reviews?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- How will you receive these types of requests?
  - *Answer:* **Develop a web-based form**

- Who performs the review? In-house vs. Outsource?
  - *Answer:* **In-house**

- What testing tools will you use?
  - *Answer:* **Screen reader, WAVE, Colour Contrast Analyser**

Procedural Questions?

IDENTIFY YOUR STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The "*Who*"

Who should you reach out to?

Who oversees your…

- Websites?
- Learning Management Systems?
- Content Management Systems?
- Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence?
- Disability Support Services?
- ADA compliance?
- Communications?

Who is missing from the list?

Strategic Partnerships (E.g., GMU VIP Group)

- **Visually Impaired Patriots Group (GMU VIP)**
  - On-campus organization for students, staff, and faculty with visual impairments to foster a sense of community and to advocate for the needs of individuals with visual impairments in the Mason Community.

  - **Web:** https://gmuvip.org/

  - **Faculty Advisors:** Kristine Neuber (kneuber@gmu.edu), Kim Avila (kavila@gmu.edu)

  - **Work with ATI:** Physical Access Issues (e.g., Delivery Robots), Web/LMS/Applications Issues (e.g., Blackboard, Respondus, etc.)
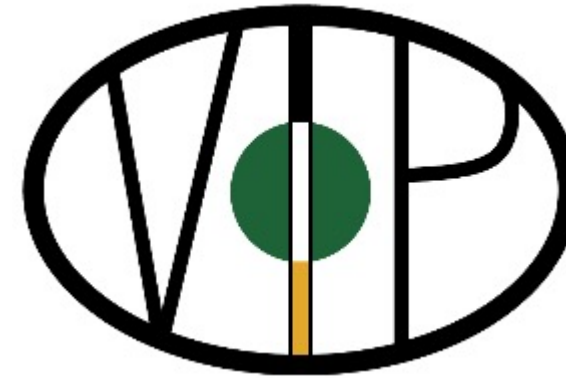
ACTIVITY #3: Identify your strategic partners…

Identify at least 2 strategic partners to help you with addressing the procedures you implemented in ACTIVITY #2.
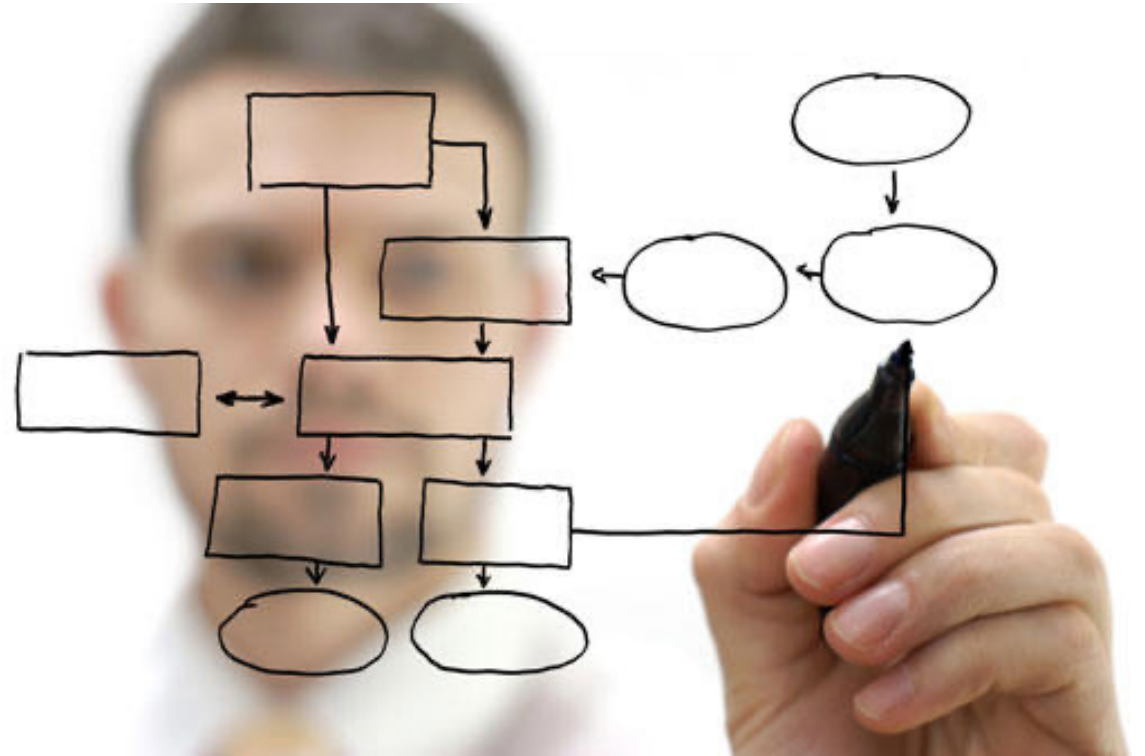
Strategic Partner Questions?

SAMPLING OF CAPACITY BUILDING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGIES

The "*What*"

Start a Committee!

- Bring together strategic partners (e.g., legal, DSS, ADA, IT, Library, Teaching & Learning, etc.) from around the campus to discuss ICT accessibility issues

- Questions to consider…
  - What is working?
  - Identify issues (i.e., what is not?)
  - Prioritize issues
  - What resources exist? What's needed that you do not have (e.g., staffing, funding, buy-in, etc.).

- *Example:* GMU ATI IT Accessibility Working Group

Conduct an Audit!

- If you have the resources, audits are an excellent way to identify where the gaps and challenges are in your campus' digital accessibility strategy

- *Higher Education Example:* [Univ. of Montana Summer 2014 EIT Accessibility Audit (Word)](#)

- **Accessibility Maturity Model Example:** [University of Arizona *itAccessibility* Program](#)

Nominate a Champion!

- Identify an individual (i.e., student, staff, faculty member, or unit) that have contributed to digital accessibility efforts on your campus!

- Provide gift cards, lunch, announcement in newsletter, etc.

- *Example:* [Blackboard Ally Community Stories](#)

Disability Awareness Training Workshops/Fairs

Host assistive technology training workshops or disability awareness fairs.

MORE COMPREHENSIVE DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGIES…

The "*What*"

Build Capacity through Accessibility Certification Programs

Princeton University

- In 2018, Princeton University started an online [CPACC (Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies) Exam Prep course](#) to train and certify IT professionals in the CPACC offered by IAAP.
- Course has now been adopted by the IAAP as part of their online CPACC training.
- To date, Princeton has trained over 100 staff.

Virginia Tech University

- Have developed a similar structure to train IT professionals for the [CPACC](#) and [WAS (Web Accessibility Specialist) certifications](#).

High Risk/High Impact Approach Plan (GMU)

- **Collaboration with Disability Services (DS)**
  - Focused on proactively addressing needs of students with sensory impairments (i.e., 120+ students)
  - Pre-semester Training workshops
  - MAAPs Initiative

- **Collaboration with Stearns Center (ODL)**
  - Accessibility integrated in the online course development process
  - Targeted training effort IDs

- **Accessibility-As-A-Service Support**
  - Document remediation
  - Post-production captioning, transcription, audio description

ICT Accessibility Training Approach in recent DOJ/OCR Settlements

Whole Institution (Top-down)

Proposed Mason Approach

Targeted Approach/Risk-Specific (High-Risk/High-Impact)

Keep C.A.L.M. Initiative (Virginia Tech)

- CALM stands for the "*Choose Accessible Learning Materials Initiative*"

- Marketing/Training efforts (i.e., *swag*, videos, posters, faculty/staff trainings, etc.) focused on slowly building capacity across campus that align with WCAG standards and indirectly to UDL

- CALM Campaign Roadmap
  - FY19 – Captions & Contrast
  - FY20 – Alt text (images) & Headings
  - FY21 – Descriptive Links & Checking Accessibility

Lunch & Learn UDL Workshops (UVA)

UDL Workshops

- *Partnerships between Provost Office, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and Student Disability Access Center (SDAC) to offer UDL workshops*

  - Invited speakers
  - Integration of UDL into *Course Design Institute*
  - focused on document accessibility, captioning, and resources at UVA

Examples of Comprehensive Digital Accessibility Plans

- Princeton University - https://accessibility.princeton.edu/
  - IAAP certification initiative to develop capacity amongst their IT professionals

- Penn State University - https://accessibility.psu.edu/
  - Accessibility and Usability at Penn State

- University of Cincinnati Accessibility Network - https://www.uc.edu/about/accessibility-network.html
  - Central EIT Coordinator with accessibility staffing spread amongst several units across campus

- University of Colorado – Boulder - https://www.colorado.edu/accessible-technology/
  - Accessible Technology Office

Final Questions?

Contact Us

Assistive Technology Initiative c/o CDE

George Mason University

- Aquia Building, Rm. 238
- Mail Stop: 6A11
- Phone: 703-993-4329
- Email: ati@gmu.edu
- Web: http://ati.gmu.edu
- Twitter: @AccessibleMason