Digital Accessibility Brief

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Key findings

- WCAG 2.2 AA, not 2.0, is now the baseline standard most federal guidance and state procurement rules point to for association websites and member portals.
- NANA's own member portal, relaunched in June 2026, is scheduled for its first full WCAG 2.2 AA audit in May 2027 rather than at launch, a sequencing this brief argues most associations should avoid repeating.
- Video captioning and PDF tagging are the two most commonly overlooked accessibility gaps on association websites, more often skipped than color contrast or alt text.
- The Digital Accessibility Safe Harbor, a federal proposal NANA has tracked since it moved to monitoring status in July 2026, would give small associations a compliance grace period tied to organization size.

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Why this brief, and why now

Director of Digital Renée Okafor led NANA's 2026 member portal relaunch and, in the months since, has fielded a recurring question from member organizations: whether their own websites and portals meet the same accessibility standard NANA held itself to during that relaunch. This brief, co-authored with Accessibility Program Lead Esperanza Villalobos-Nye of the Society of Accessible Design Professionals, sets out what WCAG 2.2 AA actually requires and where association sites most often fall short of it.

Villalobos-Nye co-authored NANA's own comments on the Digital Accessibility Safe Harbor proposal and brings a compliance perspective to this brief that Okafor's own operational experience with the portal relaunch doesn't fully cover on its own.

What WCAG 2.2 AA actually requires

WCAG 2.2 AA has replaced 2.0 as the baseline most federal guidance and a growing number of

state procurement rules point to, adding requirements around focus visibility, drag-and-drop alternatives, and consistent help placement that 2.0 didn't address. For association websites, the standard's practical requirements break into four areas most staff can act on without a full redesign: sufficient color contrast, meaningful alt text on every non-decorative image, captions on video content, and a logical heading structure that a screen reader can navigate in order.

The gaps most association sites still have

Video captioning and PDF tagging are the two most commonly overlooked gaps this brief identifies, more often skipped than the more commonly discussed issues of color contrast or alt text. A conference recording posted without captions, or a downloadable PDF report that reads as an unstructured image to a screen reader rather than as tagged text, fails WCAG 2.2 AA even when the rest of the site meets the standard.

Member portals present a specific challenge beyond the public website: content behind a login, including dues invoices and member directories, is just as subject to WCAG 2.2 AA as public pages, but is audited far less often since it's not visible to search engines or casual public review.

What NANA's own portal audit will cover

NANA's portal relaunched in June 2026 without a full WCAG 2.2 AA audit at launch, a sequencing decision Okafor has said she'd change if planning the relaunch again. The first full audit is scheduled for May 2027, ahead of the portal's planned mobile release, and will cover the member directory, the resource library, and the dues and event-registration flows members use most.

This brief recommends associations planning their own portal or website refresh build the accessibility audit into the project timeline before launch, not after, even where that means a modest delay to the launch date itself.

The Digital Accessibility Safe Harbor proposal

The Digital Accessibility Safe Harbor, now in monitoring status after moving from active tracking in July 2026, would give smaller associations a compliance grace period scaled to organization size rather than holding a two-person association to the same audit timeline as a large one. NANA's comments on the proposal, co-authored by Villalobos-Nye, argued for the grace period while cautioning against a permanent exemption that would leave smaller organizations' members with a lower standard of access indefinitely.

What to do before your next website refresh

Associations planning a website or portal project should request a WCAG 2.2 AA audit as part of the project's initial scope, not as a post-launch add-on, and should specifically confirm whether the audit will include member-only content behind a login. Captioning existing video content and re-tagging existing downloadable PDFs are the two highest-value fixes an association can make without waiting for a full redesign, and this brief recommends starting with whichever of the two carries the larger backlog of untouched content, since both fixes take roughly the same staff time per item regardless of which is addressed first.

Associations without in-house design or development staff should still expect to own the audit request itself, even where the actual remediation work is contracted out. Okafor's experience from the portal relaunch is that a vendor left to define the scope of an accessibility review on its own will often default to a narrower check than a full WCAG 2.2 AA audit unless the contract specifies the standard by name, along with whether member-only content is in scope.

Villalobos-Nye adds that associations should budget for a second, follow-up review roughly a year after any initial audit, since new content added after a site launches — newsletters, event pages, uploaded PDFs — is exactly where the gaps this brief describes tend to reappear even at a site that passed its original audit cleanly.