



Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs is building a more vibrant, resilient New Mexico by fostering greater understanding of the diverse people and traditions of our state, supporting culturally and scientifically rich education, strengthening the creative economy, and preserving our cultural resources.

Ensuring accessibility for all individuals, regardless of ability, is a fundamental responsibility of state government. The New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is dedicated to ensuring New Mexicans of all abilities can access state government resources and services.

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures individuals with disabilities have equal access to public services, programs, and activities. This is fundamental to ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to participate in the cultural life of New Mexico. The 2026 DCA Strategic Plan includes as its first strategic goal, “Expand Access and Inclusion.”

Management of the largest state-run museum system in the country, along with a variety of statewide programs and services make up our core functions which include:

- **Historic Preservation Division (statewide)**
- **Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (Santa Fe)**
- **Museum of International Folk Art (Santa Fe)**
- **Museum Resources Division (Santa Fe)**
- **National Hispanic Cultural Center (Albuquerque)**
- **New Mexico Arts (statewide)**
- **New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum (Las Cruces)**
- **New Mexico Historic Sites (statewide)**
 - Bosque Redondo Memorial at Fort Sumner Historic site (Fort Sumner)
 - Coronado Historic Site (Bernalillo)
 - Fort Selden Historic Site (Radium Springs)
 - Fort Stanton Historic Site (Fort Stanton)
 - Jemez Historic Site (Jemez Springs)
 - Lincoln Historic Site (Lincoln)
 - Los Luceros Historic Site (Alcalde)
 - Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site (Mesilla)



- **New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)**
- **New Mexico Museum of Art (Santa Fe)**
- **New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science (Albuquerque)**
- **New Mexico Museum of Space History (Alamogordo)**
- **New Mexico State Library (statewide)**
- **Office of Archaeological Studies (statewide)**

The agency has over 500 employees throughout its 15 divisions, with another 1,000 or so volunteers putting in more than 30,000 hours annually.

ADA Compliance & Grievance Procedures

Under Title II of the ADA, DCA as state agency with 50 or more employees is required to designate an employee to coordinate ADA compliance. This designated ADA Coordinator is responsible for overseeing our efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under the ADA. Per the ADA, we have provided public notice of the coordinator's contact information and the rights afforded by the ADA. In addition, we have established and published grievance procedures that provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action that would violate Title II. These steps help ensure that individuals with disabilities have a clear and accessible process for addressing barriers or discrimination.

In accordance with these requirements, we have created a website which lists the contact information for the ADA coordinator and our grievance procedures (<https://www.nmculture.org/legal/accessibility>). All division websites also have links directing visitors to this information. Written copies of the procedures are also available at every division location in both braille and large format print.

ADA Areas of Responsibility within DCA:

- Risk & Safety Manager - ADA Coordinator
- Human Resources - Interactive employee process
- Facilities Management Bureau - Facility and site accommodations
- Chair of Education and Engagement - Programs and services

Employment Practices

Our Human Resources (HR) team ensures compliance with the ADA throughout the employee lifecycle, beginning with recruitment. We comply fully with nondiscriminatory hiring and employment practices, including continuous reviewing of job applications and job descriptions to ensure they accurately reflect essential functions and do not inadvertently exclude individuals with disabilities. With new hires, HR provides a new employee orientation training course which includes navigating the ADA and accommodation request process.

HR leads the interactive process with employees when potential accommodation situations arise, engaging both employees and managers to identify reasonable modifications that allow employees to perform their duties effectively. ADA accommodation requests are documented. By monitoring compliance, addressing complaints promptly, and keeping up to date with ADA regulations and relevant case law, we support a diverse, equitable workforce, while mitigating risk.

Future Steps

Our HR and Risk & Safety Manager are creating a more robust employee and manager training infrastructure, with ADA and the accommodations process included as training requirements on a regular cadence.

Educational Programs & Statewide Services

Background

Since August of 2020, we have convened a monthly Accessibility Working Group consisting of staff at all levels across all divisions, along with representatives of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities (GCD). This group focuses on:

- Developing department-wide accessibility resources such as an annual centralized purchase order for American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services;
- Increasing knowledge in every division of ADA requirements and accessibility opportunities;
- Seeking feedback from the disability community to create accessible exhibits;
- Sharing success stories across divisions, including development of sensory backpacks at museums, ASL interpretation at youth programs, etc.;
- Improving online accessibility to programs, services, and resources, including posting ADA notices and grievance procedures on web pages;
- Creating accessible on-site programs and exhibits; and
- Inviting experts from outside of DCA to provide training on topics like Web Accessibility, accessible facilities, support for autistic individuals, and more.

Partners have included GCD, Commission for the Blind, Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Public Education Department, Department of Justice, and the University of New Mexico's Center for Developmental Disabilities, among others.

Examples of Accessible Programming

Some examples of accessible programs include:

- The Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) provides ASL interpreting at public events, including lectures, panel talks, Family Mornings, and gallery talks. MOIFA distributes digital flyers for programs with planned ASL interpretation to the GCD, and the New Mexico School for the Deaf. All in-gallery videos are closed-captioned. Visitors can access exhibit information in large print format.
- The New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science offers quarterly Relaxed Nights. These sensory-friendly evenings are for guests of all ages and feature special, low-stimulation offerings in the museum. In partnership with GCD, the Museum reviewed its new exhibit to identify and address any accessibility challenges.





- The Sandia Mountain Natural History Center, an environmental education center owned by the Albuquerque Public Schools and jointly operated with the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science, built roughly a mile of wheelchair accessible trail. As necessary, the Center modifies programs to include visual, hearing, or mobility impaired visitors.
- Wonders on Wheels (WoW), a mobile museum program run by the Museum Resources Division, is a custom 38-foot RV featuring 300 square feet of arts, culture, history and science exhibits and curriculum-based programming. WoW provides educational exhibits to people with mobility challenges, including seniors and people who are not able to manage the steps of the vehicle. A wheelchair lift allows for access to exhibits inside, in addition tables are set up outside the vehicle hosting a variety of hands-on activities. WoW will also be offering Sensory Bags during programs that include headphones, weighted blankets, and sensory/fidget objects.
- The New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies is building a box of “touchable” artifacts for loan to educators working with the visually impaired, making New Mexico history available to those who may not otherwise have a chance to handle artifacts.
- The New Mexico History Museum collaborated with the Governor’s Commission for the Blind to incorporate braille captions, large print materials, and screen-reader access. The exhibition *Reflections on History* incorporates a photograph of a little boy and dog transformed into a three-dimensional model. This model allows individuals with low or no vision to explore a traditional two-dimensional artifact and learn about history in a more engaging way that provides more context and understanding. Exhibit labels are provided in both English and Spanish.
- New Mexico State Library (NMSL) Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD) provides audio books free of charge to patrons with low vision or other print disabilities. LBPD hosts a Summer Reading Program in addition to distributing Duplication on Demand machines to public libraries around the state. NMSL also collaborated with the GCD on an exhibition to promote *Disability Employment Awareness Month*. The new NMSL Bookmobile includes an accessible ramp for patrons who cannot use steps. Finally, NMSL distributes privacy booths to public libraries that need space for telehealth and distance learning. These booths are ADA compliant with large doors and wheelchair ramps.

Future Steps

We are committed to continuing to make our public programs, services, and exhibits accessible by:

- Ensuring all gallery videos are closed captioned and audio is transcribed, with alternate-format information available by request;
- Responding quickly to requests for accommodation, and providing more accessibility-first programming;
- Building partnerships with organizations that serve people with disabilities;
- Continuing to work with GCD staff to identify and address accessibility issues during the design of new exhibits;
- Creating more sensory backpacks, developing sensory friendly programs, and creating dedicated sensory spaces in our facilities; and
- Continuing the training of our staff, volunteers, and docents to provide the best possible service to people with differing abilities.



Facilities

We are committed to providing access to all our facilities, including over 100 historic structures within our portfolio of over 240 structures statewide. These sites, encompassing over 1.3 million square feet across 1,000 acres, present unique challenges in balancing the mandates of the ADA and historic preservation. The ADA, enacted in 1990, ensures equal access to public facilities, while state and federal preservation laws protect the historical integrity of these significant buildings. We proactively address this balance through thoughtful design and customized solutions, ensuring that accessibility enhancements respect each building's unique historical character. Our ongoing commitment is demonstrated by the over \$1.33 million invested since FY21 to improve access across both historic and non-historic properties. The following examples illustrate DCA's successful integration of accessibility and preservation.

Bosque Redondo Memorial at Fort Sumner Historic Site (Fort Sumner)

- \$184,000 to upgrade the concrete ADA pathway from main building to Place of Reflection
- \$28,000 to add accessible parking to rear parking lot for improved entry
- \$10,000 to install ADA compliant seating along the wheelchair accessible path

Center for New Mexico Archaeology (Santa Fe)

- \$31,000 to make outdoor break area fully accessible and to add ADA compliant table and seating

Fort Selden Historic Site (Radium Springs)

- \$75,000 to add ADA parking spaces to existing parking lot and install new concrete pathway with railing from the parking lot to entrance
- \$25,400 to add ADA accessible pathways for site program needs
- \$21,000 to provide existing pathways with a better engineered fill surface for improved access

Jemez Historic Site (Jemez Springs)

- \$21,600 to upgrade the front walkway and entrance to the visitor center

Lincoln Historic Site (Lincoln)

- \$38,500 to upgrade the walkways to three historic buildings to improve access
- \$17,900 to install ADA parking spaces & sidewalk at the historic Lincoln Courthouse

Museum of International Folk Art (Santa Fe)

- \$60,000 to add an ADA compliant lift to existing stage in auditorium (in progress)

National Hispanic Cultural Center (Albuquerque)

- \$45,000 to repair existing sidewalk tripping hazards throughout the campus for ADA compliance

New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum (Las Cruces)

- \$50,000 for asphalt walkway improvements for better ADA access

New Mexico Museum of Art (Santa Fe)

- \$100,000 to completely replace the concrete sidewalks around the historic 1917 building to improve ADA accessibility outdoors
- \$50,000 to add automatic door openers to restrooms in the historic 1917 building and to the glass door leading into a gallery for better accessibility

New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science (Albuquerque)

- \$128,600 to remove uneven surfaces and tripping hazards along the exterior pathways and sidewalks campus-wide and install new ADA benches

New Mexico Museum of Space History (Alamogordo)

- \$42,500 to create a new concrete pathway for ADA access to the Rocket Park exhibits

Taylor-Mesilla Historic Site (Mesilla)

- \$507,500 to install ADA ramps, pathways, courtyards, and bathroom facilities to allow for an accessible route throughout the historic structures (in progress)

Future Steps

Each division will create a Transition Plan by the end of FY26 as required by ADA Title II. The transition plans will be living documents, updated annually as barriers are removed or new facilities issues arise. These plans will provide a framework for continuous improvement of facilities for people with disabilities. This ensures the facilities remain current and reflect ongoing progress in addressing accessibility barriers.

Each Transition Plans will include the following:

- **Self-Evaluation:** Assess facilities and programs to identify physical accessibility barriers (e.g., doorways, ramps, communication).
- **Barrier Removal:** Define and implement strategies for removing barriers (e.g., architectural modifications, assistive technology).
- **Timeline:** Develop and follow a schedule for barrier removal projects to achieve accessibility goals.
- **Personnel:** Designate accountable individuals/departments to implement and monitor the plan.
- **Communication:** Address physical and communication barriers by providing alternative formats and ensuring effective communication.
- **Grievance Procedure:** Reference to DCA's existing procedures.
- **Public Notice:** Publicly provide information on the plan, ADA requirements, and compliance efforts.





Photography
The first photograph was taken in 1826 by Nicéphore Niépce. It was a very small, square image made of bitumen on a piece of paper. The first photograph that could be seen by the naked eye was made in 1827 by Nicéphore Niépce and his partner, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. It was a very small, square image made of bitumen on a piece of paper. The first photograph that could be seen by the naked eye was made in 1827 by Nicéphore Niépce and his partner, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. It was a very small, square image made of bitumen on a piece of paper.

Photography
The first photograph was taken in 1826 by Nicéphore Niépce. It was a very small, square image made of bitumen on a piece of paper. The first photograph that could be seen by the naked eye was made in 1827 by Nicéphore Niépce and his partner, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. It was a very small, square image made of bitumen on a piece of paper.

NHM NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM

Large Print Gallery Guide
Reflections on History

For an online version please use the QR code below:



Technology

Technology plays a pivotal role in making our agency more accessible to individuals with differing abilities, breaking down barriers that have traditionally limited participation in cultural, artistic, and historical experiences. With innovative tools and platforms, people with various abilities can engage with museums, theaters, galleries, and other cultural venues in ways that were previously unthinkable. From virtual tours and digital exhibitions to assistive technologies that support physical access, technology is bridging gaps and fostering inclusivity in cultural spaces.

For individuals with physical disabilities, technology has revolutionized access by enabling virtual and augmented reality experiences that allow for remote participation in cultural events and exhibits. This virtual engagement ensures that mobility challenges or geographical limitations no longer prevent people from experiencing art and culture. Additionally, assistive technologies, such as audio descriptions, sign language interpretation, and captioning, have greatly enhanced the ability of individuals with visual, auditory, or cognitive disabilities to enjoy and interact with cultural materials.

Beyond simply providing access, technology also empowers cultural organizations to create more inclusive and adaptive environments. Interactive websites and apps can be tailored to provide personalized experiences, ensuring that people with varying abilities are able to explore content in ways that meet their preferences. In this sense, technology not only assists in overcoming physical barriers but also supports a broader cultural shift toward equal access and representation for all individuals, regardless of ability.

We are committed to ensuring access for all to our significant online resources. We currently maintain approximately 49 websites which support online exhibits, scholarly research, educational information, grant applications, purchasing of admissions tickets, and digital media that engage the public with the culture, history, art, and science of New Mexico.

Online Resources

These 49 websites can be divided into the following two categories.

- Self-hosted websites - hosted at the NM Department of Information Technology (NMDoIT) datacenter
- Third party hosted websites - not hosted by DCA at the NMDoIT datacenter but are managed by DCA.

Many of these 49 websites contain multiple subdomains which function as separate websites but are considered a subsection of the primary website.

Below is a brief overview of the functions of these websites.

- Primary websites provide information about the department, and the individual divisions.
- Multiple subdomain sites provide information for individual exhibits or projects that are occurring at or are related to museums or historic sites.
- A website that provides grant applications for the NM state arts program.
- A Geographic Information Systems (GIS) provides information of cultural resources throughout New Mexico.
- An online ticketing and admissions portal for museums, historic sites, and events.
- Multiple online collection databases provide the public with access to the museum collections without needing to physically visit.
- Multiple online research databases provide access to primary source material.

Following the United State Department of Justice’s final ruling to update ADA Title II regulations concerning web content and mobile applications, we are actively working to ensure compliance with the new requirements. Some immediate steps we have taken include conducting an early internal audit of our website inventory, obtaining a broad overview of compliance issues, and creating a web accessibility working group.

Audit

Our initial internal audit has revealed that several of our websites are lacking key areas, including:

Inaccessible navigation menus for users that rely on screen readers and other accessibility tools making it difficult to access all content;

Alternative text for images leaving users with visual impairments to navigate our media-rich websites without context or information;

Inadequate color contrasts and color combinations which creates a difficult reading situation for users with low vision;

Non-functional keyboard navigation for users that have impaired motor functions and cannot navigate using a mouse; and

Content that should be archived in a separate section of the websites.

Working Group

In January 2025, we created a working group consisting of users from all divisions that have websites or web content. Monthly, the group meets to discuss topics such as:

- The April 2026 federal deadline for web content compliance;
- Plans to reduce the scope of websites and decommissioning of inactive websites;
- Training on identifying concerns and improving new content so it is compliant moving forward;
- Gaining insight, guidance, and recommendations from the Governor’s Commission on Disability regarding the new ADA rules;
- Training on creating accessible content, including creation of accessible PDF documents; and
- Requiring all new IT contracts provide for ADA compliance.

Funding

Because of our proactive initial internal audit, we submitted and received a \$350,000 special appropriation to implement our plans for bringing our web content and mobile applications into alignment with the new federal ruling.

Our Office of Information Technology has been working on gathering information on possible vendors that can provide services on ADA compliance for our current websites, as well as providers for staff training that would allow us to remain compliant in the future.



ACCESSIBLE
PARKING
PART OF THIS
PARKING SPACE IS
RESERVED FOR
VEHICLES WITH
A DISABLED
PERSON.
VIOLATORS
WILL BE
SUBJECT TO
A FINE
AND/OR
CITATION.

VA
ACCESS



Future Steps

Moving forward we will continue having monthly meetings with the Web Accessibility working group and may increase frequency as the remediation phase begins. Our goals and objectives will be established by the end of the first FY26 quarter.

The special appropriation will be used for three major components of the project:

- A third-party contractor well versed in digital accessibility will conduct a full audit to determine what remediation can be done internally versus what will need to be contracted;
- Initial redressing of the audit findings, prioritizing work that can be completed by staff; and
- Train staff in maintaining accessible web content and best practices for the future, including building organizational knowledge and structure for accessibility moving forward.

Future work will include the full redesigns of several of current websites with ADA accessibility as a priority.