Accessibility Report

Aug. 2024

COLORADO
Statewide Equity Office

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Report Highlights

+5%

Annual Improvement in Accessibility Maturity

(Statewide Equity Office's Access Maturity Model)

$269k

In Accommodation Reimbursements

(Provided by the Statewide Equity Office)

250

Hours

Spent by the Statewide Equity Office on statewide policy review, technical support, training, and program development.

Executive Summary

The Statewide Equity Office (SEO) was established by [Colorado House Bill 22-1397](#) to develop Statewide strategies for inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

The SEO is structured to effectively address its mandate with eleven full-time employees, including the office's SEO director. Staff within the SEO are distributed among various strategic focuses like internal strategy, supplier diversity, external strategy, and accessibility.

Initiated by the [2022 budget request for a statewide accommodation fund and ADA program](#), the accessibility program strives for equal access in all State buildings, systems, programs, and communications, as required by the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The SEO and accessibility program are housed in and support the Department of Personnel and Administration (DPA) in several capacities, including developing best practices for non-discrimination and coordinating multi-agency initiatives to support accessible public services. The statewide equity manager for accessibility, also serves as DPA's Title II ADA coordinator.

The SEO's accessibility program places a significant focus on sustainability and equity in new initiatives and government services, aiming to create a universally accessible environment across all State facilities and communications that target specific, measurable objectives regarding access. This involves regular assessments of accessibility baselines across the State, developing an accessibility maturity model, a training plan, and active engagement with community leaders to identify and bridge service gaps.

This report outlines the actions the SEO's accessibility program has taken in its first year to meet SEO mandates in accessibility.

Self-Evaluations and Assessments

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including employment, education, transportation, and public accommodations. It requires reasonable accommodations to be provided to individuals with disabilities to ensure they have equal access and opportunities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. It requires entities to make their programs and services accessible to people with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access.

The Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) requires facilities that are designed, constructed, or altered with federal funds to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. It sets standards for accessibility in buildings and facilities, including wheelchair access, signage, and other design features to ensure equal access for individuals with disabilities.

The ADA requires covered government entities to conduct self-evaluations to assess their compliance with laws and standards such as Section 504 and the ABA and identify any barriers to access for individuals with disabilities.

Under Title II of the ADA, covered entities include state and local governments, as well as any agency, department, or other instrumentality of a state or local government. These entities are required to conduct a self-evaluation of their programs, services, and facilities to identify any barriers to accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Conducting self-evaluations provides covered entities with insight into where accessibility barriers exist and assists the organization in identifying any modifications required to ensure full and equitable access.

Self-Evaluations

Typically, a self-evaluation requires assessing the organization's facilities, policies and procedures, and other programs and services in which residents or visitors interact with the covered entity or participate in a program or service. This may include:

- Programmatic access review
- Inspection of facilities
- Assessment of digital assets and communication tools
- Inventory and review of policies and procedures and local laws
- Community engagement
- Barrier removal efforts

The SEO has not conducted a full self-evaluation of all state entities due to staffing constraints and the complexities associated with State government.

However, the SEO has documented its efforts to assess Statewide readiness to improve ADA compliance and accessibility through annual survey efforts, collaboration, monthly forums, and an ADA Accommodation Fund to support agencies statewide.

The 2023 & 2024 survey efforts, along with this report and other initiatives enumerated in this document, represent the SEO's first effort to document State ADA continuity and identify a path to the development of a statewide ADA transition plan. These efforts are measured through the SEO's Access Maturity Model.

2023 Access Maturity Model Survey

In 2023, the SEO surveyed State agencies for the first time to identify the State's baseline level of maturity using an Access Maturity Model (AMM). The maturity model is used to measure progress at a high level and is not intended to represent action by the SEO, but the hard work of many State ADA and accessibility professionals.

Data collected by the survey includes information about the levels of maturity each agency could report across several Lines of Effort (LOEs) identified as critical to the development of an access-first culture, including the agency's maturity in:

- Notification and effective communication
- Knowledge and skills
- Support
- Community engagement
- Governance

These LOEs also represent the SEO's AMM structure.

The SEO's AMM includes five stages of maturity and five dimensions, or LOEs, that focus on targeted action items that demonstrate the agency's progression and maturity over time.

For example, to reach the defined stage of maturity in the notification and effective communication dimension, an inventory of ADA policies is required; however, in the repeatable stage (the next level of maturity), one must identify the policies (defined) that need to be revised or created and published and implement those policies agency-wide.

The following table illustrates how these concepts are rendered in a maturity model.

Dimension /Stage	Undefined	Defined	Repeatable	Managed	Optimized
Notification	No policies.	Assessing policies.	Implementing policies.	Monitored policies.	Best practice.
Knowledge & Skills	No skills.	Some skills.	Required skills.	Managed skills.	Best practice.
Support	No support.	Some support.	Required support.	Managed support.	Best practice.
Program Development	No developm-ent.	Some development.	Required development processes.	Ongoing improvement.	Best practice.
Governance	No governance.	Some governance.	Transition plan established.	Barrier removal objectives being realized.	Best practice.

The five stages (table headers) of the SEO's AMM are:

- **Undefined:** No action has been taken in this LOE
- **Defined:** Planning and review processes are in progress
- **Repeatable:** Implementation
- **Managed:** Continuous improvement
- **Optimized:** Innovation and best practice

The five dimensions (first column) and definitions (table data cells) of SEO's AMM are:

- **Notification and Effective Communication:** In the repeatable stage of this dimension, all required notifications, policies, and complaint procedures have been implemented. Auxiliary tools and resources are readily available.

- **Knowledge and Skills:** In the repeatable stage of this dimension, workforce access development and training plans are in place but are inconsistently implemented.

- **Support:** In the repeatable stage of this dimension, dedicated resources are available for accessibility in the help section of customer-facing websites.

- **Program Development and Community Engagement:** In the repeatable stage of this dimension, organizational efforts to incorporate community input are being built into program development. Staff are highly encouraged to include community input and engagement in access-related SOPs.

- **Governance:** In the repeatable stage of this dimension, end-to-end defined and documented processes are available and transparent in a central repository. Barriers have been identified and policies reflect the agency's efforts to remove them.

In 2023, an internal survey using the AMM was conducted to identify Colorado's current level of maturity. This represents the SEO's first effort to assess State maturity in accessibility.

Example Survey Question:

Support (Dimension Question): Fully trained staff can support access-related inquiries and complaints. Multiple ways to communicate are implemented and are continuously improved upon. Choose the most correct answer:

- **Strongly Disagree** - No action has been taken
- **Disagree** - We have defined the scope of this effort but have not implemented agency-wide plans
- **Neutral** - Policies and procedures have been implemented
- **Agree** - This effort is being actively managed and monitored by staff
- **Strongly Agree** - My agency is a best practice in this space

Overall, respondents reported a score of 2.96 out of five across all dimensions, which suggested the State was in the defined stage of maturity. The following chart highlights State responses.

Dimension	Undefined	Defined	Repeatable	Managed	Optimized
Notification & Effective Communication	X	X	3.08		
Knowledge & Skills	X	2.88			
Support	X	X	3.38		
Program Development & Community Engagement	X	X	3.27		
Governance	X	2.27			

The survey also included guidance for the SEO regarding the implementation of the ADA Accommodation Fund, and the consistency of statewide governance, and suggested that agencies that did not have official governance scored 25% lower than those that did, on average.

This would appear to indicate that governance has a significant impact on other dimensions, as well as its own.

Challenges and Opportunities Identified

Given the State's large footprint and varying levels of maturity, through its AMM survey and other data points provided by the Governor's Office and partner agencies, the SEO identified the following challenges to and opportunities for consistent application of the ADA and deployment of barrier removal programs statewide.

Challenges:

- There is varying availability and distribution of resources and tools.

- Funding and resource levels are not consistent across agencies. This impacts:

  - Accommodations and modifications
  - Implementation of effective communication tools and resources
  - Consistency in services
  - Barrier removal programs
  - Implementation of statewide policies and procedures

Opportunities:

- While inconsistently dispersed, many State agencies have developed robust processes and governance.

- The role of the ADA coordinator is established in most agencies. However, the distinction between those who serve in Title I and Title II roles was not clarified (this will be addressed in future surveys).

- The availability of accommodation funding and accommodation-related resources is improving.

- HB21-1110, later modified in SB23-244 and HB24-1454, created a mandate that requires State agencies to address key action items from the notification and effective communication dimension, which has resulted in alignment on numerous accessibility initiatives, including the deployment of support and accommodation-related services; LOEs in the notification and effective communication dimension.

The implementation of HB21-1110 and the [Technology Accessibility Program (TAP)](#) supported ideal conditions for the implementation of some processes and supports, which was the most logical place to align SEO efforts in FY 2023-24.

Actions Taken by the Statewide Equity Office in FY 2023-24

In 2023, the SEO began its administration of the ADA Accommodation Fund, monthly ADA forums, technical assistance, the provision of resources, and the administration of an annual AMM survey and stakeholder engagement program.

The SEO utilizes the AMM to develop training initiatives intended to raise awareness at the State about compliance baselines across all dimensions, best practices in equity and accessibility, and move the State toward the development of an ADA transition plan.

These training initiatives are realized through:

- The SEO's monthly ADA forum

- Provision of accommodation resources

- Training tailored specifically for agency needs in alignment with the AMM

- Partnerships with other ADA professionals and accessibility organizations

Development of the Access Maturity Model

As referenced in the survey section of this report, the AMM was developed to establish a State baseline in ADA compliance and categorizes accessibility efforts into five stages of maturity, including undefined, defined, repeatable, managed, and optimized. Accessibility efforts are also categorized into five independent dimensions, including notification and effective communication, knowledge and skills, support, community engagement and program development, and governance.

These dimensions are described in additional detail below.

- **Notification and Effective Communication:** Focuses on ensuring proper ADA notifications are deployed, effective communication tools and processes are established, and accommodation and grievance procedures are published.

- **Knowledge and Skills:** Focuses on ensuring relevant staff have access to role-based training and the development of policies that promote inclusive culture and awareness.

- **Support:** Focuses on ensuring the proper support mechanisms are in place and supported by staff with policies and procedures, and training and awareness.

- **Community Engagement and Program Development:** Focuses on the development of community engagement programs and initiatives that improve access to government services and activities.

- **Governance:** Focuses on the development of advanced accessibility governance and the establishment of a barrier removal program.

Each dimension of the AMM requires specific action items, called proof points, which indicate a new level of maturity as action items are completed.

For example, agencies that do not have required notifications posted will score lower in the notification and effective communication dimension than those that have robust notices, policies, and readily available access to auxiliary tools and resources. The idea is to move to a consistent level of maturity incrementally by providing the appropriate training, resources, and best practices to support State ADA and accessibility professionals.

ADA Forums & Outreach

Since the SEO's first monthly ADA forum in Sept. 2023, more than 300 participants have engaged in ADA training provided by the SEO via monthly ADA forums and targeted training initiatives in partnership with State agencies and local government.

Regarding the ADA forum, approximately 400 have participated (average attendance: 40 - 60 monthly), which the SEO estimates represent roughly 100 ADA and accessibility professionals statewide.

To date, the following ADA resources have been provided to ADA and accessibility professionals:

- **What is an Access Maturity Model?**
- **Notifications Required by the ADA**
- **Denial of Participation**
- **Undue Burden**
- **The ADA Accommodation Process**
- **Effective Communication**
- **Using Colorado Relay**
- **Access Maturity Model Wrap-Up**

Most training includes associated resources and tools and is housed in the SEO's **Access Library**, which all State of Colorado ADA and accessibility professionals are provided access to.

Examples of other tools and resources available include:
- **Title II Program Review Checklist**
- **Implementation of Dimension 1 Action Items**
- **State Accommodations Resources List**
- **Free Role-Based Training Examples**

In addition, the statewide equity manager for accessibility and statewide accommodation specialist participate in weekly and monthly workgroups to promote the use of the ADA Accommodation Fund and participation in ongoing training and awareness campaigns.
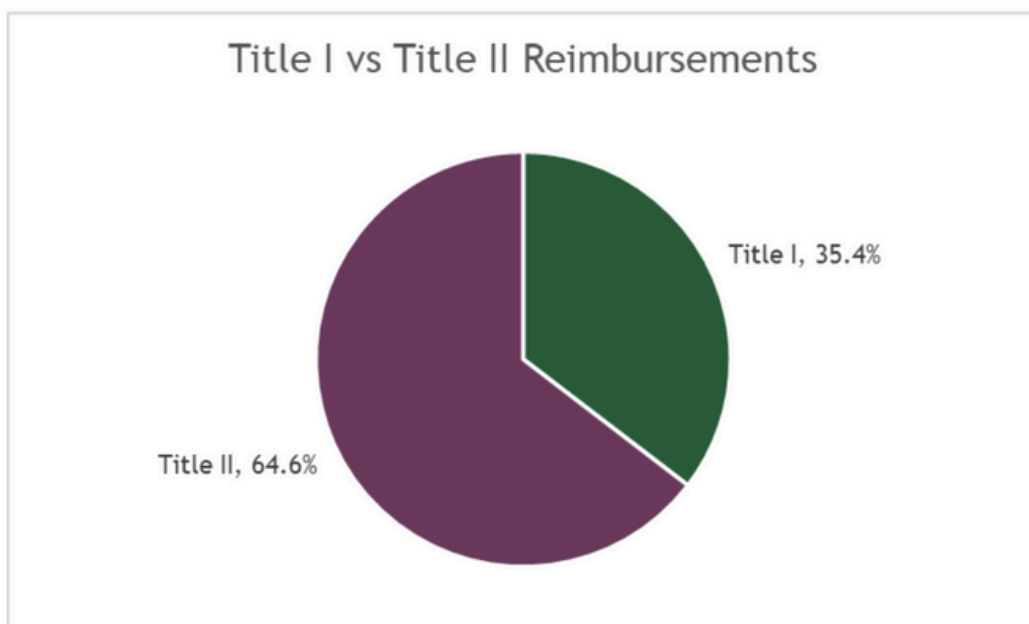
Deployment of the ADA Accommodation Fund

In 2023, the SEO established an ADA Accommodation Fund to support agency accommodation and modification efforts. All State agencies are eligible for accommodation spending reimbursements and can submit **requests for ADA accommodation funding** as needed.

For FY 2023-24, the ADA Accommodation Fund was utilized in the following ways:

- $269,801.72 in approved accommodations

    - $95,557.06 in accommodations for Title I - Employment requests

    - $174,244.66 in accommodations for Title II - State and Local Government requests

A breakdown of these expenses is illustrated in the chart below.

Title I vs Title II Reimbursements

Title I, 35.4%

Title II, 64.6%

In large part, the fund has been used to ensure effective communication services like ASL, CART, and other translation services are provided. However, the SEO has also invested in barrier removal projects and purchased employee accommodation equipment.

In FY 2024-25, the SEO anticipates that the ADA Accommodation Fund may need to be further resourced as 67% of the fund was utilized over seven months. The ADA Accommodation Fund was not launched until late 2023 when the SEO accommodation specialist position was filled.

Consulting Services

The statewide equity manager for accessibility and ADA accommodation specialist also provide consulting services to State agencies. In FY 2023-24, approximately 250 hours of services were provided, which resulted in recommendations, policy development, ADA technical guidance, and the creation of ADA transition plan-related collateral.

As of June 2024, the bulk of the SEO's consulting efforts were dedicated to ADA technical assistance and the navigation of agency-specific ADA policy implementations.

Statewide Community of Practice - Accessibility

In June of 2024, the SEO launched a Statewide Community of Practice for Accessibility (SCP-A). Participants in the SCP-A were selected based on their expertise, position of authority, lived experience, and unique perspectives.

In FY 2024-25, the SCP-A will focus on further improvement of the AMM, establishing best practices for community engagement, review of the ADA Accommodation Fund, and strategic implementation of training initiatives to establish a State baseline for accessibility.

The SCP-A holds monthly meetings for internal stakeholders and quarterly meetings for internal and external stakeholders.

Initiatives the SEO anticipates the SCP-A will engage in FY 2024-25 include:

- Further improvement of the AMM

- Recommendations for the implementation and improvement of the ADA Accommodation Fund

- Identification of new training initiatives|

- Recommendations for the development of an ADA Transition Plan

- Accessibility recommendations that will improve the State's awareness of and readiness to achieve improved access

- Development of an accessibility resource library

Year One: Data and Survey Results

In June 2024, the SEO conducted its second annual survey to measure its education and awareness efforts in 2023.
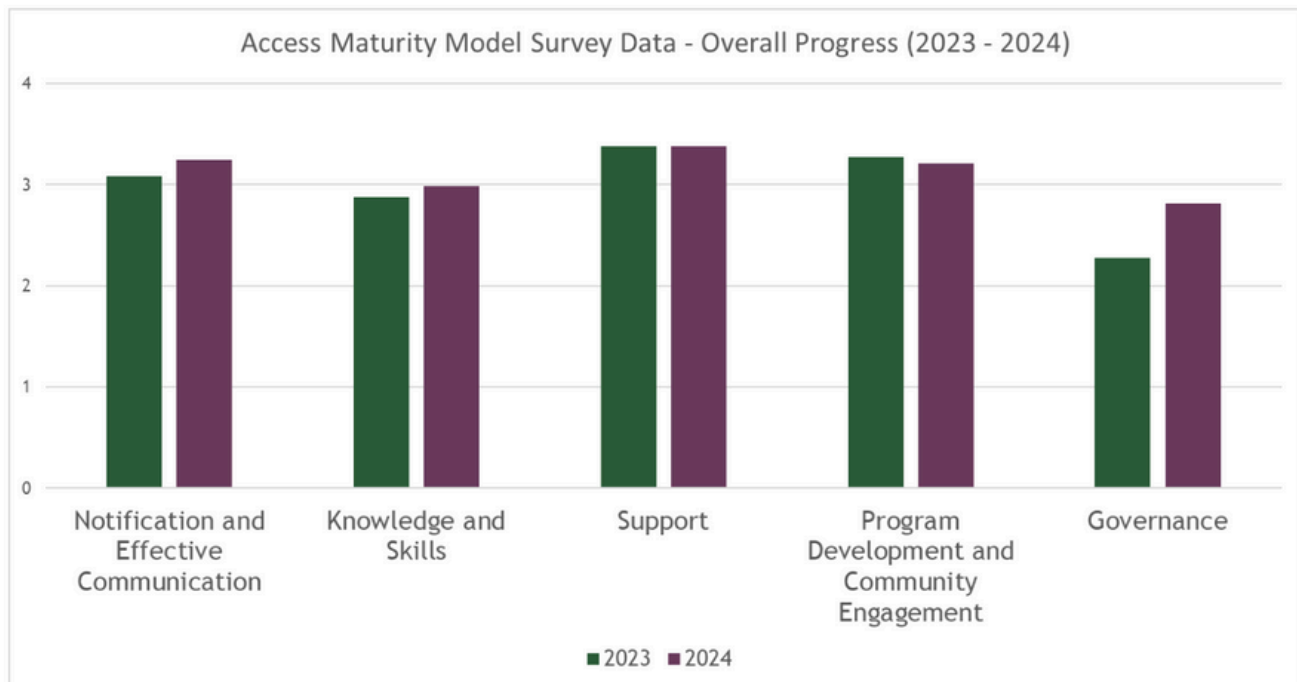
Annual surveys also provide the SEO with the data needed to manage the AMM using an iterative framework, which means the SEO will adjust its plans based on the most obvious need on an annual basis.

For example, if, during future survey efforts, the SEO identifies continued gaps in things like accommodation policies and accessibility statements, the SEO will revisit this dimension and provide targeted support to State agencies to ensure consistent implementation.

The following bullet points enumerate survey results the SEO obtained in its first and second annual AMM survey.

- 57 ADA and accessibility professionals have participated in the AMM survey effort

- 87.5% of respondents say their agency has at least one dedicated ADA coordinator (the distinction between Title I and Title II was not made and will be addressed in future surveys)

- Respondents indicate that State total accommodation costs are roughly $960,000 annually ($17,500 annually per program on average)

    - However, costs are inconsistent statewide

- The ADA Accommodation Fund expended roughly $269,000 in accommodation reimbursements from Nov. 2023 to June 2024, approximately 67% of its total budget

- The SEO provided roughly 250 hours of policy review, training, and technical support statewide

- 15 new trainings, tools, and resources were provided to State agencies

- Respondents reported a 5% improvement in State accessibility in FY 2023-24

Regarding the reported 5% improvement, the following chart illustrates where improvements were made statewide.

Access Maturity Model Survey Data - Overall Progress (2023 - 2024)

Data can be extrapolated as follows:

Dimension	2023	2024	% Change
Notification & Effective Communication	3.08	3.24	5.19%
Knowledge & Skills	2.88	2.98	3.47%
Support	3.38	3.38	0.00%
Program Development & Community Engagement	3.27	3.21	-1.83%
Governance	2.27	2.81	23.79%

This data suggests the State is now in the repeatable stage of maturity against the SEO's model and is progressing in its efforts to provide consistent and reliable service to all customers of the State of Colorado.

Next Steps

Development, Communication, and Feedback

The SEO has adopted the AMM as a statewide training program and scorecard. In 2025, the SEO will shift its focus to the knowledge and skills and support dimensions. The SEO intends to utilize feedback from the SCP-A to identify best practices and process improvements in this space.

This means that the SEO will focus on training initiatives that improve on the development of role-based training and support mechanisms, following Dimension 1, notification and effective communication.

To ensure the SEO maintains ongoing oversight of its initiatives, the SEO will survey State ADA coordinators annually to identify opportunities for improvement.

Utilization of the AMM also means that the SEO can pursue initiatives with attainable goals and measurable outcomes, while also being flexible and responsive to agency-specific needs. Annual survey results will help the SEO identify which initiatives have the most likelihood of success and sustainability, while also providing the flexibility to be responsive to the most pressing needs statewide.

To learn more about the SEO's accessibility plans, visit the
SEO's accessibility & accommodations page.

Future Goals

Using SEO's existing AMM, the ADA Accommodation Fund, monthly ADA forums, technical support and assistance, and stakeholder collaboration, the SEO aims to achieve the following objectives.

Establishing an ADA Transition Plan

As referenced in this report, the development of an ADA transition plan is a key SEO goal. This plan will outline specific steps and timelines for achieving full compliance with the ADA and improving accessibility across all State facilities and communications.

Continued Improvement in Access Maturity

Building on the progress made in the AMM survey results, the goal is to aim for further improvements in each dimension of the model. This involves targeted training initiatives, support mechanisms, and community engagement efforts to move State agencies toward the managed and optimized stages of maturity.

Expansion of ADA Accommodation Fund

Considering the success of the ADA Accommodation Fund in supporting agency accommodation and modification efforts, the SEO will continue to seek additional resources or funding to further expand the fund. In addition, the SEO will continue to market the fund as a stopgap for accommodation needs to ensure statewide access and consistency.

Strengthening Governance and Compliance

Given the impact of governance on other dimensions of the AMM, the SEO aims to further strengthen governance practices across all State agencies.

Enhancing Training Initiatives and Resources

Continuing to develop and provide role-based training, tools, and resources for ADA and accessibility professionals statewide is a key SEO goal. This will help ensure staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support access-related inquiries, complaints, and accommodations.

Boosting the SCP-A's Influence

The SEO recognizes the value of unique perspectives and lived experiences and aims to improve the SCP-A's relevance and ability to influence the public process and SEO's accessibility efforts.

In addition, the SEO plans to develop iterative project plans that allow it to be responsive to the State's greatest needs and challenges. Future AMM surveys will influence this effort.

As the SEO identifies new opportunities to create sustainable and consistent policies and best practices, this plan will be revised with new and obtainable objectives.

Appendix A: Definitions

Access Maturity Model (AMM)
A framework developed by the Statewide Equity Office to measure the maturity of accessibility efforts in State agencies. The model categorizes accessibility efforts into five stages of maturity, including: undefined, defined, repeatable, managed, and optimized, and into five dimensions, including notification and effective communication, knowledge and skills, support, community engagement and program development, and governance.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
A federal law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

The Architectural Barriers Act (ABA)
Requires that buildings and facilities that are designed, built, altered, or leased with federal funds be accessible to the public, especially people with disabilities.

Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA)
State law in Colorado that prohibits discrimination based on disability, including requiring accessibility in State buildings, systems, and communications.

Department of Personnel and Administration (DPA)
The department within the State of Colorado that houses the Statewide Equity Office and oversees accessibility initiatives, including the Access Maturity Model.

Statewide Community of Practice for Accessibility (SCP-A)
A community workgroup established by the Statewide Equity Office to identify best practices in accessibility and collect community input and lived experiences.

Statewide Equity Office (SEO)
Established by Executive Order 2020-175, the SEO is responsible for developing Statewide strategies for inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in Colorado. The SEO focuses on ensuring accessibility in all State buildings, systems, and communications to comply with CADA and the ADA.