



Accessibility Questions to Ask Your Digital Agency

A guide to understanding your agency's capability

Your agency says it has accessibility covered. But commitment and capability aren't the same thing. And if they don't, the stakes are real: In 2025 alone, plaintiffs filed 3,117 federal website accessibility lawsuits under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a 27% increase from the previous year, according to [Seyfarth Shaw](#).

Regardless of who built your site, your organization carries the legal and reputational risk.

This guide gives you the questions to ask and the context to interpret the answers. These questions aren't meant to put your agency on the spot. They're meant to give you a clearer picture of where your agency may need support. In most cases, the answers will strengthen the relationship, not strain it—and they'll help you understand where your organization may need to take a more active role.





Why your agency likely *can't own this alone*

Most agencies approach accessibility with good intentions. The challenge isn't intent—it's scope. Agencies are built to deliver. They plan, design, build, and launch, with a core project-based model. But accessibility is a continuous discipline. Every content update, new feature, and third-party integration can introduce new issues.

Without sustained monitoring and governance, even a well-built site can fall out of conformance over time. And when it does, the demand letter will be addressed to you, not your agency.

What agencies typically do well:

- Build to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA at the time of launch.
- Run automated accessibility scans during development.
- Incorporate accessible design patterns into components and templates.
- Provide handoff documentation, including accessible style guides and component libraries.



Where gaps commonly emerge



Monitoring accessibility after launch, as content and features evolve.



Testing with experts and people with disabilities, not just automated tools.



Managing accessibility across third-party integrations, plugins, and vendor-supplied content.



Maintaining conformance documentation, such as Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®) reports, required by enterprise and public-sector buyers.



Providing the governance infrastructure needed to demonstrate ongoing compliance.

Knowing where your agency's capability ends is the first step toward building a program that protects you. The questions in this guide are designed to help you do exactly that.





Questions to ask your agency

The following questions are organized into four categories. They're meant to start a productive conversation that helps you understand where your agency excels, where it may need support, and where you need to own more of the process.



Category 1: Current status

Before exploring how your agency approaches accessibility, it's worth understanding what's happening with your digital experiences now. The answers to these questions establish a baseline and often reveal more than expected.

Q1

What's the current state of accessibility on our digital experiences, and how has it been trending over time?

Context: Critical barriers prevent people with disabilities from completing key tasks like checking out, logging in, and submitting a form. These issues are most likely to generate complaints, and understanding the trajectory matters as much as the current count. Are issues increasing, decreasing, or recurring in the same areas?

What you're seeking in an answer: An agency that can answer with specificity—broken down by severity, impact, and trend over time—has invested meaningfully in accessibility infrastructure. An agency that can't answer, or hasn't been tracking systematically, is likely relying on ad hoc testing. That's an important gap to address, both for planning remediation and for building a documented record that protects you if you ever face legal challenges.



Q2 What tools are you using to evaluate accessibility, and are you combining automated scanning with manual testing?

Context: Automated tools catch only a fraction of WCAG failures. Testing by experts and people with disabilities is essential to surface the rest—whether it's a person navigating with a keyboard, a screen reader user encountering an unlabeled form field, or someone with a cognitive disability trying to complete a multi-step process.

What you're seeking in an answer: A strong answer names specific tools and describes how automated and manual testing work together. If your agency relies solely on automated scanning, it's worth a deeper conversation on what their testing approach may be missing.

Q3 Have our digital experiences ever undergone a third-party accessibility audit?

Context: A third-party audit from independent accessibility experts gives you a level of validation that internal testing simply can't. It surfaces issues automated tools miss and provides context on root causes. If you sell into enterprises or the public-sector, third-party experts can also help produce documentation, like VPAT reports, that show buyers you're taking accessibility seriously.

What you're seeking in an answer: If your agency has never commissioned or supported a third-party audit, you should discuss whether that should be part of your ongoing program. If you've received a complaint or work in a heavily regulated industry, an independent audit is often one of the most important steps you can take.



Category 2: Process and standards

An agency's processes shape the quality of their accessibility work. These questions help you understand whether accessibility is embedded from the start or treated as a checklist item at the end of a project.

Q4 What accessibility standard does your team follow, and which version of WCAG?

Context: WCAG 2.1 Level AA is the minimum benchmark for compliance with most accessibility laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Conforming with WCAG 2.2, the latest version, can help you meet the needs of a broader group of users and stay ahead of evolving regulations. The European Accessibility Act (EAA), for example, references EN 301 549, which is being updated to align with WCAG 2.2.

What you're seeking in an answer: An agency still working to WCAG 2.0 is behind the current standard. An agency that can't describe what Level AA conformance means in practice may not have the accessibility expertise your organization needs.

Q5 Who owns accessibility on your team, and when do they get involved in the process?

Context: Accessibility is most effective and cost-efficient when addressed from the beginning of a project and throughout the product development lifecycle, not retrofitted at the end. An accessibility issue that's caught in the design phase takes substantially less time and effort to fix than one caught after launch.



What you're seeking in an answer: A strong answer names a specific individual or team responsible for accessibility, with clearly defined responsibilities for each role—designers, developers, content authors, and QA. “Everyone is responsible” typically means no one is accountable. These responsibilities should be documented in a standard operating procedure (SOP) to be tracked and enforced.

Equally important is when each role gets involved. The answer should be early and often, with defined checkpoints and quality gates at every handoff—design to development to QA to release—so issues are caught before they move downstream.

Q6 How do you manage accessibility when inheriting work from another agency or integrating third-party tools?

Context: Many organizations work with multiple agencies and a complex mix of third-party tools—payment platforms, personalization engines, marketing automation, and more. Each of these touchpoints can introduce accessibility issues, and it's important that any given agency is equipped to handle them.

What you're seeking in an answer: A strong answer describes a clear process for evaluating inherited code, designs, and content, along with third-party integrations, before they're incorporated into your experience. An agency that assumes third-party content is accessible, without checking, is creating risk you'll end up responsible for.



Q7 How and when do you involve people with disabilities in your testing or research process?

Context: Testing with people with disabilities is one of the most effective ways to surface issues that automated tools and even experienced developers can miss. It also validates that your digital experience is genuinely usable—not just technically conformant—with the assistive technologies your customers rely on.

What you're seeking in an answer: An agency that involves people with disabilities throughout the process—not just in accessibility testing—shows a meaningful commitment to inclusive design. Their inclusion should extend to all phases of user research, including scoping and discovery, where they can surface not only barriers, but also opportunities for usability improvements and new features or functionality.

The goal isn't just to identify what's broken; it's to design better experiences from the start.

Q8 Besides design and development, what's your process for accessible content creation—including alt text, captions, and plain language?

Context: Accessibility isn't just a design or development responsibility. Every product description, image, video, form label, and document is a potential accessibility issue—and content is updated constantly across most organizations. Unlike a one-time code fix, content changes with every campaign, policy update, or new resource published.

Each update can introduce new barriers, including inaccessible PDFs and other documents that are often missed. Organizations with high content volume are particularly exposed, but this challenge applies broadly wherever content is frequently created or revised.



What you're seeking in an answer: A strong answer describes a process that ensures content authors, not just developers and designers, follow accessible practices. This might include content authoring guidelines, training for marketing and editorial teams, or built-in accessibility checks in your content management system.

An agency that treats accessibility as purely a technical concern is leaving a gap that will only grow as your content does.



Category 3: Tooling

The tools your agency uses to evaluate and address accessibility have a direct impact on the quality and completeness of their work. These questions help you understand whether your agency's tooling is giving you an accurate picture of your accessibility status.

Q9

How does accessibility testing fit into your development pipeline, and what happens when an issue is identified late in a build?

Context: Accessibility issues are cheapest to fix when caught in design—before a single line of code is written. But catching them there requires intentional process: accessibility annotations, WCAG-conformant design system components, and designer involvement in accessibility reviews.

Once work moves into development, integrating accessibility testing into the pipeline—running automatically as part of each build or release—ensures issues are identified before they reach production. It's far more cost-efficient than fixing issues after launch and keeps your backlog from growing.

That said, late-stage issues still need to be prioritized, not deferred. Logging them for a future release and shipping anyway is how backlogs start.



What you're seeking in an answer: How an agency responds to late-stage accessibility issues says a lot about how seriously they take accessibility. Ideally, accessibility is integrated into the development process from the start, so late-stage surprises are the exception, not the rule. But when issues do surface late, are they escalated and resolved before launch, even if it affects the timeline? Or are they logged for future remediation and released anyway?

Launching with known barriers on critical flows like checkout or account login creates real legal exposure for you.

Q10

How do you ensure automated scanning is just one part of your accessibility testing?

Context: Not all accessibility issues are equal, and not all of them are detectable by automated tools. Color contrast failures and missing alt text are straightforward for automated scanners to detect. But ensuring a form is usable by a person who is blind, or a checkout flow can be navigated by keyboard alone, requires human evaluation.

What you're seeking in an answer: An agency that understands the difference between automated and manual testing—and that incorporates both into its process—is better positioned to give you an accurate picture of your actual accessibility status. An agency that treats a passing automated scan as proof of full accessibility conformance is underestimating your exposure.



Category 4: Maintenance and monitoring

Agencies are typically engaged on a project basis, which means post-launch maintenance may fall outside their scope entirely. That's worth understanding upfront. These questions aren't necessarily about holding your agency accountable for long-term monitoring — they're about understanding what they hand off, what they leave behind, and whether they're set up to support you if you need them after launch.

The answers will also help you identify where your organization may need to own more of the maintenance process or bring in a dedicated accessibility partner to fill that gap.

Q11 What accessibility documentation and resources will you provide at handoff?

Context: Without the right documentation and resources, keeping your site or app accessible after the project wraps gets much harder, especially if your content is managed by non-technical teams.

What you're seeking in an answer: An agency should hand off accessibility work that's fully documented, transferable, and includes these deliverables:



Brand and style guidelines that clearly outline WCAG-conformant color combinations and contrast ratios, including guardrails and rules of use.



Accessible component libraries and design system elements your team can use to build new pages without introducing accessibility issues, with documented rules of use—including known limitations such as character count thresholds and behavior at 200% text size.



CSS written with proper semantic markup to reinforce content structure, with documentation on rules of use—including known limitations such as character count thresholds and behavior at 200% text size.



Accessible default settings in your content management system (CMS), so content authors start from an accessible baseline with guidance on how to maintain its accessibility.



Q12 What do you put in place to help us maintain accessibility after launch?

Context: Most agencies hand work off to their clients at the end of a project and move on. That's expected. But without the right tools, documentation, and processes in place, accessibility issues accumulate undetected until a user with a disability encounters them or files a complaint.

What you're seeking in an answer: A strong answer describes a specific monitoring process: automated scanning at defined intervals, a process for reviewing results and prioritizing remediation, and clear ownership of post-launch accessibility. "As needed" or "when clients ask" is a gap worth addressing.

Q13 What guidance or processes do you provide to help us prevent accessibility issues from creeping back in after launch?

Context: Accessibility issues commonly resurface when new content is published without checks, when a platform update overwrites accessible code, or when a third-party tool is updated without evaluation. For organizations operating at scale, this can happen quickly.

What you're seeking in an answer: A strong answer shows the agency understands that accessibility doesn't end at launch and has built that reality into their handoff. They should share documented processes, regression testing guidance, and recommendations for how your team can validate accessibility as part of every release cycle—even after the agency is no longer involved.



Q14 If accessibility issues attributable to your work are identified after launch, what's your process for addressing them?

Context: Even with thorough testing, accessibility issues can surface after launch. What matters is whether the agency has a clear, documented process for handling them — and whether that process is agreed upon before work begins. Ambiguity here often means the client absorbs the cost and effort of fixing issues the agency introduced.

What you're seeking in an answer: A strong answer describes a defined remediation process for post-launch issues attributable to the agency's work, including timelines, ownership, and how disputes are handled. Prioritize agencies that are willing to put this process—along with any accessibility guarantees—in the statement of work or contract. If your agency hasn't thought about this, or considers their responsibility to end at handoff, that's a risk worth understanding.





Interpreting the answers

The responses you receive will vary widely depending on your agency's size, maturity, and investment in accessibility. Here's a practical framework for interpreting what they share.

Strong foundation

Your agency can explain their accessibility approach with specificity and confidence: who owns it, how it's tested, when people with disabilities are involved, and how accessibility is monitored after launch. If this describes your agency, you're well-positioned for success. But even strong agencies benefit from independent validation and support from experts.

Significant exposure

Your agency struggles to describe a consistent accessibility process, relies entirely on automated tools, and has no clear approach to post-launch monitoring or testing with people with disabilities. This is particularly concerning if your digital experiences handle sensitive transactions and face high legal scrutiny. An independent audit and a more structured program are worth prioritizing.

Room to grow

Your agency is doing the right things at the build stage but hasn't fully addressed what happens after launch. They may have clear answers to questions about standards, ownership, and development pipeline—but struggle to describe a systematic monitoring process, how they handle regression, or whether they involve people with disabilities in testing. These gaps are common and entirely manageable with the right support. This is the most common situation.

Findings by conformance level

Conformance	Rules evaluated	Issues discovered
Level A	45 / 63	87
Level AA	82 / 100	392
Level AAA	5 / 6	12

Element missing alt text

 **Critical**



How to close the gaps

If your agency's answers reveal gaps, that doesn't mean it's time to find a new one. It means getting them the right support and ensuring you have the third-party tools and expertise to fill what falls outside their scope.

A dedicated accessibility partner doesn't replace your agency. Instead, the right partner will work alongside them. Even strong agencies can't do everything, and some aspects of a complete accessibility program fall outside what any agency typically covers.

What Level Access provides

Level Access works alongside your agency to help you:



Find the issues that matter:

Level Access offers continuous monitoring and expert auditing—including testing by people with disabilities—that gives you an accurate picture of your accessibility status across your entire digital portfolio.



Fix and prevent issues in the flow of work:

We equip you with AI-powered prioritization and developer tools that surface the highest-impact issues first and help your teams resolve them faster, right in their existing workflows.



Continuously prove progress:

We can support you with governance, reporting, and conformance documentation, including VPATs®, that show ongoing progress to legal, regulatory, and procurement stakeholders.



Advance digital accessibility at scale *with Level Access*

Level Access has partnered with organizations across industries for more than 25 years. We work directly with agency partners to support accessible design and development at every stage of the product lifecycle.

Our hybrid intelligence solution combines platform automation, AI, and human expertise to help organizations find, fix, and prove accessibility at scale. Named a Leader in the Forrester Wave™: Digital Accessibility Platforms, Q4 2025, and trusted by hundreds of leading organizations, Level Access offers the most advanced digital accessibility solution in the market.

[Connect with our team today](#) to learn how we can help you create effective, inclusive digital experiences.

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