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Accessibility Revolution: Cross-Disciplinary Strategies for Accessible Design

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This chapter argues for a shift from checklist-driven accessibility toward a proactive, learner-centered design model powered by cross-disciplinary collaboration. Drawing on practice at Indiana University, it frames accessible design and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as complementary foundations, then critiques surface-level remediation that overlooks rigor, equity, and student experience. The core case details a partnership among Teaching and Learning Design (TLD), the Assistive Technology and Accessibility Centers (ATAC), and the University Library. Beginning with an ATAC-trained liaison embedded in TLD, the teams co-created reference guides, delivered targeted trainings, integrated accessible library resources, and normalized workflows that exceed minimum legal standards. Through "pinch point" exemplars—PDF remediation, accurate captioning and media supports, discipline-specific needs (e.g., math notation, foreign-language markup), and multimodal engagement—the chapter shows how shared tools, roles, and processes increase efficiency while preserving academic integrity. It also addresses systemic barriers, including instructional designer preparation gaps, misaligned interdepartmental workflows, and faculty

resistance, offering practical strategies for process evaluation, knowledge building, and relationship development. The chapter concludes with guiding questions and a reflection activity to help readers map local resources, identify collaborators, and design actionable improvements. The result is a replicable model for institutions seeking sustainable, high-quality accessibility that advances inclusion and student success.

Drawing from the authors' collaborative work at Indiana University (IU), this chapter presents a compelling case for applying cross-disciplinary collaboration to expand accessibility beyond a simple set of checklists into a proactive, effective, and sustainable course design model. The chapter begins by grounding readers in key concepts such as accessible design, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), proactive accommodation, and barrier reduction. It then explores the limitations of traditional accessibility approaches—particularly the overreliance on surface-level checklists—and argues for a more meaningful, learner-centered design philosophy.

The core of the chapter details the story of how a cross-departmental partnership amongst the Teaching and Learning Design (TLD), Assistive Technology and Accessibility Centers (ATAC), and University Library has revolutionized the accessibility practices within the institution. The revolution began with ATAC training a TLD instructional designer who could serve as the liaison between the two departments. The continued conversation and knowledge sharing between the two groups led to a reference guide on best practices, internal training to all TLD's instructional designers, and proactively accessible online course designs that exceed minimum legal standards. To best steward limited resources, the collaboration expanded to leverage existing accessible library resources and share strategies with librarians.

By collaboratively addressing challenges, the teams developed creative solutions to common accessibility "pinch points," including inaccessible PDFs, multiple means of engagement, multimedia captioning challenges, and discipline-specific content, such as math and foreign language materials. The "pinch point" case examples illustrate how shared problem-solving, tools, workflows, and expertise can dramatically improve both efficiency and the quality of accessible course design.

The chapter addresses systemic challenges such as instructional designers' training gaps, misaligned workflows, and faculty resistance. It provides practical strategies for identifying and resolving these issues through process evaluation, targeted training, and relation-building across departments. To support readers in applying these insights, the chapter concludes with a reflection-based activity designed to assess current accessibility practices, identify collaboration opportunities, and develop actionable strategies for improvement.

Guiding Questions

To prepare for the reflection-based activity at the end of the chapter, reflect on the following guiding questions while reading:

1. What does my university offer in terms of accessible resources and support? (i.e., Library, Accessibility Services)
2. Who might be able to collaborate with me on creating an accessible solution?

3. Where can I network with others facing the same pinch points to learn more about what they are doing?

Key Terms and Concepts

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

A cooperative process across more than one discipline where partners work together to reach a common goal.

Accessible Design

A framework that focuses on fixing the environment and complements governmental requirements

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A framework that encourages the use of multiple ways of representation, engagement, action, and expression (CAST, 2025).

Pinch Point

A problem that arises when completing a task or following a process and hinders one's productivity.

Theories and Best Practices

Effective coordination across campus entities requires a proactive approach to course design. The success of this strategy depends on strong interdisciplinary collaboration practices, the application of sound learning theories, and a deep knowledge of accessibility remediation. To be effective, one must focus on developing a vision that will unite instructional designers, educators, and accessibility professionals in their mission to support students' success in their educational pursuits. Romano (2025) echoes this call to action:

It's time for design to be more inclusive, and it starts with accessibility. We each navigate the world according to our varied skills and cognitive or physical abilities. The same is true online—but designers seldom take into consideration the fifteen percent of people worldwide who have some form of disability. That number will grow as our population ages. We need to shift our mindset so we can start shaping a world that people with varying abilities can navigate easily (para. 1 - 2).

Romano's (2025) quote firmly encapsulates where we currently find ourselves as instructional designers (IDs) and faculty – how can we "shift our mindset so that we can start shaping a world that people with varying abilities can navigate easily" (para. 2) that maintains excellence in the overall learner experience. Making a course accessible should not translate into simply removing activities that are difficult to remediate. Hamraie (2016) highlights the importance of human-centered design:

> Accessibility standards reduced disability to functional limitations that could be addressed through checklist solutions… They did not, however… emphasize the qualitative dimensions of meaningful accessibility or creative designs beyond minimal standards (p. 9).

Rather than just meeting the minimum accessibility requirements, the goal should be to reach higher toward a meaningful, well-designed experience that best matches the learning outcomes and is enjoyable for all students regardless of their interaction needs. Accessibility is an imperative element of the course design process, not a reactive closing step.

To accomplish this goal, best practices for instructional design and accessibility should guide the process from beginning to end. Instructional design offers a systematic process to develop effective and efficient quality instruction that provides pertinent educational content for the learner (Berger, 1996; Morrison et al., 2007); aligns assessments with learning objectives; and includes course features designed to meet the varying needs of learners. Here, accessibility best practices are guided by the requirements outlined in 2018 Revised Standards of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1873 (U.S. Access Board, 2018), WCAG 2.1 (World Wide Web Consortium [W3C], 2025), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), Title II. These policies set a legal mandate and provide the technical standards for proactively preparing online courses such as with captioning standards, keyboard navigation expectations, and markup and structure changes for screen reader compatibility. With a thorough breakdown of accessibility across all aspects of digital courses, these longstanding guidelines can be integrated and addressed throughout the instructional design process.

Two primary design frameworks have emerged to inform design decisions: Accessible design and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Accessible design centers on rehabilitating the environment (Hamraie, 2016) which complements the above requirements; whereas, UDL identifies poorly designed curriculum as “disabling” (Waitoller & Thorius, 2016) and advocates for course materials that can be widely accessed by diverse learners “rather than [just] the ‘average’ user’” (Hitt, 2018, p. 56), regardless of “a formal disability diagnosis” (Hamraie, 2016, p. 110). Together, these frameworks improve course quality in addition to meeting accessibility requirements by providing materials that can be accessed in multiple ways, such as closed captioning and screen-reader-friendly reading materials. They extend beyond a checklist of technical requirements and move towards embodied the UDL accessible practice where the focus is on creating enhanced learning experiences and materials for all learners regardless of their access needs.

Common Accessibility Issues

The first framework, accessible design, addresses the current issue of inaccessible environment and content of online courses, an area of increasing attention in news and legislation. Here, technology can serve as both an asset and obstacle in online classes, both creating and fixing accessibility issues. The expensive implications of inaccessible online courses appear to be that institutions either pay hefty lawsuits when their courses are not accessible, or they must invest in extensive development costs to ensure compliance (Fennelly-Atkinson et al., 2022). Neither option is ideal nor sustainable: there is a need to develop a more cost-effective approach to accessible course design.

Institutions rely on accessibility checklists and tools focusing on surface-level concerns while neglecting the heavy work of more complex issues (Fennelly-Atkinson et al., 2022). Checklists target easily remediated targets, such as meaningful links and alternative text for images, but they fail to address caption accuracy or the need for tactile alternatives. In the hands of someone unfamiliar with the diverse range of learners’ access needs, a checklist is limited in scope and practicality. The conclusion is “accessibility can only be comprehensively addressed through a collaborative effort between the institution and instructors or designers” (Fennelly-Atkinson et al., p. 568). Accessibility issues will persist if the remediation process focuses solely on completing checklists without focusing on how the materials impact the learning experience.

The distinction between surface-level and intensive accessibility intervention reveals the persisting problem. The most common accessibility issues are related to materials like files and documents, pages (i.e., tables and headings), and links

(Briggs et al., 2024). Further, accessibility concerns can be discipline-specific, such as the visuals in an art or theater course (Briggs et al., 2024). Of note, Briggs et al. (2024) found courses were more likely to be accessible if the faculty had instructional design support or prior knowledge, leading the authors to recommend early feedback and intervention in course development. Stakeholders would need to become aware of what lies beneath the surface and the practices to appropriately resolve these concerns. Collaboration across campus entities has a large potential impact that could be a more cost-effective and efficient route.

What other areas of accessibility benefit from collaboration? To better illustrate the need for collaboration and efforts beyond checklist remediation, let us discuss three areas of accessibility concerns further: Materials, multimedia, and discipline-specific content.

Materials

In online courses, many readings and activities are uploaded as separate files. Research articles are commonly available in Portable Document Format (PDF). There are well documented accessibility issues with the PDF format. For example, see Darvishy (2018) for an overview of PDF accessibility standards and challenges. Çakir (2016), in a review of PDFs, notes that all PDF documents should be considered inaccessible and contain errors. Fayyaz et al. (2021) found that tables in PDFs pose exceptional challenges. In a study of over 11,000 PDFs published between 2010-2019, Wang et al. (2021) found only 2.4% satisfied all the authors' defined accessibility criteria.

Based on these issues, the accessibility of materials— whether provided by libraries both directly through publishers as well as through vendors in aggregate databases (such as those from EBSCO and ProQuest)— is currently not in an optimal state. Hovious and Wang (2024) found that aggregate database vendors note that they do not have control over document accessibility in their databases but put the responsibility on journal publishers to provide accessible articles. However, publisher output, as noted, is not accessible (Nganji, 2015; Nganji, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Instructors might be unaware that the resources they are sharing and requiring, even if from an institutional resource or well-known database, are inaccessible.

Multimedia

Multimedia such as video requires captions and a review of visual aids and video quality. Although courses in Briggs et al.'s (2024) study passed the accessibility check for captions, there were unresolved issues. The Web Accessibility Initiative (2024, September 17), in describing the captioning standard of WCAG 2.1, holds that machine captions are insufficient. They conclude machine generated captions only meet requirements if "automatically-generated captions do not meet user needs or accessibility requirements, unless they are confirmed to be fully accurate" (W3C, 2024, para. 9). Furthermore, Section 508 echoes this conclusion, "current auto-captioning technology does not meet the minimum standard for pre-recorded media" (General Services Administration, 2025, para. 9). Being automatic, computer-generated captions save time and costs, but this may be at the expense of accessibility.

Parton (2016) observed that many online videos that rely on automatic captioning have critical errors. Their evaluation of YouTube auto-generated captions on lecture videos noted consistent errors, rendering the videos inaccurate and at times unintelligible– "a barrier to communication" (Parton, 2016 p. 15). In some cases, the automatic captioning added swear words or misrepresented crucial details about assignments (Parton, 2016). Relying on automatic captions is not a sufficiently accessible option as the students receive less or incorrect information. Parton further proposes additional elements that could interfere with the accessibility of captions: accents, sound quality, position of the speaker, pacing, etc. (Parton, 2016). Human captioning takes time and money. Although automatic captioning is an appealing alternative, it can create more problems than it solves. Readers are encouraged to review the American Disabilities Act Title II Regulations for clarification of the April 24, 2026, requirements (Department of Justice, 2024, April 24).

Discipline-specific needs are a critical consideration throughout accessibility remediation efforts. For example, STEM courses can pose a challenge with their unique demands. The use of lecture videos with handwritten equations and calculations requires thorough transformations to be accessible to a screen reader. Complex graphs or figures, especially if required for a homework assignment, similarly must undergo transformation as alternative text would not sufficiently cover all that is involved. Additionally, terminology that is specific to the field might be incorrectly captioned. Some universities try to find a solution with a license or software, but there are limitations. For example, in The Ohio State University's documentation on STEM accessibility, they note that their LMS can only display LaTeX in certain quiz question types, and the resizing of equations only works for Mac computers (ASC Office of Distance Education, 2024). There is no easy solution for complex courses in cases like these; an expert in the field is necessary to ensure accuracy and success.

Instructional Designer Gaps

Instructional designers (IDs) are "pivotal players in the design and delivery of learning experiences... [and] bridge the gap between faculty instruction and student online learning" (Intentional Futures, 2016, p. 2). As practitioners of the art and science of instructional design, they use a systematic process of applying instructional and learning principles to the various components of learning materials and experiences (Hansel, 2023; Olesova & Campbell, 2019; Outlaw & Rice, 2025). According to the literature, there is a direct correlation between student success and courses designed with instructional designers (Altena et al., 2019). Additionally, courses designed with instructional designers result in high-quality program development (Alexander et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2013). We know IDs are a necessary component of collaboration efforts.

Despite their tremendous skills toward creating quality courses, IDs reported receiving insufficient training through their master programs and learned about accessibility during their work experience (Lomellini et al., 2024). Through this informal learning, many IDs might be familiar with Universal Design for Learning and understand the importance of designing accessibly, but gaps in their skillset and knowledge can limit the application of proactive design.

This lack of preparedness for more extensive accessibility considerations leads to a smaller range of solutions that designers can offer or pursue. Lomellini et al. (2024) interviewed instructional designers on their experience with accessibility and observed several noteworthy trends:

1. Instructional designers desire more training "due to the lack of focus on these topics in their graduate studies" (Lomellini et al., 2024, p. 315-316).
2. There is increasing pressure from institutions for instructional designers "to not only be knowledgeable but also responsible for accessible and inclusive course design" (Lomellini et al, 2024, p. 316-317).
3. While quality assurance frameworks are appreciated, they also "present barriers due to peer reviewers' lack of knowledge" (Lomellini et al, 2024, p. 320-321).

These three observations, as well as the previously mentioned studies, signify a critical tension: IDs have a strong potential impact on education, faculty and improving course accessibility, but the success of this approach is through collaboration. In a more robust collaboration, IDs provide early intervention while faculty provide discipline-specific knowledge of norms (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Chao et al., 2010; Hansel, 2023) and content that is relevant to those interventions, and additional stakeholders supplement the instructional designer knowledge.

Cross-Disciplinary Co-Design

What does collaboration mean? Collaboration is:

1. a cooperative process (Colbry et al., 2014; Hansel, 2023)
2. amongst two or more people (Albrahim, 2018; Hansel, 2023)

3. which leverages each partners' expertise (Hansel, 2023; Richardson et al., 2019)
4. using well-defined roles (Albrahim, 2018; Hansel, 2023),
5. common language, shared rules, and expectations (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Hansel, 2023; Magruder et al., 2019; Wood & Gray, 1991)
6. to reach a common goal (Albrahim, 2018; Day et al., 2024; Hansel, 2023; Hart, 2018; Magruder et al., 2019).

The best practices to support the collaborative process includes clearly identifying who leads or owns initiatives (Linder et al., 2015), focusing on the relationship-building aspects (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Chen & Carliner, 2021; Hansel, 2023); defining a shared, common goal; and facilitating discussion (Day et al., 2024). These are essential to the ID-faculty collaborative process.

As previously mentioned, instructional designers (IDs) and faculty are commonly partnered to collaboratively design online coursework in higher education (Chen & Carliner, 2020; Hsu, 2020), which positively correlates to increased course quality (Hart, 2018). The ID-faculty collaboration supports instructors and faculty who are either not trained to do and/or have varying levels of familiarity with accessibility and remediation work and inaccessible content is a barrier to student success (Francis et al., 2021; Guilbaud et al., 2021; Linder et al., 2015).

Further, this ID-faculty collaboration can be extended across disciplines and areas of expertise to improve accessibility efforts by including accessibility experts, librarians, leadership, and other disciplinary experts. By leveraging cross-disciplinary collaborations, accessibility challenges can be tackled by brainstorming about each partner's available resources and how to use those to support student access needs. To put this into perspective, Day et al. (2024) recommended identifying barriers and solutions such as using existing accessible library resources rather than using other remediation options.

Partnership Overview

In 2017, two departments began to collaborate on tackling accessibility challenges or pinch points with high-profile online courses: Teaching and Learning Design (TLD) and Assistive Technology and Accessibility Centers (ATAC). TLD provides instructional design support for instructors who are creating or modifying online courses. Best practices in instructional design guide their practice, which involves incorporating accessibility best practices and library resources into the course creation. ATAC provides content remediation services for courses that receive student accommodation requests. They offer their accessibility expertise in developing creative solutions for challenging content beyond the seven simple steps: Headings, images, links, colors, lists, tables, and video/audio (Connected Professor, 2025). Further, ATAC shares their established remediation workflows, feedback, and guidance.

TLD prides themselves on creating engaging online courses that are visually beautiful, employ innovative learning activities using the most cutting edge educational technologies available, and provide a meaningful learning experience aligned with learning objectives; whereas, ATAC prides themselves on ensuring that all online content meet accessibility standards; providing guidance on meeting the requirements for creating an accessible course; and ensuring that all stakeholders know their responsibility for achieving those standards. Both groups want the best for students, but their perspectives on how to accomplish this are quite different. Imagine conversations where the instructional design department wanted to get students excited through innovative experiences while the accessibility department wanted compliance so that all students participated. Naturally, there have been conflicts.

During the initial meetings, the instructional designer (ID) would share a new activity, and the accessibility department would suggest stripping it down to an accessible word document consisting of a header and bulleted list. For example, an ID wanted to include flashcards that students could use for studying. The tool used for the flashcards was not accessible, so the suggestion was to remove the activity for all and create a document using headers and bulleted lists. Both groups were disheartened and frankly found the collaboration difficult. The solution came when leadership appointed one ID who would

become the accessibility liaison, which meant developing a collaborative relationship with the accessibility team to create a beneficial partnership for both.

Those initial conflicts have led to a revolutionary mechanism for collaboratively tackling big accessibility pinch points within online courses. The TLD accessibility liaison and ATAC leader collaboratively developed a different mindset. Instead of designs that just met the baseline requirements, the focus became let us find a way to create something better that both meets accessibility requirements and enhances the overall learning experience for all students.

Thus began a very fruitful partnership that has revolutionized the online design process and produced many innovative, accessible online courses. The partnership has grown beyond the initial pair. Another TLD ID joined in to capture the innovative strategies used to tackle our pinch points in an electronic book, provide tips of the week for other university IDs, and offer training around specific accessibility best practices for instructional designers. Also, several ATAC experts collaborated on different projects that fit within their area of expertise, such as STEM-related strategies, tactile graphics, and 3D visualizations. The output from this collaboration displayed UDL's principle of multiple methods of representation with tactile graphics and 3D prints of bullets for a forensics course lab kit.

Finally, librarians stepped into the collaboration to share their workflows and expertise on finding accessible library resources. Of note, partnering with the library proved mutually beneficial as the library is responsible for ensuring their own materials are accessible and face similar barriers of limited resources. This allowed TLD, the ATAC, and the library to incorporate accessible materials into their workflows, reducing time spent on remediation. The core of this partnership has been turning pinch points or challenges into solutions that fit with each group's mission.

Evaluating Pinch Points

Online accessibility work guarantees plenty of opportunities to identify pinch points and create novel solutions. The heart of the process is building a mutually beneficial collaborative relationship, which includes regular meetings or other communication genres, discussing the challenges each are facing, and leaning into each other's expertise to develop a solution that helps everyone.

Pinch Point #1: Limited Resources

The ATAC team consists of nine experts who support multiple campuses and thousands of students. Meeting the accommodation requests for several hundred students can stretch resources thin. The solution was to train instructional designers in accessibility best practices, which reduced the overall support requests made to the ATAC due to fixes being made proactively before accommodation requests. This freed up time for both departments.

Pinch Point #2: PDF Remediation

Many online courses contain multiple PDFs, which tend to be inaccessible (Çakir, 2016) and require a significant amount of time to remediate.

For example, one TLD project had 104 article PDFs with 58.7% being scanned articles that required remediation. With a tight deadline on this specialized content, the TLD team discussed the project with ATAC who recommended pulling existing accessible articles from the library and linking into the course. Next came a conversation with the librarian who shared how to navigate databases and permalinks. The result was 218 hours (about one and a half weeks working non-stop) spent remediating and linking to accessible library resources. Of note, 32.7% of the articles were available in an accessible format within the library.

Another piece of the solution was to collaboratively identify a tool to better support the remediation efforts. ATAC worked with TLD to find a better optical character recognition (OCR) product, MathPix (2025), which partially automates remediation of

inaccessible PDFs. The recommendation from the ATAC improved the accuracy of text converted from scanned (image-only) PDFs, reducing the number of errors that had to be fixed manually and allowing for more documents to be fixed in the same span of time.

Pinch Point #3: Language Markup

Online foreign language courses require special HTML markups so that screen readers can pronounce the text with an appropriate accent. This is vital to ensure that learners hear the appropriate reading of the text so they can learn how to speak the language correctly. The pinch point is that introductory language courses tend to have both English and the foreign language so to remedy this one must go line by line to add the special html markup.

The solution came when the TLD accessibility liaison asked an ATAC expert for a simpler, faster way where you could highlight the foreign language text and select the language tag needed, much like one does when making a word bold. It turned out that the ATAC expert had created his own language markup tool, which he shared with TLD. Additionally, this led to the tool being offered publicly to further enhance foreign language accessibility efforts (Indiana University, 2020).

Pinch Point #4: Discipline-specific challenges

Some new math programs were launched which resulted in TLD receiving several new courses in that area. Discipline-specific accessibility fixes may require specialized knowledge to create accessible content. For instance, math equations need to be written in LaTeX using the correct symbols. The issue becomes knowing the difference between what looks like the correct symbol and what really is the correct symbol. An example is the minus symbol, which looks like the dash on a keyboard, but there is a difference. The specific minus symbol must be used for a screen reader to read it correctly. This is just one of many math-specific accessibility issues. TLD had multiple math courses that needed to be designed quickly.

The solution was to offer weekly meetings between IDs designing math courses and an accessibility math expert. Training was provided during the session on frequent accessible fixes while allowing IDs to ask questions specifically tied to their course. The result included building multiple IDs' math accessibility knowledge plus the TLD accessibility ID expert documented the strategies so future IDs could quickly address these issues.

Improvement Strategies

Evaluating potential pinch points offers an excellent opportunity to improve design by finding solutions for repetitive tasks or areas where frequent questions are received. Begin with tasks that are easy wins or cost the most time and/or effort. Freeing up time via automation or information sharing can enable you to focus on more complex pinch points. To move forward on these, it can be helpful to identify the type of issue you are experiencing. These typically fall into four categories:

1. Process inefficiencies caused by unnecessary steps, lack of communication, disorganization, or lack of intentional project management.
2. Lack of knowledge of how to do a task, use a process, or whom to connect with to solve a problem.
3. Workflow gaps resulting from a lack of interdepartmental communication about existing processes and how they impact other departments' workflow.
4. Instructor hesitance towards change that may result from lack of knowledge, misconceptions about accessibility, or resistance to change.

Process Inefficiencies

Solving process inefficiencies is typically the most effective way to fix internal pinch points, so it is worth discussing first. The goal is to change the process so that the issue is addressed or eliminated. When possible, make accessibility part of other

processes to ensure it is considered in all relevant discussions and that rework is not necessary after most of a project is finished. Here are some useful questions to ask when identifying process inefficiencies:

1. Who is the designated individual tasked with planning projects related to accessibility?
    a. Are they aware of their responsibilities regarding accessibility?
    b. Do they have a system for managing the tasks in their project?
2. Which steps must be repeated by one or multiple people?
3. Is it necessary to complete all these steps, or could they be streamlined to happen only once or twice?
4. How are accessibility processes integrated into other business processes (such as creating materials, building tools, or approving vendors and software)?
5. Where might new accessibility processes be integrated to improve business processes?
6. Which tasks do you (or others) keep putting off?
    a. Why are these tasks being put off?
    b. What elements of the tasks might be overwhelming or challenging?
7. How would you break down the process into actionable parts and document the steps for future projects?

Whether you answer the above questions alone or as a group, write down your answers to these questions to help identify what can be addressed to create a more streamlined process. Many times, existing processes have been done that way for a long time and there may be push back, such as “We’ve always done it this way.” Questioning existing processes gives you the chance to create a problem statement along with identifying specific areas to address.

Lack of Knowledge

Once you have identified what information is missing and who needs it, the next step is to determine the best way to share the information. This depends on your audience and how they will use the content. We have found that providing information in numerous modalities is best for overall retention, which includes live training sessions, just-in-time resources, and hands-on training.

Live training sessions or webinars provide opportunities for attendees to ask questions and to create facilitator presence. Attendees are more likely to participate or reach out after sessions if they know you are approachable. Recording sessions for those who cannot attend makes the content more available to a wider audience.

Just-in-time resources (job aids) provide step-by-step instructions for completing specific tasks or processes. They can be extremely helpful for providing specific information about processes that users do not complete on a regular basis (and therefore would have no opportunity to memorize). Wherever possible, provide job aids directly in the workflow where they will be needed, for example as links to a website, application menu, or a task in project management software. If that is not possible, ensure that the materials are kept in a centralized place that can be easily shared. This may be an official knowledge base within your institution or more informally in a shared document storage that can be linked in emails, chats, presentation slides, and other documents. Consistent communication about this shared storage location is necessary to train individuals on where to look for resources.

Direct hands-on training may be required for role-essential knowledge. Effective training offers learners the opportunity to practice with real-world examples, to ask questions, and to refresh their memories with supplemental job aids. Over time, the number of simple questions asked will likely decrease, allowing you time to focus on more complex issues.

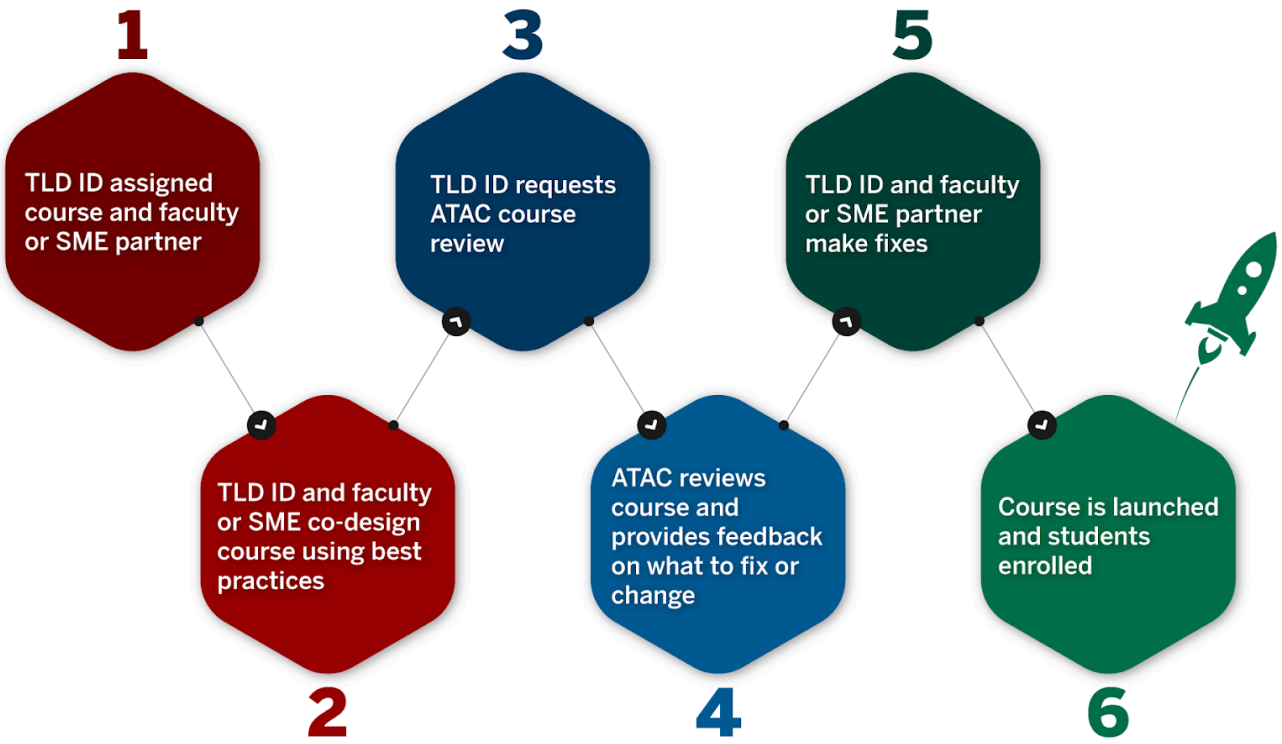
Misaligned Workflows

Misaligned workflows across departments can create a pinch point of remediating recently created content from IDs rather than building it accessibly from the beginning. Figure 1 depicts the old TLD model where the ID and faculty member created

the content, then passed the course to ATAC who identified and shared needed accessibility fixes with the ID who would rework the materials to make the course accessible.

Figure 1

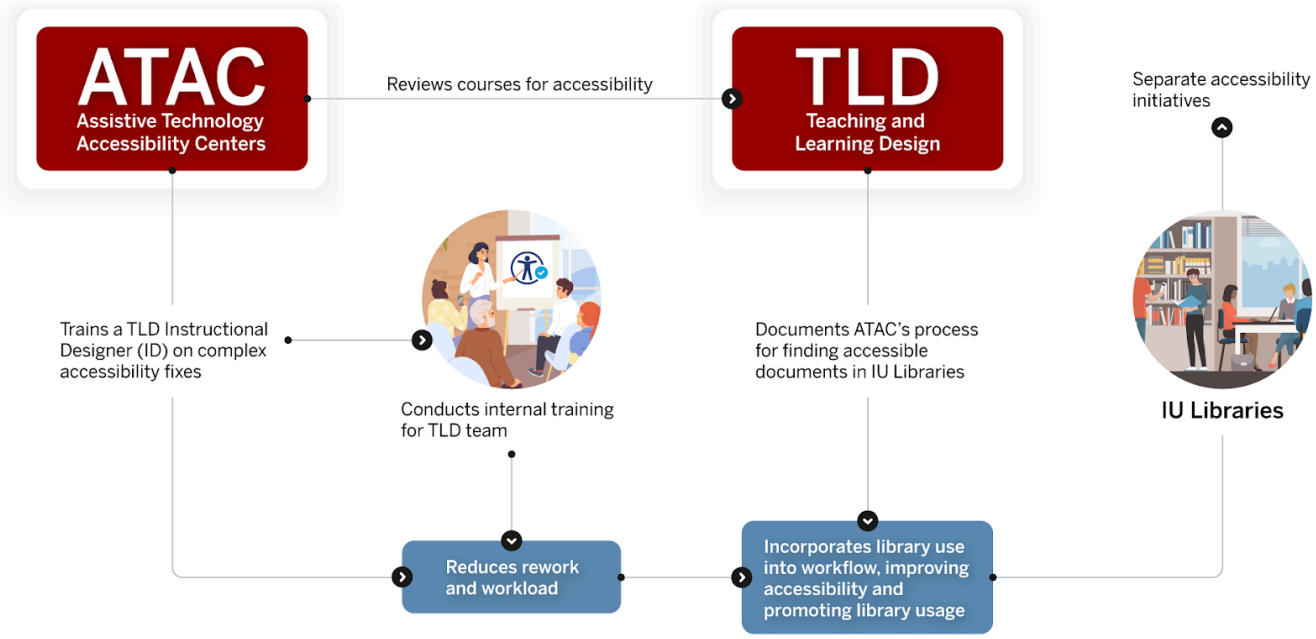
Old TLD Workflow



A better workflow involves identifying when to communicate with other departments and brainstorming on how to develop a better workflow that supports both teams (Figure 2).

Figure 2

New TLD Workflow



When evaluating cross-departmental misaligned workflows, consider:

1. Which departments impact my department's workflow?
2. What tasks are affected by another department's workflow process?
    a. Are there tasks being completed that must be altered later due to input from another department?
    b. If so, describe the task(s) and the rework process.
3. What information would you like to know about the above department's work?
4. Who are potential collaborators who would benefit from working together on a specific workflow?
    a. Do you know them well enough to ask?
    b. Do you know someone with an existing relationship with that department who would be willing to introduce you?

Instructor Resistance

A common factor in course design is faculty resistance (Magruder et al., 2019). Faculty carry increased workloads (Chen & Carliner, 2021), time pressures, competing commitments (Croxford et al., 2019), limited resources, and inadequate institutional support (Kidd et al., 2016). The resistance can grow as the conversation turns to creating accessible content which further exacerbates the aforementioned pressures. One strategy to counter resistance is to discuss the constraints and concerns that the instructor has, then address each concern based on the topic.

Academic integrity

Provide information on how the content will be made accessible while preserving academic integrity. It can help to show the alignment between accessibility solutions and the course's learning objectives or to cite official standards like the Northwest Evaluation Association Accessibility and Accommodation Guidelines (NWEA, 2025).

Workload

Prioritize accessibility fixes based on their likely impact on students. Create a plan of action that explicitly explains what the instructor will be responsible for. Provide instructional materials to support the work, such as job aids, hands-on demonstrations, and training videos. Describe how much support they will have from relevant departments, if any.

Misconceptions around accessibility

Sometimes misconceptions around accessibility can fuel instructor resistance. UDL emphasizes that making course materials accessible benefits all learners, not just those with disabilities. For example, although students who have hearing impairments may require closed captioning, a student who parents a young child may also benefit from closed captioning while their child sleeps. Having a conversation about their concerns may lead to a deeper conversation where you can share facts about accessibility. A frequent instructor misconception is that "I do not have any students who have a disability in my class so why spend time with a student who does not exist?" What they may not realize is that about 20% of the US student population identifies as having a disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023), and most never disclose to instructors or request accommodations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Having a disability does not equate to an inability to do the coursework. In fact, students with disabilities are often able to do more than instructors expect when given the right support and accessibility best practices are used. Another misconception is around which skills are being tested. For example, although a task that seems to require physical ability (sight, sound, fine motor control, etc.) may actually be testing another skill (recall, critical thinking, sentence construction, etc.). It is important to separate the essential skill from traditional methods of assessment to determine whether a physical ability is truly required for a course.

Identifying Partners

When identifying possible solution partners, look for other departments where accessibility goals intersect, but workflows usually do not. Look for opportunities to meet the goals for all groups involved by combining processes, training individuals in each other's departments, and sharing knowledge. For example, at Indiana University (IU) the ATAC and TLD often work on courses, but usually separately. TLD IDs build courses while the ATAC reviews them for accessibility issues. To reduce workloads for both groups, TLD identified an ID to be trained by ATAC on how to complete many complex accessibility fixes, which empowered her to create a reference guide on best practices and to conduct an internal training series for the rest of the TLD team. The accessibility best practices from the training became incorporated into TLD's standard course design workflow, which reduced ATAC and TLD workloads and rework. Similarly, ATAC, TLD, and the library discovered they had all been conducting separate initiatives to make content more accessible, so they decided to partner. The TLD ID documented ATAC's process for finding accessible documents in the library, which they then shared with the library for feedback on how to improve the document and offered sharing rights for the library's business purposes. This reduced TLD's remediation time and incorporated the use of accessible library resources into the design workflow, simultaneously improving course accessibility while promoting overall library usage.

Promoting Collaboration

Collaboration is an ongoing process that starts with building relationships. We have found it useful to look for small, low-stakes projects that are mutually beneficial to all parties, which allows us to get to know each other while working towards a common goal. As relationships progressed, we were able to work on more advanced problems with greater political implications.

Our collaboration worked best when we supported an iterative format. We created ways to easily communicate – first emails and introduction meetings, then progressing to dedicated group chats and working sessions. We started with small deliverables that would contribute to a larger set of resources over time, such as one-off consultations that could be converted into job aids and recorded training that could be shared, then used these resources as support as we trained colleagues on new processes.

Stakeholder Experience

The TLD, ATAC, and library collaboration has positively influenced faculty and student experiences. All course build sites meet a high score on the university's accessibility checker before being imported into a live course. Approximately a quarter of

recent faculty feedback surveys reported positive feelings and experiences about developing an accessible course. Since the data was collected operationally without permission to share widely, more specific data cannot be shared.

Anecdotally, the first author knows about a few faculty partners who received accommodation requests right before their classes launched. Their classes were prepared and required no major remediation by ATAC. The main change was that ATAC paid the captioning costs instead of TLD, the usual funder. Imagine the student experience when the materials are ready right away and no extra time is needed to remediate them before starting the course.

Conclusion and Key Takeaways

This chapter outlined the identification of an issue and the development of partnerships and processes to remediate the issue. While the present intervention was developed at a large, public university, regardless of the institution size or number of personnel, there are actions anyone can take to improve processes:

1. Pinch points drive the revolution by bringing collaborators together to develop solutions that support student success and meet cross-departmental needs. Identify your pinch point in your workflow, which will guide your collaboration process.
2. Cross-disciplinary collaboration is the key to revolutionizing your accessibility process. These partnerships allow for shared expertise, extend the reach of accessibility services, generate innovative solutions that better steward university resources, and provide a mechanism for moving beyond compliance to create processes that support meaningful learning experiences for all learners. Find collaborators who would benefit from addressing the pinch points you have identified.
3. Proactive accessible design practices align with required standards while reducing remediation workload and providing faster accommodation support. Collaborate with your partner to develop solutions that address pinch points to speed up your accessibility workflow and eliminate unnecessary practices.

Pinch Point Summaries

1. Limited Resources:
    a. Challenge: Accessibility teams, like ATAC, face limited personnel, special expertise, and time.
    b. Solution: Train an ID trainer who teaches the instructional design team to create accessible courses needing less remediation when an accommodation request arrives.
2. PDF Remediation
    a. Challenge: Many online courses contain multiple PDFs which require significant remediation time.
    b. Solution: Collaborate with the accessibility team to learn which tools they use and their best practices for PDF remediation. Collaborate with the library to locate and link to accessible versions when possible.
3. Language Markup
    a. Challenge: Online foreign language courses require special HTML markups.
    b. Solution: Take the challenge to the accessibility team and brainstorm together on how to tackle the problem.
4. Discipline-specific
    a. Challenge: STEM courses require disciplinary knowledge and specialized code to create different accessible formats (e.g., learning management systems and PDFs).
    b. Solution: Schedule training sessions where IDs can ask questions of the accessibility team's STEM expert.

Reflection Activity

Use the following reflection questions to evaluate the opportunities for revolutionizing your accessibility work processes.

Current Workflow

1. What is your accessibility workflow process?
2. How are accessibility processes integrated into other business processes (such as creating materials, building tools, or approving vendors and software)?
3. Where might new accessibility processes be integrated to improve business processes?
4. How would you break down the process into actionable parts and document the steps for future projects?
5. What information is missing from your process?
6. Does this missing information require training, or would a non-instructional strategy work better (i.e., job aid)?
7. Which formats will best convey the information that is missing from your process? (i.e., live trainings, just-in-time resources, recordings, or hands-on training)

Pinch Points

1. Which tasks do you (or others) keep putting off?
    a. Why are these tasks being put off?
    b. What elements of the tasks might be overwhelming or challenging?
2. Which steps must be repeated by one or multiple people?
3. Are all these steps necessary to complete the task? If not, what steps could be eliminated or modified to streamline the process?
4. Which departments impact my department's workflow?
    a. What tasks are affected by another department's workflow process?
    b. Are there tasks being completed that must be altered later due to input from another department?
    c. If so, describe the task(s) and define the pinch point.
5. What information would you like to know about the above department's work?
    a. Why do they use this process that negatively impacts my work?
    b. How might we create a system that meets their needs and my own?

Collaborative Solutions

1. What opportunities do I see where I could partner with another department?
    a. Does this department have accessibility goals aligned with mine?
    b. What low-stakes projects would be mutually beneficial?
2. How do you envision communicating with this other department? (i.e., email, working sessions, standing meetings, group chat)
3. Who are potential collaborators in this department?
    a. Do you know them well enough to ask?
    b. Who do you know with an existing relationship with that department who would be willing to introduce you?
    c. What buy-in do I need from leadership to proceed?

Further exploration

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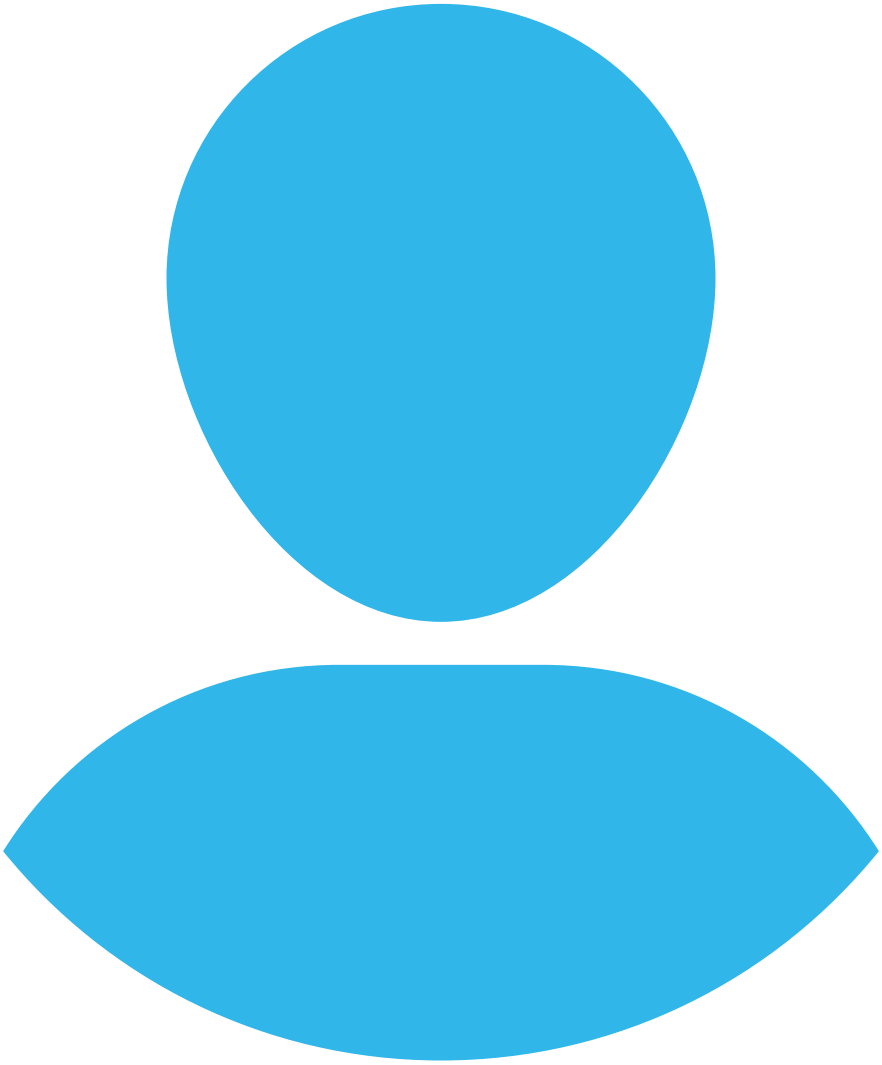
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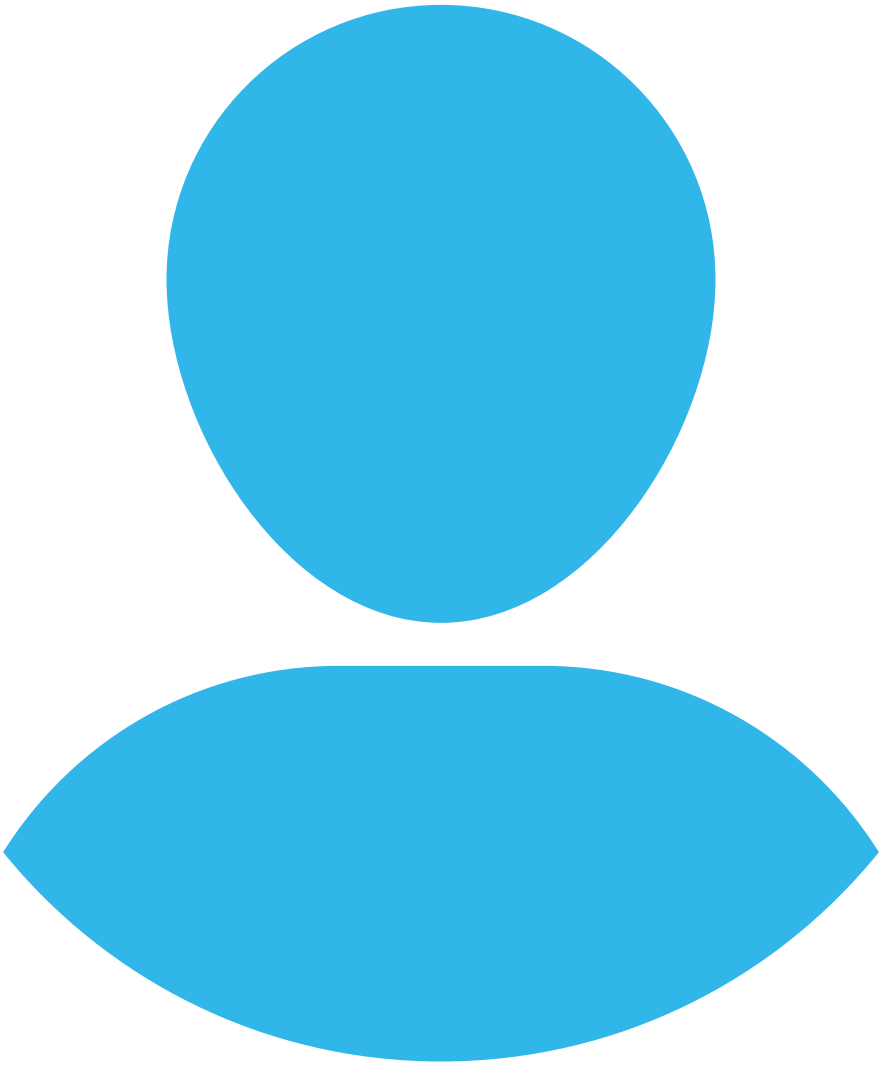
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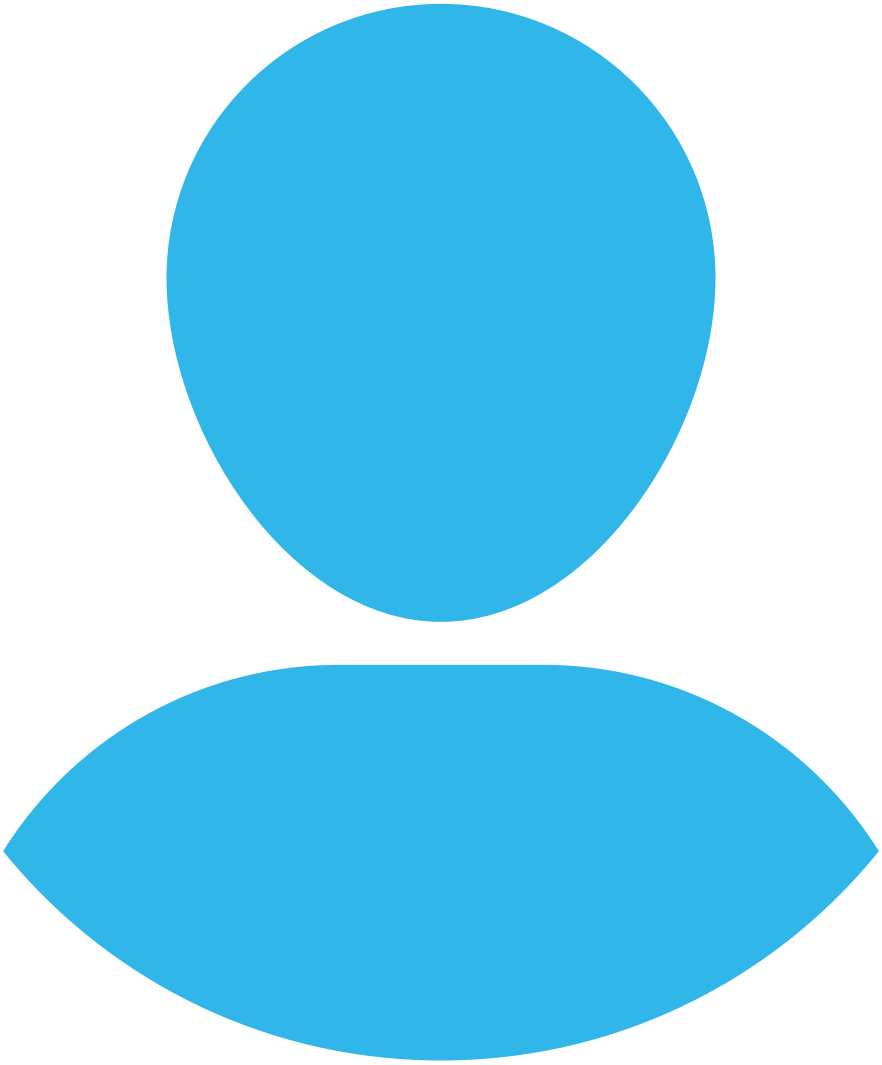
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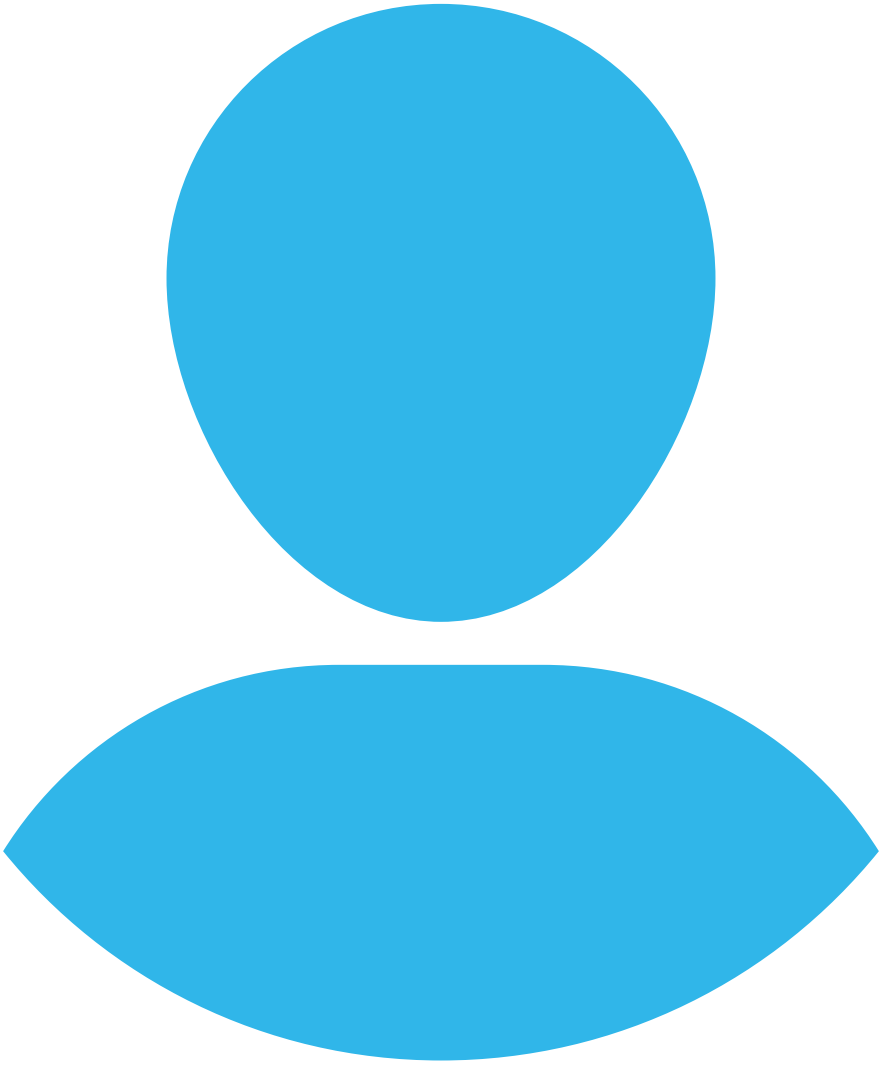
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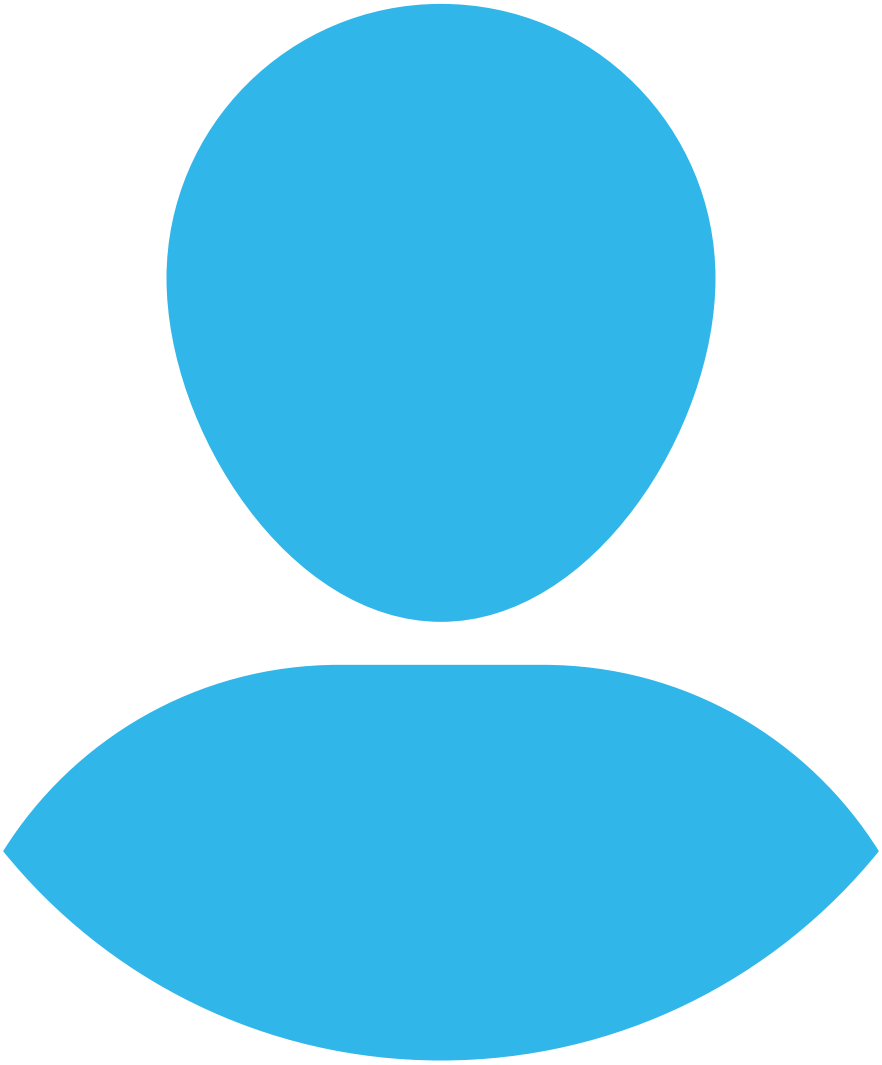
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