

**THE OFFICE OF BRONX BOROUGH
PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON**



**Local Law 12
Five-Year Accessibility Plan
(2024-2028)**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background	3
Background and Mission of the Office of the Bronx Borough President.....	3
Local Law 12 Overview	3
Statement of Commitment	3
Disability Service Facilitator	4
Disability Advisory Council.....	5
Agency Accessibility Policies and Plans (2024-2028)	7
Physical Access	7
Digital Access	7
Programmatic Access.....	8
Workplace Inclusion	9
Effective Communication.....	10
Methodology	11
Public Comment	11
Glossary	12

Executive Summary

In compliance with Local Law 12 of 2023 (§23-1004 of the New York City Administrative Code) and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities template, the Office of the Bronx Borough President has developed this five-year accessibility plan for the 2024-28 cycle. This plan fulfills this Office's obligation to share proposed accessibility measures, seek public comments from the City Council and Community Boards, and outline steps to ensure accessibility, accommodation, and inclusivity for individuals with disabilities.

This plan encompasses various projects aimed at improving physical, digital, and programmatic access, as well as effective communication, for people with disabilities. Budgetary information and timelines will be provided where applicable to ensure transparency and accountability.

In addition to fulfilling legal responsibilities under city, state, and federal laws, the Office of the Bronx Borough President is committed to making reasonable accommodations for applicants, employees, and program participants with disabilities. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment, either visible or invisible, that significantly limits an individual.

To comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Office of the Bronx Borough President's location at 851 Grand Concourse is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant, offering ramps and elevators for accessibility. Anyone requiring accommodations in line with the ADA when visiting the office or attending events in the building, should contact the Office's Disability Services Facilitator at 917-769-2866.

What sets the Office of the Bronx Borough President apart is the Office's Disability Advisory Council, which is a valuable platform for organizing and bringing the community of people with disabilities together. This Council plays a crucial role in ensuring that the voices and perspectives of individuals with disabilities are heard and considered in the Office's decision-making processes. Actively involving individuals with disabilities can create positive change and foster an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and supported.

In conclusion, the Office of the Bronx Borough President is dedicated to fulfilling its legal obligations, improving accessibility, and promoting inclusivity for individuals with disabilities. Through this five-year accessibility plan, the Office will strive to address the diverse needs of Bronx communities and create a more accessible and inclusive environment for all.

Background

Background and Mission of the Office of The Bronx Borough President

The Office of the Bronx Borough President (“the Office”) is a non-mayoral agency headed by Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson. The specific powers and duties of the Borough President can be found in Chapter 4, Section 82, of the New York City Charter. Under Chapter 4 of the Charter, the Borough President is mandated to maintain a topographical bureau, recommend capital projects, monitor borough service delivery, establish a budget office, and establish a planning office that will assist in the development of land use and environmental matters. In addition, the Borough President is responsible for the development of a strategic policy statement for The Bronx and may conduct public hearings and introduce legislation in the City Council.

Overview: Local Law 12 of 2023

Local Law 12 of 2023, codified as New York City Administrative Code §23-1004, requires every agency, in conjunction with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), to develop and implement a plan that includes the measures it is currently taking and will be taking over the next five years to ensure that the agency’s workplace, services, programs, and activities are accessible to and accommodating and inclusive of persons with disabilities. This document is the Office of the Bronx Borough President’s five-year accessibility plan under Local Law 12.

Statement of Commitment

The Office of The Bronx Borough President, led by Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson, is committed to establishing and maintaining an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment in the workplace, at Office events, and in the community. The Office is committed to identifying and removing barriers to accessibility and to meeting accessibility requirements in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of individuals with disabilities.

The Office is committed to ensuring its digital content is accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. The user experience for everyone is continually being improved, and the Office is applying the relevant accessibility standards of WCAG 2.1 when possible.

Consistent with the language and intention of Local Law 12, the Office is committed to undertaking to ensure that its policies and procedures fully comply with best practices for engaging with community members who have disabilities. This includes policies regarding Office communications with the community, the ability of community members to visit the Office and attend Office events, and the ability of community members to access assistive technologies. The Office will also strive to ensure that staff members and prospective staff members with disabilities are able to access resources and are able to fully succeed in fulfilling their job responsibilities.

Disability Service Facilitator

Under Local Law 27 of 2016, every city agency is required to appoint a Disability Service Facilitator to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under the ADA and other federal, state, and local laws and regulations concerning accessibility for persons with disabilities. This Facilitator shall serve as the primary contact within the agency for persons with disabilities requesting auxiliary services, coordinate auxiliary services for persons with disabilities, respond to inquiries from members of the public concerning accessibility, develop agency policies and procedures to ensure full programmatic and communication accessibility for persons with disabilities, conduct training for agency staff on disability access issues, provide accessible notices to members of the public advising of them of their rights and the agency's grievance procedures, and document and assist in the investigation of complaints regarding noncompliance with the ADA and other applicable laws.

The Community Affairs unit of the Office of the Bronx Borough President is responsible for fulfilling this role, as well as preparing and coordinating an updated accessibility plan in collaboration with other units. The Office is committed to creating an inclusive environment that is welcoming to people with disabilities. The Office of the Bronx Borough President strives to connect people with disabilities to critical resources and provide a direct platform for engagement through the Disability Advisory Council.

Anyone experiencing accessibility issues with the Office's digital content should provide feedback through the [Website Accessibility Feedback Form](#). The Office is always seeking input that will help improve website and digital accessibility.

Any employee of the Office or member of the public interacting with the Office should contact the Disability Service Facilitator to request an accommodation not otherwise provided or to file a complaint or grievance regarding accessibility for people with disabilities.

The Office's Disability Service Facilitator is **David Coulibaly**, Director of Community Affairs, and he can be reached at: dcoulibaly@bronxbp.nyc.gov, 917-769-2866, 851 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 10451.

Disability Advisory Council

The Office of the Bronx Borough President is exceptionally well-equipped to cater to the diverse needs of community members with disabilities. The Borough President re-established the Office's Disability Advisory Council (DAC) to serve as a powerful platform for organizing and bringing the community together. Not only is the DAC advocating for the implementation of best practices, but it will also make valuable policy recommendations to ensure that the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities are fully recognized and addressed. Inquiries for the DAC should be sent to accessibility@bronxbp.nyc.gov.

The DAC is a crucial resource for connecting disability service providers, understanding the unique needs of The Bronx's diverse communities, and advocating for positive change.

The DAC is dedicated to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for the community of people with disabilities in The Bronx. The DAC strives to advocate for their rights, promote accessibility, and ensure equal opportunities for their participation in all aspects of society.

Through collaboration with local organizations, government agencies, and community members, the DAC aims to implement comprehensive initiatives that empower individuals with disabilities, enhance their quality of life, and cultivate a culture of acceptance and understanding. The DAC's mission is to create a barrier-free and equitable environment that promotes independence, respect, and full participation for people of all abilities within The Bronx. Over the years, the DAC has organized events such as Disability Resource Fairs,

Medicaid Forums, and forums with FEMA and NYC OEM to review emergency responses for people with disabilities.

DAC Commitments:

Inclusivity: The DAC is committed to creating an inclusive Bronx where all individuals with disabilities are valued, respected, and embraced as an integral part of The Bronx’s diverse communities.

Advocacy: The DAC advocates for the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities at the local, state, and national levels, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed.

Accessibility: The DAC works tirelessly to remove barriers and promote accessibility in all aspects of life, including education, employment, transportation, healthcare, and public spaces, enabling full participation for people with disabilities.

Education: The DAC strives to raise awareness and understanding of disability-related issues, promoting a culture of empathy and inclusion to combat stereotypes and discrimination.

Collaboration: The DAC collaborates with local organizations, government agencies, and community stakeholders to develop and implement policies and programs that support individuals with disabilities in The Bronx.

Empowerment: The DAC empowers individuals with disabilities by providing resources, support, and opportunities for skill development, independence, and self-advocacy.

Celebration: The DAC celebrates the achievements and contributions of individuals with disabilities, recognizing their strengths and capabilities.

Together, with the Bronx community, the **Disability Advisory Council** works towards a future where disability is not a barrier to but a facet of The Bronx’s rich diversity, and where personal people, regardless of their abilities, can lead fulfilling lives and realize their full potential.

Agency Accessibility Policies and Plans (2024-2028)

Local Law 12 requires each agency to publish a plan describing the steps it is currently taking and will take over the next five years to ensure that the agency's workplace, services, programs, and activities are accessible, accommodating, and inclusive of persons with disabilities. The timeframe for implementation of these policies and plans will last over the course of the five-year plan.

The Office of the Bronx Borough President recognizes that a disability can refer to many conditions, both visible and invisible. While many of the most visible accessibility aids for people with physical disabilities are those geared toward individuals using wheelchairs or who otherwise have conditions inhibiting movement, disabilities can include many limitations that may or may not be visible to other people. The Office is cognizant of people who have sense impairments, chronic illnesses, developmental disorders, mental health disorders such as PTSD, and intellectual disabilities.

Physical Access

The Office of the Bronx Borough President is located at 851 Grand Concourse in The Bronx in a building owned and managed by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). DCAS is therefore responsible for the management of accessibility concerns in common areas of the building, including entrances, lobbies, elevators, common hallways, stairwells, common area bathrooms, and means of egress.

The Office of the Bronx Borough President is dedicated to guaranteeing that its occupied office spaces are accessible and usable for individuals with disabilities. This includes ensuring that the following spaces are accessible to all: open areas, workstations, private offices, dedicated meeting rooms, dedicated ingress/egress, interior signage, and all other spaces under the Office's control.

Digital Access

Digital accessibility for the Office of the Bronx Borough President is an important consideration for the Borough President to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access and engage with the Office's online platforms. In this fast-changing technology environment, the Office will ensure to adapt the

digital accessibility plan accordingly to reflect the most accurate technology to better serve community members with disabilities. Here are some steps the Office plans to implement to improve digital accessibility:

- 1. Website Accessibility:** The Office's website is designed with accessibility in mind, but the Office will ensure that the website remains in compliance with Local Law 12 as part of this plan. This includes using clear and concise language, providing alternative text for images, and ensuring proper heading structure.
- 2. Social Media Accessibility:** When posting content on social media platforms, the Office will strive to ensure that posts and flyers are digitally accessible by using up-to-date best practices and technologies.
- 3. Virtual Meeting Accessibility:** When hosting virtual meetings, the Office will consider using platforms that offer accessibility features such as closed captioning, screen reader compatibility, and keyboard accessibility. Before any meeting, staff will test these features and provide instructions to participants about how they can access them.
- 4. Training and Awareness:** One of the Office's priorities will be to educate key staff members about digital accessibility best practices and the importance of creating inclusive online experiences. This will include sharing resources from MOPD training sessions as well as crafting training through the Office's Disability Advisory Council.
- 5. Accessibility Policy:** The Office of The Bronx Borough President is dedicated to making its digital content accessible and usable for people with disabilities. The Office strives to enhance the user experience for all individuals and adhere to appropriate accessibility standards. This commitment to accessibility will be implemented across all units within the office. The Office's Web Accessibility Statement is posted on the website here: [Website Accessibility Statement – The Office of The Bronx Borough President | Vanessa L. Gibson](#).

Programmatic Access

The Office of the Bronx Borough President strives to be fully inclusive of all individuals with disabilities in its public events, meetings, hearings, and programming. The Office will work to ensure that all staff who interact with the public and the community are fully trained in EEO policies and procedures relevant to improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

The Office will include information about accessibility features and how to request additional accommodations in event notices and other Office communications.

Effective Communications

Although the Office of the Bronx Borough President shares a building with multiple agencies, the Office understands the need to communicate effectively to ensure that every visitor feels welcome and valued. As mentioned above, the Office's digital content is developed with inclusion in mind, and the same strategies apply to all communications across the board. Here are the strategies the Office will implement to achieve more inclusion:

- 1. Use clear and concise language:** The Office will avoid using jargon or complex terminology that may be difficult for people to understand. The Office will strive to keep communication simple and easy to comprehend.
- 2. Provide alternative formats:** The Office will make sure to offer alternative formats for communication materials, such as providing written transcripts for audio content or providing captions for videos. This ensures that individuals with hearing or visual impairments can easily access the information.
- 3. Use accessible technology:** The Office will utilize technology that is compatible with assistive devices, such as screen readers or voice recognition software. The Office will ensure that the website, documents, and other digital content are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- 4. Be mindful of visual presentation:** The Office will use clear and legible fonts with adequate contrast between the text and background. The Office will avoid relying solely on color to convey important information and provide visual cues or alternative text descriptions for images.
- 5. Offer multiple communication channels:** The Office will provide various ways for individuals to contact the Office and access information, such as phone, email, and in-person communication. The office will ensure that these channels are accessible and suitable for people with different types of disabilities.
- 6. Improve staff training:** The Office will educate its employees on ADA compliance and effective communication techniques, including teaching

them about common disabilities, etiquette, and how to assist individuals with disabilities respectfully.

Workplace Inclusion

In line with the Office of the Bronx Borough President's five-year accessibility plan, the Borough President is committed to creating an inclusive and accommodating workplace for individuals with disabilities. The Office will actively work towards fostering a culture of openness, tolerance, and cooperation, promoting equity in all aspects of its operations. The Office will also strive to identify and address any structural barriers that may hinder equal treatment in the recruitment, selection, development, advancement, and retention of a diverse workforce, ensuring that it reflects the demographics of The Bronx and New York City.

To ensure accountability, the leadership of the Office as well as key personnel such as the EEO Officer, EEO professionals, personnel professionals, legal professionals, managers, and supervisors will be made responsible for preventing any form of discrimination against employees or job applicants. The Office will actively support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives by adhering to EEO regulations and working diligently toward achieving stated goals in this area. All staff members must comply with the City's EEO Policy to maintain a fair and inclusive work environment for individuals with disabilities.

The Office will periodically review and update internal policies and procedures to incorporate accessibility equity into operations. Staff will be informed of and, if necessary, trained on any changes, so they are able to adjust their practices accordingly.

The Office of the Bronx Borough President is committed to ensuring all employees with disabilities can access reasonable accommodations to ensure that they are to fulfill their job responsibilities. If necessary, the Office will produce and provide documented individual accommodation plans for employees, in accordance with citywide EEO policies. The Office will also ensure that any employee with a disability is aware of emergency response information and procedures that may be affected by their disability and will provide such employee with information about how they can safely evacuate the building or otherwise act in the event of an emergency.

The Office is committed to working with any employee who has been absent due to a disability on an individual accommodation plan and return-to-work process, consistent with citywide EEO policies.

Methodology

To develop this accessibility plan, the Office of the Bronx Borough President reviewed internal processes and procedures to determine where improvements could be made and where policies could be clarified. The Office consulted with the Office's Disability Advisory Council and its Chair Jillian Moses. The Office wants to hear from people with disabilities who interact with the Office about their experiences and ways that the Office can improve its procedures to better serve individuals with disabilities.

Public Comment

The Office opened its proposed plan for public comment between January and March 2024. The public comments received were positive and supportive of the proposed document.

The Office welcomes any further feedback that the public wishes to offer on this final plan. This feedback can be directed to the Disability Service Facilitator or to accessibility@bronxbp.nyc.gov.

Glossary

Assistive Listening Devices

Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) are small devices that can help people who are hard of hearing communicate in one-to-one conversations generally by capturing and amplifying some sounds while filtering some background noise.

Captions, Closed

Captions generated through a text file, usually .SRT, which video players use to display captions when that feature is turned on by the user. The file contains the text to be displayed along with time codes to indicate when and for how long the captions should be displayed. This type of caption is the most accessible because it provides the user with the greatest level of access and customization since it is actual text.

Captions, Open (Embedded)

Captions added to a video during its production. These captions are always on and cannot be turned off. These captions are less accessible because they are essentially an image of text, which means the user cannot customize their display or get access to the text with their access technology.

Communication Access Realtime Transcription

Also known as “real-time captioning” or “CART”, a caption writer (sometimes trained as a court reporter or stenographer) uses a stenotype machine with a phonetic keyboard and special software. A computer translates the phonetic symbols into English captions almost instantaneously. Depending on the skill of the caption writer, it is generally superior to auto-generated captions.

Cooperative dialogue

“Cooperative dialogue” is required by the NYC’s Human Rights Law. An agency and someone requesting an accommodation engage in a “cooperative dialogue” when they engage in a good faith conversation (written or oral) about the person’s accommodation needs; potential accommodations that may address the person’s accommodation needs, including alternatives to a requested accommodation; and the

difficulties that such potential accommodations may pose for the agency. When the request has been made by an employee, the agency must provide the employee with a written final determination identifying any accommodation granted or denied.

Disability

Any physical or mental impairment, either visible or invisible, that significantly limits an individual.

Primary Consideration

This means providing an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to request the auxiliary aids and services of their choice. The agency should honor the individual's choice unless there is another effective means of communication, or use of the means preferred by the individual would not be required (for example, because it is not needed or would present an undue burden for the agency). If the requested aid or service would result in an undue burden, the agency still has an obligation to provide another aid or service if there is one that provides effective communication without presenting an undue hardship.

Telecommunications Relay Service

A telecommunications relay service (TRS) allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability to communicate with people who use a standard telephone. Some people hang up on TRS calls because they think the Communication Assistant or interpreter is a telemarketer. If you hear, "Hello. This is the relay service..." when you pick up the phone, don't hang up! You are about to talk, through a TRS provider, to a person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, or has a speech disability.

Video Remote Interpretation

Video remote interpreting (VRI) uses video conferencing technology to access an off-site interpreter to provide real-time sign language or oral interpreting services for conversations between hearing people and people who are deaf or have hearing loss. Federal regulations allow covered entities to use VRI or on-site interpreters in situations where either would be effective. However, VRI will not be effective in all circumstances. For example, it will not be effective if the person who

needs the interpreter has difficulty seeing the screen. In these circumstances, an on-site interpreter may be required.

If VRI is chosen, all of the following specific performance standards must be met:

- real-time, full-motion video and audio over a dedicated high-speed, wide-bandwidth video connection or wireless connection that delivers high-quality video images that do not produce lags, choppy, blurry, or grainy images, or irregular pauses in communication;
- a sharply delineated image that is large enough to display the interpreter's face, arms, hands, and fingers, and the face, arms, hands, and fingers of the person using sign language, regardless of his or her body position;
- a clear, audible transmission of voices; and
- adequate staff training to ensure quick set-up and proper operation.