

APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE
DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
October 8, 2015

RECOMMENDATION OF THE FCC DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Subcommittee on Communications

New and Emerging Technologies Working Group

October 8, 2015

WHEREAS, accessible and usable technology is critical for persons with disabilities to fully participate in all parts of civil society from education to employment to civic engagement;

WHEREAS, new and emerging communications technologies offer new opportunities of accessibility for persons with disabilities such as speech to text, real-time text communications, video-enabled communication and High-Definition audio;

WHEREAS, new and emerging user-interface technologies offer new or additional opportunities of accessibility for persons with disabilities;

WHEREAS, new and emerging communications technologies that had objectives unrelated to accessibility can be leveraged for the benefit of people with disabilities;

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) can help to further awareness and encourage efforts to design and develop these new and emerging technologies that are accessible to and usable by people with disabilities;

WHEREAS, consumers with disabilities, organizations and agencies addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and regulators require timely and knowledgeable tools and resources to understand and learn about these new and emerging technologies in order to better inform consumers and adopt policies that address both the advantages and barriers that new technologies present;

WHEREAS, the Commission has the responsibility of ensuring a rapid, efficient nationwide communications service for all citizens and ensuring the access of persons with disabilities to telecommunications and advanced communications;

RECOMMENDED, the Commission should develop its capability to research and analyze new and emerging technologies and best practices to further awareness and encourage efforts to design and develop these new technologies to be accessible, such as hosting forums, workshops or other stakeholder meetings, directly engage innovators, engineers and researchers and publish reports that promote accessible design and development;

RECOMMENDED, the Commission should engage and, where appropriate, partner with standards bodies working on emerging technology, the relevant specialized industry trade associations, and technology developers to encourage factoring accessibility and usability into their work outside of a regulatory framework;

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RECOMMENDED, the Commission should coordinate efforts between its relevant bureaus and offices as needed, and partner with industry and consumer stakeholders on efforts that would promote accessibility and usability of new and emerging technologies;

RECOMMENDED, in order for the Commission to stay up to date on accessibility issues with new and emerging technologies, the Commission should engage a wide range of contributors and stakeholders, such as industry, innovators, the Disability Advisory Committee, organizations with accessibility and usability expertise in the disability and aging communities and, as appropriate, other public sector agencies that may also benefit from this effort, including but not limited to the Department of Justice, Department of Education, Library of Congress, U.S. Patent & Trademark Office, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Administration for Community Living, and the Access Board; and

RECOMMENDED, that the Commission should update the Disability Advisory Committee on these efforts within one year.