

Digital Accessibility Audit Checklist:

A Step-by-Step Review



- Structured review finds barriers users with disabilities face



- For product designers, developers, and content owners



- Aligns with WCAG 2.2, real user impact, and business risk



- Roadmap: scope, automated baseline, manual checks, reporting, remediation



The Case for a Structured Audit



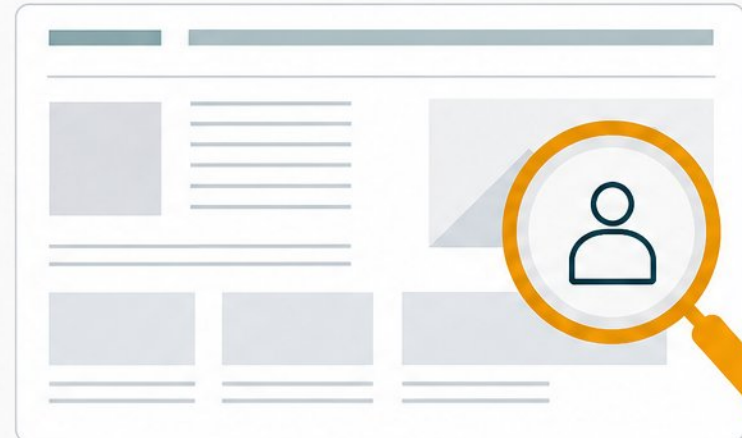
Automated Scan

Catches some issues



Manual Human Review

Finds what tools miss



VS.



- Automated tools catch only ~30-40% of WCAG issues



- Manual and assistive technology testing are essential



- A checklist makes reviews repeatable and defensible



- WCAG 2.2 Level AA is the 2026 baseline standard



- Audits connect compliance to real user barriers

Alignment with WCAG 2.2 and Compliance Context



- WCAG 2.2 adds 9 criteria: focus, targets, authentication



- Level AA is the practical compliance target



- Aligns with ADA, Section 508, EN 301 549, EAA



- Four principles: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, Robust



Defining Audit Scope and Success Criteria



- Define conformance target (WCAG 2.2 AA) and product boundary



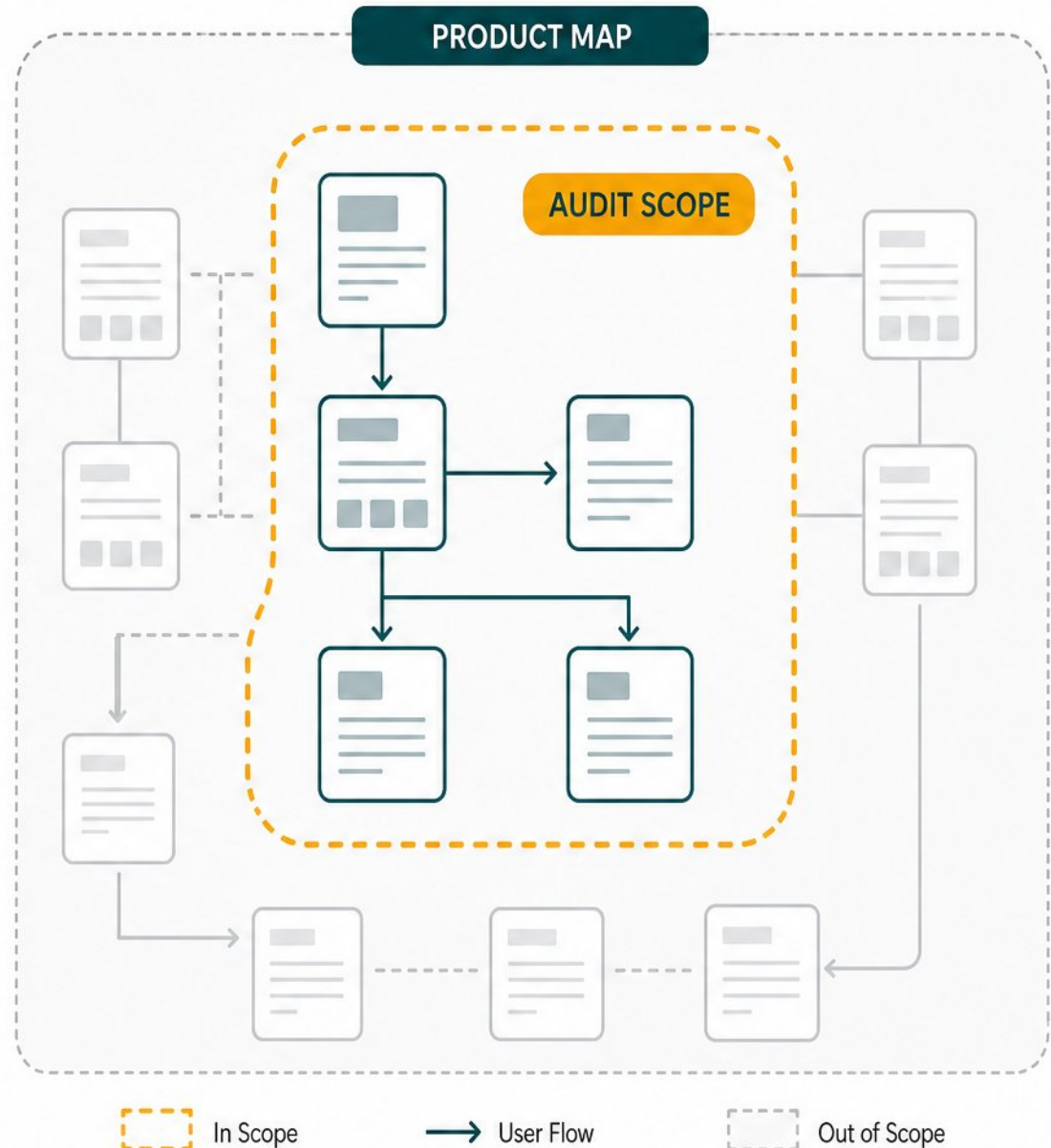
- Inventory pages, templates, technologies, and essential functionality



- Sample representative set: structured plus 10% random validation



- Set severity levels before testing: critical, serious, moderate, minor



Selecting a Representative Sample



- Structured sampling: cover every unique template, component, and critical flow



- Add random sample (10% of structured set) to verify representativeness



- Include complete multi-step processes end to end, like checkout or signup



- Sample size driven by variety and complexity, not total page count



- Document reasoning for defensible, repeatable audits

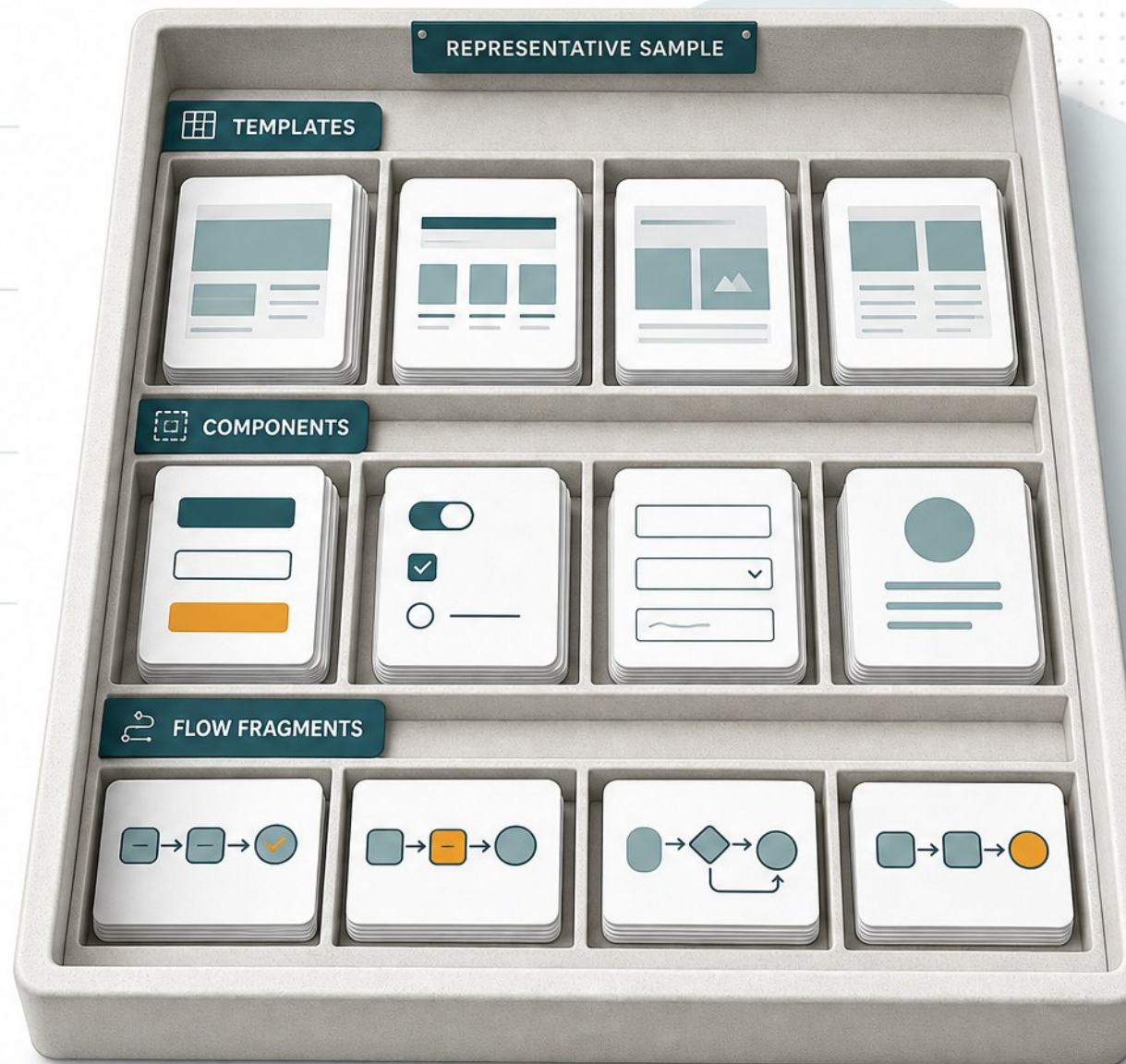


● PERCEIVABLE

● OPERABLE

● UNDERSTANDABLE

● ROBUST





Running an Automated Baseline



- Run automated scans to catch obvious, high-volume issues like missing labels and low contrast



- Understand that scans flag candidates, not confirmed barriers



- Use scan results to prioritize areas for deeper manual review



- Common findings: missing alt text, empty links, missing form labels, invalid ARIA



Scan Results

Flagged issues sorted by category and priority



Missing alt text



Empty links



Missing form labels



Invalid ARIA



Severity (high to low)



High



Medium



Low



Minor



Keyboard and Focus Review



- Verify all interactive elements are keyboard-reachable and operable



- Check visible focus indicators and logical tab order



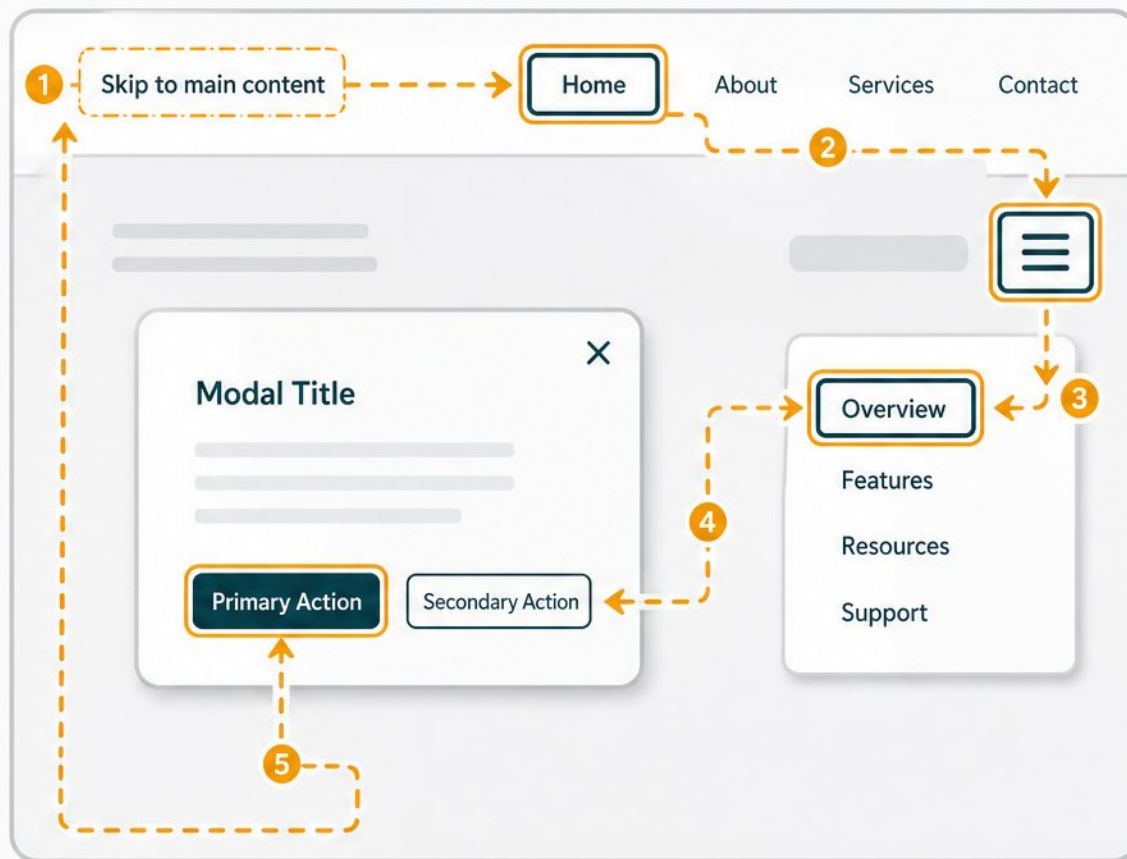
- Ensure no keyboard traps; skip links work



- Test modals, menus, and SPAs for focus management



- Use Tab, Shift+Tab, Enter, Space, arrow keys, Escape





Screen Reader and Semantic Structure Check



Verify landmarks, headings, labels, and accessible names are accurate



Test forms, tables, lists, and dynamic updates with screen readers



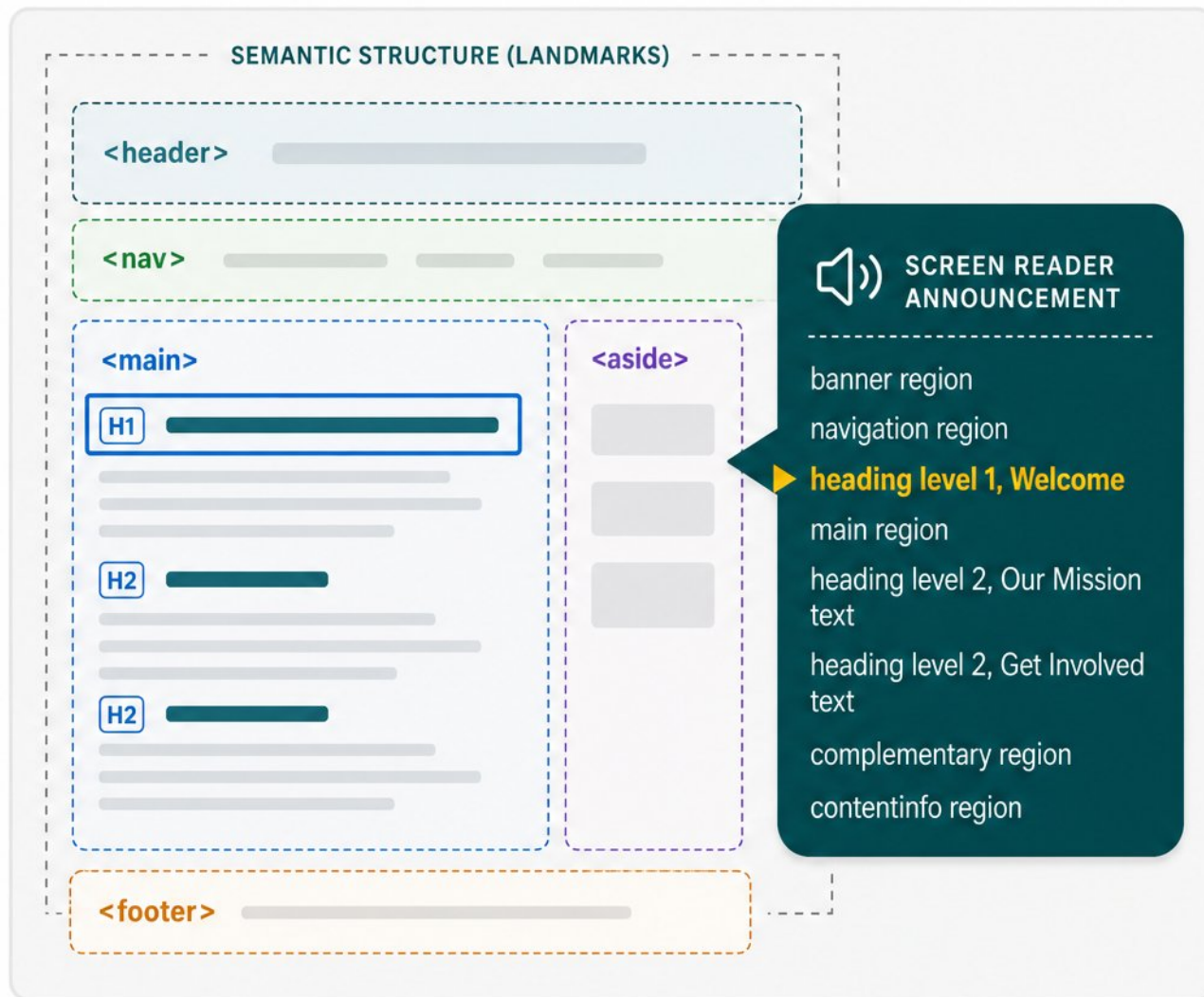
Identify experiences relying on visual cues or missing programmatic relationships



Use NVDA, VoiceOver, or JAWS to listen, not just inspect code



Structural shortcuts (H, D, K) reveal logical hierarchy and reading order



STRUCTURAL SHORTCUTS

Use these keys to navigate by structure with your screen reader.

H

Next Heading
Move to the next heading

D

Next Landmark
Move to the next landmark region

K

Next Link
Move to the next link

Color, Contrast, and Visual Presentation



- Verify text contrast: 4.5:1 normal, 3:1 large



- Non-text contrast 3:1; check focus visibility



- Confirm information isn't conveyed by color alone



- Test readability at 200% zoom, 400% reflow



- Use contrast checkers and browser dev tools for verification

Contrast Ratio Examples



Meets (Normal Text)



Meets (Large Text)



Does Not Meet

Zoomed Readability Example

100%

This is a sample text showing readability.



200%

This is a sample text showing readability.



400% Reflow

This is a sample text showing readability.

Color-Blindness Simulation

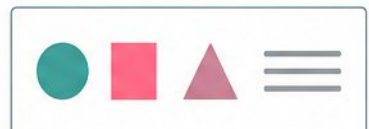
Original (Normal Vision)



Deuteranopia Simulation



Tritanopia Simulation



Severity Heat Map



Low



Minor



Moderate



Major



Critical

Forms, Multimedia, and Content Review

- ✓ - Validate form labels, instructions, and error messages for clarity
- ✓ - Check captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions for media
- ✓ - Review links, headings, and plain-language content for clarity
- ✓ - Confirm WCAG 2.2 Accessible Authentication and Redundant Entry
- ✓ - Ensure error messages identify fields and explain how to fix them

Full Name

Email Address

Message

! Please enter your email address. Enter a valid email address.



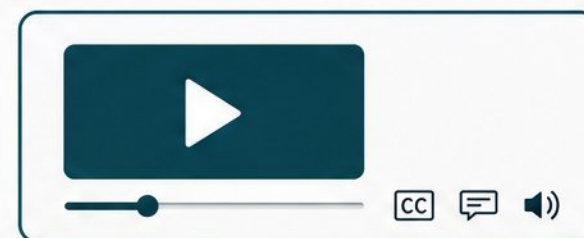
Clear labels and instructions



Field-specific error message



How to fix the issue



Captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions

! Verification code is required. Enter the code and try again.



Accessible authentication and redundant entry



Tracking Findings and Severity



- Record each issue with location, WCAG criterion, and reproduction steps



- Rank severity by user impact, frequency, and business risk



- Separate severity from evidence basis: verified, flagged, or human-required



- Structure findings so each role can act on them directly



 Critical	 High	 Medium	 Low
 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact	 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact	 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact	 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact
 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact	 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact	 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact	 Location  WCAG Criterion  Reproduction Steps  User Impact

Severity Heat Map



Critical



High



Medium



Low

From Checklist to Repeatable Process



Turn the step-by-step checklist into a repeatable team process



Integrate checks into design, development, and content workflows



Use templates and lightweight documentation to avoid audit-from-scratch



Automate regression checks and schedule periodic re-audits



Embed accessibility checks into PR reviews and QA gates



Remediation Planning and Retesting



- Prioritize fixes by severity, user impact, and effort



- Retest affected flows, document regression risk



- Build shared requirements and role ownership



- Bring in external experts or usability testing when needed



Higher Severity

Lower Severity

Effort

Lower Effort

Higher Effort



Fix First



Plan Next

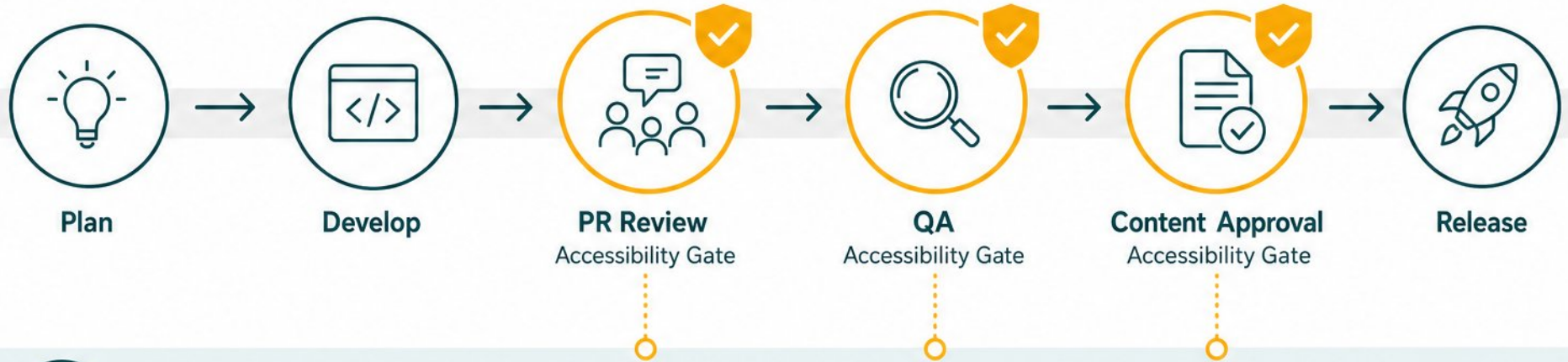


Quick Wins



Backlog Review

Sustaining Accessibility Beyond the Audit



Accessibility Foundations (continuous)

Policies • Patterns • Tools • Training • Monitoring

- ✓ Shift from one-off audits to continuous accessibility monitoring
- ✓ Embed checks into PR reviews, QA gates, and content workflows
- ✓ Assign clear ownership to designers, developers, and content authors
- ✓ Track improvements and catch regressions with metrics and re-audits



PersonWise.

PersonWise • AI digital-human course platform



Scan the code or click anywhere to watch this course live, with voice Q&A

personwise.ai/t/95409ff7/public