Guiding Principles: Making Accessible Excel Files

Accessibility Tip: Keep your data to the left! Screen readers will read first from left to right, then from top to bottom. Indicate where the content ends by typing "end of worksheet" after the last row of data in column A.

Dos

- ✓ Organize, describe, and **clearly label** your tables, sheet tabs, charts, URLs, and filename.

- ✓ In a complex workbook, provide an overview of the table, sheet, or index within A1. You can additionally give a written overview of your file in an accompanying email.

- ✓ Always specify **Headers rows/columns or regions** in your document and tables.

- ✓ Have each cell hold only one type of data or piece of information; one sheet has one chart or table **(Think 1:1).**

- ✓ Always add meaningful **Alt-Text** (alternative text) to charts, tables and any graphical or embedded object and explain the relationship to the data.

- ✓ Run the **Accessibility Checker** in Excel in the Review Pane.

Don'ts

- ☒ Merge or split cells together in the data portion of the table or worksheet.

- ☒ Start your table or data in a random position on a worksheet, such as B6.

- ☒ Use colour as the only means to convey important information.

- ☒ Leave blank cells, rows and columns, especially in tables and data.

Design Tip:

You can provide information for screen readers in a cell and then use a white font (white on white) to hide information or place a floating object over the cell.

Keyboard Shortcuts:

CTRL+9 = Hide Rows

CTRL+SHIFT+9 = Unhide Rows

CTRL+0 = Hide Columns

CTRL+SHIFT+0 = Unhide Columns

Retrofitting Inaccessible File

Retrofitting an excel file can be labour and time intensive. The layout and organization of the information may alter significantly or need to be redesigned to account for diverse learning styles. An inaccessible excel file is usually converted into a different file format (word or html).

Disclaimer: This is an internal document meant for use by CNIB, CNIB Foundation, Vision Loss Rehabilitation and CNIB Deafblind Community Service employees and volunteers

only. It was created with the understanding the user of this tip sheet has a basic knowledge of Microsoft Excel.