

Are You Ready for the 2026 Federal Design Deadlines?

The clock is ticking. By **April 24, 2026**, the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA) mandates that public services be accessible, task-oriented, and mobile-friendly. Shortly after, by **July 4, 2026**, the America by Design Executive Order requires proven results in design excellence.

Use this checklist to pinpoint where your program **excels** and where **risks are hiding**.

Point system

Yes

2 PTS

In progress

1 PT

No

0 PTS

Design Readiness Checklist

1. User Experience Strategy

CHECKLIST ITEM	WHY IT MATTERS	STATUS		
We have identified the top public tasks our service must help users complete.	IDEA is task-based. If the service is organized around org charts instead of user jobs-to-be-done, modernization will stall.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
Navigation and page structure are organized around user needs, not internal bureaucracy.	IDEA explicitly emphasizes user needs and tasks.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
Plain language, wayfinding, and calls to action are consistent across the experience.	Good design is not decoration. It reduces confusion and accelerates task completion.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
Critical services, forms, and FAQs are easy to find through onsite search and navigation.	Searchability is a specific IDEA requirement and a practical trust signal.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
Mobile experience has been tested on real devices for core transactions.	Mobile-friendly is required, and many public users meet government online through a phone first.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO

2. Accessibility and Trust

CHECKLIST ITEM	WHY IT MATTERS	STATUS		
Accessibility is built into design and development, not deferred to final QA.	Retrofit accessibility is slower, more expensive, and riskier than designing correctly from the start.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
We have an active process for Section 508 and WCAG 2.1 AA conformance testing, remediation, and monitoring.	Accessibility posture should be evidence-based, not wishful thinking with a footer statement.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
Design choices support readability, contrast, focus states, keyboard use, and assistive technology.	Usability for every ability is table stakes for public service delivery.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO
We have a plan for continuous remediation and monitoring after launch.	Readiness is not a one-time audit. Decentralized content and ongoing publishing create new issues fast.	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO



3. Systems & Technical Foundation

CHECKLIST ITEM	WHY IT MATTERS	STATUS
We use US Web Design System patterns and principles where appropriate, and keep pages, forms, and service touch-points consistent.	America by Design calls for updated USWDS alignment; consistency lowers cost and raises trust.	<input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="radio"/> NO
Hosting, integrations, and security decisions support a stable, modern experience.	A modern-looking interface cannot fix unstable systems, poor integrations, or security gaps.	<input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="radio"/> NO
We know where legacy CMS, duplicate content, or disconnected systems are blocking progress.	Original content, maintainability, and secure connectivity are part of readiness, not afterthoughts.	<input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="radio"/> NO

4. Delivery and Governance

CHECKLIST ITEM	WHY IT MATTERS	STATUS
We have a realistic roadmap for phased improvements, not a single high-risk rewrite effort.	Fast, credible wins matter. Especially when policy pressure is real and timelines are short.	<input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="radio"/> NO
We can show evidence of progress through audits, benchmarks, analytics, or usability testing.	Initial results should be backed by measurable evidence, not assumptions.	<input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="radio"/> NO
Content, design, engineering, accessibility, and program owners have defined roles.	Governance gaps can create delays, confuse ownership, and slow decisions.	<input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="radio"/> NO
We have a partner or internal team capable of combining compliance, UX, and engineering.	Most departments are strong in one lane. The work gets faster when strategy, design, and secure delivery are connected.	<input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> IN PROGRESS <input type="radio"/> NO

How to Use This Checklist

Give yourself two points for every “Yes,” one point for every “In Progress,” and zero for every “No.”

26-32 POINTS	You are in a strong position to move forward with confidence. Focus on proving progress and scaling what works.
16-25 POINTS	You have momentum, but there are gaps that could slow modernization, create compliance risk, or weaken trust.
< 16 POINTS	Your agency may be trying to modernize before the foundation is ready. Start with design readiness, governance, accessibility, and user-task clarity before pursuing larger transformation efforts.

What This Signals

A modern government experience is **not just a website refresh**. It is a coordinated effort across policy, UX, accessibility, content, engineering, and operations.

Agencies that are most prepared for IDEA and America by Design are not the ones with the flashiest interfaces. They are the ones who can connect compliance, usability, trust, and delivery into **one practical strategy**.

How Mindgrub Technologies Helps

Mindgrub helps government teams polish public-facing digital services with a practical, compliance-first approach that connects strategy, user experience, accessibility, and secure implementation.

We support agencies and partners with:



Customer experience (CX) and human-centered design (HCD) rooted in real public need



Accessibility and Section 508 or WCAG remediation built into delivery



Content, navigation, search, and way-finding improvements that reduce friction



USWDS-aligned design and secure implementation for modern federal services



Secure, scalable website and application development



Phased modernization strategies built for real-world constraints

Need a partner in preparing for the deadlines?

Mindgrub designs secure, accessible, user-centered digital experiences for government.



Reach out to:

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