# Guide to requesting Alternate Formats

This guide explains how to request alternate formats of your information from the all-of-government service, and what you need to do.

**Please read this before requesting alternate formats**

Providing information in alternate formats helps ensure the public sector is accessible for everyone. This is a core component of delivering on the Accessibility Charter.

The five alternate formats are:

* New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)
* Large Print
* Braille
* Audio
* Easy Read.

**All five formats are required.** This ensures disabled people have equal access to government information on policies, initiatives, and programmes.

If you need advice on alternate formats or the process, email the Alternate Formats Group at [accessibility@msd.govt.nz](mailto:accessibility@msd.govt.nz). You can contact us if you need information about the general process and timeframes, or want advice on the information you need in alternate formats.

Please engage with us early as alternate formats take time to produce. We can often provide initial advice about the process and getting a document ready for translation / transcription that will save you time and make the process smoother.

## Process

You must fully complete the form for requesting alternate formats and email it with your document(s) for translation / transcription to [accessibility@msd.govt.nz](mailto:accessibility@msd.govt.nz).

* The form can be found at [Form for requesting alternate formats](https://msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/alternate-formats/form-for-requesting-alternate-formats.html).
* Read the [Guide to requesting Alternate Formats](https://msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/alternate-formats/guide-to-alternate-formats.html) to help you complete the form and get the most out of the process.

Documents must be provided to the Alternate Formats Group in MS Word format.

**Ensure you have completed the checklist component of the form** – otherwise the request will be returned to you for completion.

### Prioritisation

Once we receive your request, there will be an initial assessment to determine how the work is prioritised and initial timeframes.

There are 3 levels of prioritisation at first assessment. These are, in order of priority:

1. **Risk:** Direct and Immediate Public Health Risk to disabled people. For example, pandemic management and civil emergencies.
2. **Impact:** Direct and Immediate impact on access to rights and services for disabled people. For example, health, legal, employment or financial services, or Government inquiries.
3. **Contribution:** Access and contribution to civic life. For example, contributing to surveys, access to Government reports, or access.

Other factors that drive prioritization and timeframes include:

* relevance to, and impact on disabled people
* final due dates
* provider capacity
* size and complexity of the job.

Once the Alternate Formats Group receives the completed request form and all relevant attachments in a reviewable format (Word document, no images without alternate text, etc), the process below will start.

If information is missing, or documents are not provided in the format required, we will return the request with comments.

### Process steps

**Step 1:****Feedback and costings**

Once we have a reviewable document (i.e. all the requirements in the checklist are met), the Alternate Formats Group will review the document and provide any additional feedback on the content for alternate formats.

This feedback will generally cover issues relating to the readiness of your document for production.

Our producers will also provide costings by way of either estimates or quotes for the work, unless significant changes to the document are required.

Generally, advice and costings will be provided within 10 working days of receiving a reviewable document, however this may take longer when there are multiple documents in your request.

**Note:** Your final document may need to be changed before costings can be provided because of the advice you receive. In this case, costings will take up to an additional 5 working days from when we get the updated document.

Costings for the work will be emailed to you. These may come directly from the providers. You will get a separate estimate or quote for:

1. Easy Read
2. NZSL
3. Blindness formats –Audio, Braille and Large Print (if there is a cost).

You need to respond and accept the costings before production can start.

Timeframes will be agreed once the costings have been accepted and will depend on current work priorities.

**Step 2:** **Production**

Production will only start once the costings have been accepted, the final documents have been received, and there is space in the production queue. Production typically takes four to 6 weeks.

If you make any changes to the content after production has started, there may be additional costs and timeframes could change as the work may need to start again.

**Step 3:** **Final translations / transcriptions**

The completed translations / transcriptions will be sent to you for uploading on your website. Your website administrator will be able to load these to an easy to find location on your site.

* **New Zealand Sign Language** videos are large files. These are provided via ‘WeTransfer’, ‘Vimeo’, or a similar platform for you to either download or link to. You may need to ask your IT team to allow you to access to the platform.

These are a translation for NZSL users and do not include captions. Captioning of general videos is a different mechanism and is not part of these translations. If needed, we can refer you to an agency that does this.

We recommend putting NZSL videos on your website alongside the English text. If your agency uses a video hosting service (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, etc), upload your NZSL videos to that service. The video can then be embedded into your website. If your website does not support embedding a video, a link to the video on YouTube, Vimeo, etc can be used instead, but the link must be clearly labelled with the words ‘NZSL’ and a Sign Language image/symbol. For further advice please contact your translation provider.

* **Braille** transcriptions are emailed as a ‘Braille Ready File’ (BRF). This file format is accessible to Braille readers who use an electronic Braille device. The file needs to go on the website exactly as it is, or it can be added as a Zip file if your website does not support BRF file formats.
* **Audio** files come as MP3s and/or DAISY files. Sometimes these files are large and may be provided via ‘Dropbox’, ‘WeTransfer’, or a similar platform.
* **Large Print** documents are emailed to you as an MS Word file. Audio and Braille are often produced based on finalised Large Print content. You may need to sign-off on the Large Print version before the file can be passed over to the producers of Audio and Braille.
* **Easy Read** documents are provided as both MS Word and PDF files. Both versions need to be available on your website.

**Step 4:** **Share the information**

You need to make sure the documents are easy to find on your website and that disabled people are aware there are alternate formats available. Many disabled people are digitally excluded and don’t have reliable access to the internet and digital information. It is important to plan how you will get the information to the community and consider how people can access hard copies of your information. The Alternate Formats Group can provide advice on this.

**Note on sharing the alternate formats:** Please provide us with a link when the resource is live. The Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) we work can provide a link to the final information on their websites and/or newsletters.

**Note on HTML:** Where you provide documents on your website, the information should also be provided in HTML. This means the base or full document used to produce the alternate formats is available in HTML. Some agencies may also choose to provide the Easy Read version in HTML.

In HTML format, use alternative text for graphs and diagrams that contain important information. Decorative images are not needed. If it is a complex image such as a detailed graph, then provide a full-text explanation below the image.

In **Easy Read documents**, each image is provided to help the reader understand the idea in the sentence located next to it. Images on the first page of an Easy Read document should be included in the HTML version of the Easy Read document, but other images are decorative and should not be included. For more information go to the Department of Internal Affairs: [Providing content in alternate formats](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgovtnz.github.io%2Fweb-a11y-guidance%2Fka%2Fhow-disabled-people-use-the-web%2Falternate-formats%2Fproviding-content-in-alternate-formats.html&data=05%7C01%7CJaime.Campbell023%40msd.govt.nz%7Ca016aa56f9e44d03a8d308dba81f2e43%7Ce40c4f5299bd4d4fbf7ed001a2ca6556%7C0%7C0%7C638288624099254462%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KxVNFNQglY7hukgZmDXPwQGU0J1tryoSFhqkNqbBnmw%3D&reserved=0)

**Note on videos:** If you are producing **videos for a general audience** (i.e. not a NZSL video), make sure there are captions, a transcript, picture-in-picture or in the frame (NZSL), and audio description.

As an alternate format, **NZSL videos** are a translation of content already provided in another language, and in most cases, another format. No captions are required as there is no speech in the NZSL translation to caption. For more information go to the Department of Internal Affairs: [Providing content in alternate formats](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgovtnz.github.io%2Fweb-a11y-guidance%2Fka%2Fhow-disabled-people-use-the-web%2Falternate-formats%2Fproviding-content-in-alternate-formats.html&data=05%7C01%7CJaime.Campbell023%40msd.govt.nz%7Ca016aa56f9e44d03a8d308dba81f2e43%7Ce40c4f5299bd4d4fbf7ed001a2ca6556%7C0%7C0%7C638288624099254462%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KxVNFNQglY7hukgZmDXPwQGU0J1tryoSFhqkNqbBnmw%3D&reserved=0)

## Tips for completing the alternate formats request form

Ensure the [Form for requesting alternate formats](https://msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/alternate-formats/form-for-requesting-alternate-formats.html) is fully completed before sending it to us. This includes the checklist, invoicing information, contact person and logo(s). If something is not applicable or being clarified, specify this on the form.

* Clearly list all documents that will be translated / transcribed.
* Send the completed form to [accessibility@msd.govt.nz](mailto:accessibility@msd.govt.nz).
* If working from a long document, provide a **Microsoft Word** document with an executive summary with the key information, generally of up to 4 to 10 pages.

This summary is generally what will be translated into Easy Read and NZSL. For Blindness formats (Large Print, Audio and Braille), we often transcribe the full report and the summary – this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

* As context, also provide the full document as an MS Word file.
* Include a web address for where your audience can go to get more detailed information.

For surveys and other feedback processes, you will need to provide a contact point your audience can use if they have questions. This includes:

* + a web address
  + an email address
  + a free-call number (including hours of operation)
  + a Text number for Deaf and hard of hearing
  + NZ Relay.

**All** these contact options are required for the process to be accessible.

* Dates for completion are determined based on the priority of the work and capacity of providers. To help determine timeframes, it is important we know any key dates you are aiming for. If the date is flexible, let us know this but also please indicate any general timeframes you are looking at.

Please note that where possible we will do our best to meet the timeframes you are aiming for, but this may not be doable if we do not receive the final document and approval of costings early enough, or capacity is limited by other priority work.

Please note that **“ASAP” is not a timeframe –** you must give a date.

* If copying information from an existing website, check the final document as the formatting can change or symbols can be added to the text when copying into MS Word.
* We only accept MS Word documents – we cannot accept PDF versions of documents. Documents for translation /transcription **must**:
  + be the final version with no tracked changes
  + use plain language – avoid jargon, acronyms, technical words, and unnecessary detail
  + provide enough context so your audience understands where the information is coming from and its purpose
  + include a clear and consistent heading structure using MS Word “Styles” options (accessed in the “Home” ribbon)
  + use a strong sans serif font (such as Arial or Verdana)
  + use a 12-point font with 1.5 line spacing for body text
  + not have information in tables or graphs – use lists instead if the information is needed
  + generally, not include pictures or images (other than logos). When pictures or images are included, they **must** have alternate text or a text description of the information.
* MS Word has an accessibility checker – we suggest that you use this on any documents included with the request form.

For more information on plain language see [Checklist for plain language - a quick reference guide - Ministry of Social Development](https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/quick-reference-guides/checklist-for-plain-language.html).

For more information on accessibility and alternate formats see [Accessibility - Ministry of Social Development](https://msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/index.html).