As we begin, we pause to acknowledge the place we exist, connect and create is the traditional UN surrendered territory of the Abenaki people, one of five Wabanaki nations who have continued and enduring presence with this land. Presence with mountains, vistas, forests, waters. Presence with people, relations with culture and creations. Presence with light.

We learned that in Abenaki “Waban” refers to the white flickering light in the sky and “aki” is the word for land or the earth. So the Abenaki are the people of the dawnlands.

We acknowledge Abenaki ancestors past, present and future. And with this acknowledgement, we commit to engage in efforts that dismantle the impacts of settler colonialism.

Good morning and welcome. I want to add just one more spontaneous note in the workshop that Katie and I did a number of I don't know months ago somebody said it looked like we had it all together and with the zoom boxes and everybody being here.

We do have lots together, but I just want to make a note that the world is in an unsettled place, and so as a human first perspective, and as a heart, I don't know if I'm saying that for the zoom space or for myself, but just to name the pink elephant in the zoom.

That the world is kind of unsettled right now, and so I just want to honor that and move into this space, which is what we're going to talk about digital accessibility, verbal descriptions and alt text. And when I get into that zone, I'm going to be super excited. 'cause I'm really passionate about accessing these things so.

With that my name is Heidi Swevens. I use she, her pronouns, and I am the director of community partnerships at Inclusive Arts, Vermont, and for access purposes I'll do a visual description of myself and surroundings.

I have blue eyes and pale skin with short brown hair and today I'm wearing a black velvet button down shirt. And a multi colored buff with purples and I think Blues and Reds and behind me is a blank white wall. I'm going to turn it over to Katie.

Alright, good morning everybody.
I'm Katie Miller. I'm the executive director at Inclusive Arts Vermont. I use she her pronouns and I'm joining you from our office today so I have some beige ish yellowish... None of us can really figure out what color they are... Walls behind me with a window over one shoulder and some artwork pieces behind me and over my other shoulder. I am a very pale skinned woman with shoulder length silver blonde hair, black glasses and today I'm wearing a sort of olive green sweater. I want to start off just by doing a little bit of housekeeping, uhm?

We already did some introductions in the chat box, but if folks are just joining us, feel free to pop in the chat box, sort of your name. Where in the state you're joining us from today, and if you're associated with any organization.

Uh, a couple reminders.

So we say this at the beginning of all of our trainings and meetings, and that's to remind you all that we are all humans first. And all the rest of it comes after. So if you need to get up and stretch or turn your camera on or off be joined by tiny people, big people, animals, whatever.

Just feel free to do that and take care of yourself as you see fit.

And along the same lines, we really encourage multiple ways to participate.

So today, if you know we're sharing things out loud and you prefer to use the chat box or.

If you have questions, you can either use the raise hand feature.

You can visually raise your hand and with a group this big it might take me a little while to see it, but if I see it I will get to you.

Or you could also direct message it to me on here.

You could email me a question so there are lots of ways to get a question to me if you need to.

And we are going to ask that the first time you speak today if you speak out loud to give a short verbal description of yourself and surroundings just like Heidi and I did.
And my last piece of housekeeping is that I want to let you all know that today's session will be recorded and available on from VT Arts Council website within the next week or so, with a full transcript.

So if after you see this so you want to share it with your colleagues, you're more than welcome to share that link. Which will be emailed to you after the training with everyone you know.

Great, I think that's it.

Awesome, so welcome again and I'm going to just start with the overview of what we're going to cover in this next sort of less than an hour. We're going to start by defining and demonstrating verbal description and alt text, and then Katie is going to do some screen sharing about how to add alt text to multiple applications on the computer.

And then we're going to invite you to practice writing out text. So we've set aside time. Hopefully 2 examples, maybe one, but so that you get some actual practice and then then running into questions and reflections.

So here we go.

The first thing I'm going to do is to give you a demonstration of alt text so and I thought maybe we would start with the experiential part and I'll go into all the wordy pieces so I have computer.

Well, it's actually an iPhone.

And I want you just listen to.
This first example.

Next, you’re recording example one, yesterday, duration.

Voice memos example one text play.

Example one.

Try to guess what this is.

IMG Dash 7700.

61 Dodge APG graphic.

OK, so that is an example of how a screen reader use, you know, reads out what something is with software.

Could you tell what that is?

Anybody know what that that image is of?

OK.

Uh, no.

All right, so let’s go to example 2.

Next play example.
Try to guess what this is.

One beautiful red and yellow apple without background stock photo. Picture and royalty free image. Image 945.

So anybody have an idea of what that Image is of.

I, I think that that's sort of a basic example of.

You know why Alt text is important.

The first one clearly didn't have alt text, and the second one did, and so as a person who uses screen readers and accessibility purposes? All sorts of other things.

We'll get more into the alt text does provide access for the information that's shown visually and a reminder from from the New England ADA Center. For those of you or previous workshops, we've said this before, but I'll say it again, the New England ADA. For the Americans with Disabilities Disabilities Act gives guidance and their guidance is if it's important enough to show it's an important enough to describe and so that's just sort of a framework for for talking about this.

So I'm going to try to find my place in the map here.

OK, so now what is verbal description?

And Katie has, uh, a definition of this to put in the chat box.

For those of you who want to look at the the definition. And I'm going to read it aloud.

Bear with.

Me if I'm a little choppy.
Verbal description uses non visual language to convey the visual world. It can navigate a visitor through museum, orients a listener to a work of art. Or provide access to the visual elements of our performance.

So that's a very specific art related definition. But essentially it uses visual verbal description. Uses non visual language to convey the visual world. And that might sound really heady or sort of confusing at first, but the idea again is to, you know, if a picture is worth 1000 words, offer some of those words. Probably not 1000, just so that somebody who may not be able to see it or who doesn't see it, has access to the meaning. The the next thing I want to just go over briefly is that we're talking about verbal description, and this is not related.

I have a cat who's really wanting to be part of this conversation so I’m trying to keep away.

You might also see or hear the phrase audio.

And in one disability led organization, somebody referred to visual descriptions.

So verbal description, audio description and to provide access there is a orange tiger cat walking in front of me. My apologies.

Essentially, there are some technicalities and if you get into the weeds with it, audio audio description is generally not going to turn the volume down, apologies.

Audio description often happens in film or television or live theater, where it's actually said out loud. It's an audio track.

And it provides visual elements for the people who have blindness or low vision.

I use them interchangeably and you know they have a technical difference, but I want you to know that audio description, verbal description. Visual description. All in essence, provides that visual information through language, and that's kind of the point. Does that make sense?

It's like, yeah, yeah, thumbs up.

And apologies for Polaris, the the cat here.
OK, so now we're going to go into what is alt text and I think that many of you I know what alt text is or we've talked about it a little bit before, but I was looking for a definition because I have used it but I never thought you know how to define it in terms.

00:10:40 Heidi Swevens

Of telling other people about it.

00:10:42 Speaker 3

So there's a.

00:10:43 Heidi Swevens

Website a website called web aim and I Love this definition and again Katie has this for the chat box.

00:10:50 Heidi Swevens

For those of you.

00:10:50 Heidi Swevens

Who are visual learner?

00:10:53 Heidi Swevens

But the definition is alternative text is a visual substitute for non text content in websites, documents and other digital mediums.

00:11:05 Heidi Swevens

Substitute it's a substitute.

00:11:07 Heidi Swevens

I love that and and there's lots of places that Katie will get into later to put in this.

00:11:12 Heidi Swevens

Substitute, but you might understand how verbal description kind of takes all this visual and the alternative text is a digital application of verbal description.

00:11:25 Heidi Swevens

The other thing to mention right now is that alternative text has more than that function.

00:11:29 Heidi Swevens

For our purposes, we want to stress the access function, but this website web am had several others that I think are really important to note, because when you get into the world of talking to others on your team or.

00:11:41 Heidi Swevens

The tech folks.
Around the functions of Alt text.

These are important things to consider as well or just to know about.

So there's three.

Things and Katie has these for the chat again.

I'm going to.

Read them out loud so they may not be precise, but the first function of Alt text is that screen readers announce.

Alternative text in place of the images.

Helping users with.

Visual or cognitive conditions perceive the content and I demonstrated that before with a sort of voiceover, so that's the first function of alternative text.

A second function is that if an image fails to download or user blocks images, the alternative text appears visually.

For the for the reader or the receiver.

So when somebody you know got protections on the alternative text comes through when the.

Graphics are black.
And thirdly, search engines use alternative text as a factor in their assessment of page purpose and content.

00:12:46 Heidi Swevens
That's a foreign language to me.

00:12:47 Heidi Swevens
The search engine thing, I know it's out there, but there's this other function.

00:12:51 Heidi Swevens
So what goes in your alt text is being assessed and and screened for the the online search engine functions as well.

00:13:00 Heidi Swevens
Two more things before Katie gets into demonstrating and.

00:13:04 Heidi Swevens
I hope we're OK what time?

00:13:06 Heidi Swevens
Then the next thing is that there is something called artificial intelligence that provides automatic alternative text descriptions.

00:13:15 Heidi Swevens
Now, they're not alternative text, they're automatic impressions of the verbal disk.

00:13:20 Heidi Swevens
Uhm, they are far from accurate and they do not need the JDA standards.

00:13:25 Heidi Swevens
So if somebody like there's this really cool thing where you know it tries to describe what it is that is really cool and it's not precise enough to actually convey the meaning.

00:13:34 Heidi Swevens
It might say Apple or might be a mountain, and that's not necessarily helpful in terms of somebody accessing.

00:13:40 Heidi Swevens
The meaning of the image.

00:13:43 Heidi Swevens
And the last thing I think is a great transition into kind of where Katie is going to go next, and to our practice, but it's it's preferred and sort of recommended that when you provide all texts you think about things in addition to what the images with the content and function of the image.

00:14:00 Heidi Swevens

So the context and function, and that we'll we'll get into more later.

00:14:03 Heidi Swevens

When we practice, but it's not just that it's an apple.

00:14:07 Heidi Swevens

It might be that it's an Apple logo, or it might be that it's an apple in a bucket that's being.

00:14:15 Heidi Swevens

Correct, so that there's I'll get more examples later, but context and function are really important when you think about creating the alternative texts.

00:14:23 Heidi Swevens

I'm gonna pause there and pass it.

00:14:24 Heidi Swevens

Over to Katie thanks.

00:14:27 Katie Miller

Thanks, Heidi.

00:14:28 Katie Miller

So a lot of folks when we talk about Alt text, they're like OK, that's all well and good, but how do I add it to?

00:14:35 Katie Miller

My website can I get?

00:14:37 Katie Miller

A quick show of hands?

00:14:39 Katie Miller

Who here?

00:14:41 Katie Miller

Manages your own website.
You can either raise your hand visually or just put like a yes in the chat box.
And it doesn't have to be you, but you manage it within your organization instead of farming it out somewhere else.
Looks like a lot.
Of people that's very typical of small to midsize nonprofit organizations, independent artists there.
There are many places that run their own website, so some of the common places that host websites are.
There's word press, which is what we use at inclusive arts, Vermont.
I think a lot of people use square space.
There are lots of them out there, so today I'm not going to.
Go, I'm going.
To talk about how to add it, but I'm not going to go in the nitty gritty of each web hosting space.
Honestly, it's different for every place, and they all have their different managing things.

00:15:37 Katie Miller

The how I would recommend finding that, and it's usually the first link that pops up.

00:15:42 Katie Miller

I'm gonna share some links with you today that are going to get emailed to you as well, so don't feel like you have to memorize this, but.

00:15:48 Katie Miller

You can just Google your web development platform and then how to add alt text, and that's usually the first link that pops up is the one you.

00:15:57 Katie Miller

Want to use?

00:15:59 Katie Miller

In WordPress.

00:16:01 Katie Miller

And they have a whole page like within their help section on how to do it, and all of the major social media platforms also have the ability to change and update all text to now, which is really cool.

00:16:14 Katie Miller

So uhm, how to find it?

00:16:16 Katie Miller

Do you know if an image has alt text?

00:16:18 Katie Miller

I'm going to share my.

00:16:19 Katie Miller

Screen really quick, uhm?

00:16:24 Katie Miller

My goodness, I took a couple weeks off from work and I forgot how to use zoom.

00:16:27 Katie Miller

Here we go OK.

00:16:29

All right?
OK, so uhm this screen. On the left hand side here actually I see the emcee. Do you have a question or is your hand raised from earlier? Oh OK, it's just from earlier. OK, so on the left on this screen that we're all looking at here, can folks still see my screen? Yeah OK good come on any image browser and this is true. I believe it's true in Safari. Uh, but in Chrome. And pretty much any other browser you're going to right click any image. Or you could control click and that will do the same thing and it will pop up this little menu here. You know it says open, save, copy all of those all the way at the bottom, it says inspect. You're going to click that and it will pop up this window on the right hand side. That's full of web code of website coding. It looks really scary.
I promise it's not and you can't mess this up, so it's not like if you start clicking things within this box on the right hand side, you're going to edit your website.

00:17:44 Katie Miller

You won't.

00:17:46 Katie Miller

This is just to show you the code.

00:17:48 Katie Miller

So once you open that up, you right click, click inspect.

00:17:52 Katie Miller

Uhm, there's this little set of double arrows about halfway down this window here, I'm going to click that and click accessibility.

00:18:03 Katie Miller

And it what it's doing right now in this window is it's giving me all of the information about this image so I can see I'm going to let somebody in here.

00:18:13 Katie Miller

I can see what's called the metadata or the data behind the image.

00:18:18 Katie Miller

Uh, one of them is alt text, so you see right here the part that I'm highlighting in Blue says Alt.

00:18:26 Katie Miller

If this has alt text, it will say something there.

00:18:29 Katie Miller

Sometimes it might say none, or it might say.

00:18:33 Katie Miller

Uh, it might look like an image title, so something like IMG 7941.

00:18:40 Katie Miller

Those are just the default of whatever was there, so either it was blank or the Web host decided to default to the image title as the Alt Tech.

00:18:50 Katie Miller

But this one you can see it says a student holds up a piece of artwork covering.
Their face and et cetera, et cetera.

00:18:56 Katie Miller

So that's how you find it.

00:19:01 Katie Miller

Any questions on how to find whether or not an image has all text?

00:19:07 Katie Miller

No, we're all good.

00:19:08 Katie Miller

OK.

00:19:09 Katie Miller

So how to add it?

00:19:10 Katie Miller

Again, it varies on your web depending on your website host we sent out links for the major social media platforms before this training.

00:19:17 Katie Miller

You'll get them again in the follow up email that's going to go out after the training's over today.

00:19:23 Katie Miller

Uhm, we also sent out a link for WordPress and again you can just Google it if you want to find out how to do it for your own web development software.

00:19:34 Katie Miller

If it's different than WordPress.

00:19:36 Katie Miller

Uhm, typically the alt text varies in style and length, but typically one to three sentences I would say is the average.

00:19:46 Katie Miller

And like Heidi said, it gives a description of the visual elements and is not an interpretation.

00:19:52 Katie Miller

So we're not going to if any of you are like art history nerds like myself, you know we're not going into the symbolism and the meaning of the apple.

00:19:59 Katie Miller
We're just talking about the color of the apple.

Where is it in space and what does it look like and.

And you want to.

Keep it factual.

And it's also a best practice to include all text in a graphic in the alt text, and I'm going to show you what that looks like.

In a second on our social media.

You, as you can see this is our website at Inclusive Arts, Vermont.

When we do our alt text we put it in the back end in the coding.

So like Heidi showed earlier, someone who uses a screen reader, it will read that alt text aloud.

We also put it as the caption, so it's a visual out there.

This part that I'm highlighting right now.

That's a caption on our website.

And the reason we do that is sort of two fold.


One is not everyone who uses the alt text or an image description necessarily uses a screen read.

The other reason is that it's a great conversation starter and educational tool.

We get questions very frequently, at least monthly.

Hey, what's the I was on your website.

What's the deal with those captions?

And we can say, oh, cool, let me tell you about verbal description so it's a really dumb.

Sort of.

I would say passive way to engage in a little bit of education.

And advocacy with folks who are visiting your website.

It's a way for you as an artist or as an organization to advocate for verbal descriptions.

If everyone can see.

It in the front.

Well, we've got a couple more.

People joining us.

Good morning to those who just came in.
Feel free to put yourself on you and if you could change your name to your actual.

Name that would be great.

OK, so we do that on our website.

We also do it.

This window.

Here is our Instagram and you can see on this picture at the very bottom of each social media post we have this thing that.

In brackets we put image or image description and then a very short one to three sentence description of the image.

Again, this is because not everyone who could make use of this description is someone who necessarily uses screen reader software, so this is what it looks like for a.

A simple photograph, so I'll read this aloud.

It says image a photo of Neil Marcus outdoors he is wearing a Gray hoodie and yellow sweatpants kneeling towards the ground.

One hand on his wheelchair and one hand on a tree, he stares directly at the camera.

There's sky and grass behind him.

I'm going to show you an example as well of one with text, so we'll choose this one.
00:22:32 Katie Miller
So all the way at the bottom again in brackets it says image a Gray square graphic at bottom center, a grayscale photo of the inclusive Arts Vermont management team.

00:22:41 Katie Miller
Five people all smiling at the camera above in bold white writing, and says we’re grateful for you.

00:22:47 Katie Miller
Here’s to a creative and safe 2022.

00:22:50 Katie Miller
Now the reason on social media that this is really important is, well, there are a few reasons.

00:22:56 Katie Miller
The first is you want to go in and update this alt text and add it to your caption because like Heidi said earlier, there is AI software that will.

00:23:08 Katie Miller
Do let's try to guess what your images of and put in an alt text for you.

00:23:15 Katie Miller
If you don't put within, it is very often wrong.

00:23:18 Katie Miller
Uhm, so you could have an image of say it's a simple headshot of me and it for whatever reason decides that.

00:23:28 Katie Miller
It's a black and white image of a flower in the desert.

00:23:32 Katie Miller
Uh, drinking a milkshake, you know, like it's like, totally unrelated to what it actually is.

00:23:39 Katie Miller
So you want to go through and edit that all text, which is really easy to do.

00:23:42 Katie Miller
I don't think we can do it.

00:23:46 Katie Miller
On here, but on the desktop versions of social media platforms.
But I will show share with you those links on how to do it step by step and.

They're really thorough, which is great.

And and.

So can I just ask a clarifying question?

So you put captions in Instagram, but you can also do the same kind of alt text in Instagram, yeah?

Data reader would.

Yeah, Yep, so uh, my I'm going to once I find it share a link right?

Now or if you.

So these are how to update the alt text on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter.

How to do it in a Word document.

A word press and an Adobe Acrobat document.

Oh, except for the actual links aren't working, so bear with me.

Once we switch to Heidi I'll share those, but essentially it's when you post it.

You can go into an Instagram.

I think you go to advanced options and then you type in your alt text.
I think on Facebook it's the same.

I believe I would have to talk to the person who manages our social media.

It's been a long time since I've done it here, but I believe you can do it through some content managing software if you use those like hoot suite and others and.

A little a little.

Hack a little time saving hack for you all.

Up is to when you write a verbal description or an alt text, save it somewhere to a Word document.

Even if you save them all to one place.

Because then you can go in and just copy and paste it every time you need it.

So for example, the verbal description for our logo, it's saved in a Word document, so we're not trying to remember or rewrite it every time we write one, we know it's good.

We copy and paste it every time.

Does that make sense?

OK, so the last thing I'll say about writing.
It can be really intimidating at first, but please come.

Keep in mind everyone has their own style and voice and have fun with it.

If you just peruse our website a little bit, you'll get to notice that there are a few different voices you know our previous executive Executive Director, Judy.

If anybody knows Judy Chalmer is a poet, and so when she writes verbal descriptions, some of the old ones are still there.

They're so poetic and beautiful.

And other people are like strictly factual, some are shorter, some are longer so.

Have fun with it.

Uhm, any questions before we move on to practice.

There's one in the chat box here.

Let me see.

Katie, can I just do a poll like so quick thumbs up.

How many people here have written all text before?

Right?

Looks like a half a dozen maybe?
OK.

I'll notice that like 10.

So this is.

So this is new and.

In other workshops that Katie and I've done in verbal description trainings for our mass exhibition and other things, one thing I like to talk about one is that the practice will be kind of.

A judgment free zone that really it's just a practice, but many people who gravitate towards communications and other things like.

Words, so how many people here like words?

Yeah, so when Katie says have fun with it.

I think this might be my own interpretation.

It clearly it is, but I think that the fun if you can engage with fun and writing out texts and creating those things, become fun for you.

That sort of gets translated whatever your style.

Is so for practice.
We'll keep it in that spirit.
00:27:27 Heidi Swevens
But also just know that.
00:27:29 Heidi Swevens
There's a nice match for people in communications to do this.
00:27:32 Heidi Swevens
Added part with words and having words you know, make visuals come alive, so yeah.
00:27:38 Katie Miller
And I will add to.
00:27:39 Katie Miller
So as someone who is a verbal describer myself, you know I before I started working at Inclusive Arts, Vermont.
00:27:47 Katie Miller
Uhm, I had not heard of verbal description or alt text like actually I've heard of Alt text but not verbal description as a practice and.
00:27:56 Katie Miller
When I first started doing it here, I was really intimidated.
00:28:00 Katie Miller
I was really worried I was going to do it wrong or that I was going to disappoint.
00:28:05 Katie Miller
Somehow the person that I was describing something for UM, then I also wound up having a child like I one of my children was born with low vision so I used verbal description every day in my life.
00:28:16 Katie Miller
So that worked out.
00:28:17 Katie Miller
Sort of serendipitously but also.
00:28:20 Katie Miller
I think.
00:28:21 Katie Miller
As you practice.
It will become.

More and more natural to you and the.

Desire to try at all, or the desire to practice or put it out there.

Outweighs the possibility of.

Getting it quote unquote wrong so.

If you’re feeling nervous about getting it wrong, just know that that's totally normal and it happens everybody.

OK, so I put all those links in the chat box.

We are going to share.

Them again with you all later.

And and now that I'm caught.

Up with text.

Stuff, oh, there was one question, sorry, let me go back here.

Uhm, Marie asks.
When cross posting between Instagram and Facebook, does the alt text from your Instagram post stay with the post in Facebook or do I need to go in and edit the Facebook post at it?

00:29:12 Katie Miller

That is a.

00:29:12 Katie Miller

Great question I.

00:29:16 Katie Miller

I would hope yes because they are owned by the same company, but I'm not sure.

00:29:20 Katie Miller

So when we give you all practice time.

00:29:21 Katie Miller

I'm going to do some research really quick and I will get you an answer on that, OK?

00:29:28 Katie Miller

Uh, alright practice time.

00:29:31 Katie Miller

Let's see.

00:29:35 Katie Miller

OK, So what we're going?

00:29:37 Katie Miller

To do next is I'm going to.

00:29:38 Katie Miller

Pull up an.

00:29:39 Katie Miller

Image for all.

00:29:39 Katie Miller

Of you and if.

00:29:41 Katie Miller

You don't feel inspired by this image and you want to practice on something else.

00:29:45 Katie Miller
That's totally fine.
00:29:46 Katie Miller

Do that.
00:29:47 Katie Miller

Uhm, but I'm going to pull up an image and give you some prompts to work through.
00:29:54 Katie Miller

Practice writing all text and right.
00:29:59 Katie Miller

Let's pull up.
00:30:00 Katie Miller

The first one here.
00:30:08

There go.
00:30:08 Heidi Swevens

We have two ideas in mind and our first one was that maybe people could try the same image to see where the variations are, and then if we have time to get to another one.
00:30:19 Heidi Swevens

But as Katie was saying, feel, go with where you're feeling inspired, but part of the fun could be to see what different descriptions.
00:30:25 Heidi Swevens

Or of this same image?
00:30:28 Katie Miller

OK, so the first prompt and I will put these in the chat box too, so don't feel like you have to memorize them.
00:30:36 Katie Miller

The first prompt.
00:30:36 Katie Miller

I'm going to give you is to write down all of the adjectives.
00:30:42 Katie Miller

You would use.
To describe this image, so any and all adjectives you would use to describe it.

I'm going to give people.

And about one minute to do that, and some people.

Are putting theirs in the chat which I love like let's let's do that.

So if you want to put your adjectives in the chat box to share, it might help inspire other people.

I know that when we do verbal descriptions here collaboratively, I think about things in a whole new way.

Eliza asks, are we describing the object or the image itself a that is a great question with a complicated answer and the answer is both and so you want to describe that it is a.

Color photograph.

Uhm, but you also want to describe what's contained in it, so hopefully that makes sense.

OK, so once you write down all of the adjectives, you would.

Use to describe it.
Do you want to wait?

And do that at the end.

Yeah, sure we can.

Sure why not, uhm?

A fresh red and or a fresh ripe red and green shiny apple sitting on a wood surface.

Uhm, shiny red green light white.

A red and green shiny apple in the center of Woodward.

OK, people are getting past the the actitudes.

All right, yeah?

Uhm, some of the other ones are red, round, green, brown, white, wooden, shiny, brightly lit, red, speckled, red, green, gradient, light white.

Uh, m'cheyne shiny natural red green colorful photographic crisp loves that, that's like yeah yeah clear bright what I love when people share their own descriptions is I some words that I don't necessarily come to my mind.

Come come up and it helps.
I don't know, just sort of.

Make the description richer.

OK, so your next step.

After you write down all of the.

Adjectives is what is it doing?

Where is it?

Does it interact with?

It's spaced at all, so this is where we're talking about context and function.

So uhm.

Where is this apple?

What is it doing?

I'll get people a few minutes to share.

One person said placed on wood.

It's a single apple sitting upright on a wood surface.
This is just a side note, but.
00:34:07 Heidi Swevens

Uhm, when I so my way of seeing.
00:34:11 Speaker 4

Blah blah blah.
00:34:13 Heidi Swevens

I had no idea there was.
00:34:14 Heidi Swevens

Wood on that image.
00:34:16 Heidi Swevens

So that's really cool to know.
00:34:21 Heidi Swevens

It's like the same color as the background to me, so it really.
00:34:22 Heidi Swevens

Looks like just.
00:34:25 Heidi Swevens

This apple in the middle of nowhere.
00:34:28 Heidi Swevens

So maybe just a case in point Y audio description.
00:34:31 Heidi Swevens

The little description has impact.
00:34:36 Katie Miller

Uhm, it says on a wood surface it sits upright on a light wooden board.
00:34:44 Katie Miller

Murray says I'm a little surprised no one has identified the variety of Apple LOL.
00:34:50 Katie Miller
Uhm, OK, so the next thing we're going to do is to write your alt text draft and remember this is so I'm going to put the prompt in the chat box.

00:34:58 Katie Miller

This is one to three sentences where you combine what is the image of and what is the object or whatever it is doing in space.

00:35:08 Katie Miller

One to three sentences really quick.

00:35:09 Katie Miller

You can share it in the chat box or in a few moments.

00:35:13 Katie Miller

I'll give people.

00:35:15 Katie Miller

Maybe one to two?

00:35:16 Katie Miller

Minutes to write their sentences and then some people can share.

00:35:18 Katie Miller

Theirs out loud if they want.

00:35:22 Katie Miller

Oh cool, Charlotte said I was seeing it as red and yellow until everyone started saying green.

00:35:29 Katie Miller

OK, so you're going to write your alt text.

00:35:33 Katie Miller

One to three sentences.

00:35:38 Katie Miller

And then share.

00:35:40 Katie Miller

In the chat box.

00:35:47 Katie Miller

So I'm going to give people one to two minutes and I'm going to do my.
If you're fast and furious, Googling.

In the meantime, oops, everyone gonna.

That's my thought.

I think we'll have time to do a few out loud for sure and just notice the time and get a second practice exercise.

And so if you're not somebody who chats, there'll be an. Opportunity for you to share.

OK, I'm gonna read a few of these out loud.

Shay says.

A brightly lit color photograph of a shiny red and green speckled apple sitting on a light wood surface.

Maria says a colored photo of a shiny red and green apple sitting upright and centered on a blonde wood surface.

A color photograph of a bright shiny apple sitting on a wood surface.

A shiny red and green apple sitting stem up on a wooden surface.

A crisp photograph of a speckled, shiny red and green apple is sitting on a washed out surface of pale wood boards.
A shiny, red and green whole apple with a stem sits upright on a light almost white wooden surface.

Katie Miller
Uh, so as you.

Katie Miller
Can see there.

Katie Miller
There are lots more and I encourage you to look through the chat and sort of read them as they go.

Katie Miller
I'm going to read this last one here.

Katie Miller
A color photograph of a single apple sitting on a wooden board.

Katie Miller
The apple is shiny modelled red, green, with a stem pointing up and a small shadow beneath the right the surface.

Katie Miller
Is pale the lines go between the boards diagonally from upper left to bottom right?

Katie Miller
The board is in focus in the foreground, but is blurry in the background.

Speaker 6
Baby baby I have a question.

Speaker 6
Yeah, my question is, I'm thinking about our colleague who has.

Speaker 6
Never had vision.

Speaker 6
And so a lot of these words would be extraneous for him.

Speaker 6
So can you help me think through this?
Are we writing for to be more inclusive of people with low vision?

00:39:09 Speaker 6

Versus people who have never had vision.

00:39:13 Speaker 6

So I mean.

00:39:14 Katie Miller

I'm going to let Heidi answer that one.

00:39:16 Speaker 6

OK.

00:39:18 Heidi Swevens

Thank you for that question and I'm going to start by sort of saying a couple things about this exercise and then about your question, which is something that Katie and I've heard again and again.

00:39:29 Heidi Swevens

This practice exercise is designed to get people thinking about verbal description and applying it for all texts for digital access.

00:39:39 Heidi Swevens

And there was a range, right?

00:39:40 Heidi Swevens

Like we're artists in this space.

00:39:42 Heidi Swevens

I think artists and writers and lovers of.

00:39:44 Heidi Swevens

Words and alt text has the specific function of digital access.

00:39:48 Heidi Swevens

One to three sentences, and so that's a concise sort of way.

00:39:51 Heidi Swevens

Some of these descriptions may not actually fit into an alt text photo label, but if it's an artistic thing then it then it's a whole.

00:40:01 Heidi Swevens

There's just some nuances there with the access feature.
If you're doing it for art's sake.

Then maybe you want to have a longer description, and that may or may not fit into the alt text, so verbal description and alt text go hand in hand, if that makes sense and alt text is 1.

Application of verbal description, and that’s my starting place does that.

Make sense to people.

Yes, OK.

So then the question of.

You're using we're using.

Visual language for people who may not have ever seen and might not have a reference.

Point to the visual.

And I think that that question is probably nuanced depending on.

Individuals, like everything is, but in general, people who have never seen anything have a sense of red.

They might have a sense of.

Fluffy even though it’s a different sense so.
That philosophical question, I think varies, but I don't think it's I'm. I'm going to use the word wrong, although I don't like the word wrong, I don't think it's inappropriate to use words that people may not have a visual reference because they might have a different experiential reference.

00:41:16 Heidi Swevens

Separate from that or in addition to that.

00:41:19 Heidi Swevens

We at inclusive Art, Vermont do two kinds of verbal descriptions.

00:41:23 Heidi Swevens

Again, this is not necessarily all text, but two kinds of verbal descriptions for art exhibitions, because sometimes all of the words that describe the beautiful nuances of the art and then people get lost in that there's too many words.

00:41:39 Heidi Swevens

That the the.

00:41:40 Heidi Swevens

Meaning is not conveyed because somebody cognitive processing or somebody attention.

00:41:47 Heidi Swevens

Needs a shorter version for them.

00:41:49 Heidi Swevens

To have access.

00:41:49 Heidi Swevens

To it, so we intentionally do short versions and long versions of the art is one example to provide multiple access points for different kinds of listeners and learners, and that has you know.

00:42:02 Heidi Swevens

More to do with.

00:42:03 Heidi Swevens

Cognitive than visual access and we discovered that when we were doing it verbal description training many years ago now in the.

00:42:11 Heidi Swevens

Office and there's.

00:42:12 Heidi Swevens

There's one photo that I sometimes see now, and I still think why don't we just?
Call that a.

Happy snowman 'cause we have all.

These writers, who love words who are.

Like going on and on in paragraphs.

And I, as somebody, and this is me and I love the details like the stem and the like.

I'm I'm drawn into that.

But this this colleague was like.

Why don't you?

Just call it a happy snowman and.

We thought, oh right.

I don't need to.

I'm getting lost, she said.

So we intentionally now do 2 versions of that for the access points, does that.

Make sense and did.
I lose anybody trying to explain.

00:42:48 Katie Miller

Looks like it makes sense.

00:42:50 Katie Miller

I did put in the chat box, uh, a link to the audio descriptions from our previous exhibition if anyone is curious what, like longer form, verbal descriptions, look and sound like, there's text there and then they're all recorded as well.

00:43:06 Heidi Swevens

And curiously, the short versions of verbal descriptions actually are also the alt text for.

00:43:11 Heidi Swevens

The images, that's what.

00:43:12 Katie Miller

I was going to say.

00:43:13 Katie Miller

Is when we.

00:43:13 Heidi Swevens

Oh sorry.

00:43:13 Katie Miller

Do the short descriptions.

00:43:15 Katie Miller

It actually serves as the alt text too, which is.

00:43:19 Katie Miller

Start with lunch.

00:43:19 Speaker 5

I'm just thinking it it would be as we are processing.

00:43:23 Speaker 5

I appreciate what you just explained about having two different versions.

00:43:27 Speaker 5

I think that's awesome because that was part of what I was thinking.
Well, we're making these really long complicated descriptions of these photos, like that's additional to the content, and when I look at uh. Picture, it's like a really quick intake and like as somebody with a visual impairment if they're reading or you know in taking all the information of the body. Of the thing. Plus these really long alt text. It must be like me as somebody who likes concise. I would be like. You might get. Annoyed by it?

So I see that happy snowman being like the ideal version, but that's of course my perception. So yeah, cool.

I think this links, oh sorry I wasn't seeing this link.
Context and function.

So all text is specifically for the digital access pieces.

But in an art gallery in you know somebody looking at the Mona Lisa just to use that example.

I don't even know how.

To describe that you know a woman with a under the undistinguishable smile that might not get to the nuances for the art world.

So the function in context of that has its own place within.

The art realms and museums.

And galleries that I think we're acknowledging that is different than alt text, and they do go hand in hand.

And we were doing a training.

I just want to say that sort of like happy function happy.

Snowman being the idea.

Yeah, we were doing a training with some college students.

Who were doing?
Verbal descriptions for a gallery installation and we were playing one from the past exhibit as an example.

00:45:06 Heidi Swevens
The long version and I I just couldn't pay attention in that moment and they noticed it.

00:45:10 Heidi Swevens
So it's not this multiple options these.

00:45:12 Heidi Swevens
Multiple access points.

00:45:14 Heidi Swevens
It varies from person to person and moment to moment 2 and you know people aren't necessarily going to do every single option all the time, but as we're sharing with you, kind of.

00:45:24 Heidi Swevens
Why we do?

00:45:24 Heidi Swevens
What we do and from our experience of maybe having an a-ha moment.

00:45:29 Heidi Swevens
There's not a right or wrong.

00:45:30 Heidi Swevens
There's just, you know, being clear about why you're doing it and knowing that you're going to reach different people in different ways.

00:45:35 Heidi Swevens
And if the point is to communicate and to connect, then just being aware of why you're doing it is is important and that it's not going to reach everybody and somebody might be like hey, why don't you just call that a happy snowman?

00:45:47 Speaker 5
And you're like.

00:45:49 Heidi Swevens
Then yeah, yeah Katie, I didn't I.

00:45:50 Heidi Swevens
Don't know where you were going to.
Go but thanks for letting me add to that.

No, that’s OK.

We've got a couple of hands up so.

Let's do Shea and then David.

You're up next.

Uh, I was just gonna say, oh, uh, for time first time talking.

Hi, I'm Shay uh my use they she pronouns and I'm a pale fat white person with long dark brown braids and a turquoise button up shirt sitting in a off white and wood paneled. Room with wainscoting and a brightly lit window, inconveniently backlighting me.

In in unflattering light conditions, and I will say that I just wanted to respond to what Dominique said in that.

Uhm, I've recently tried to integrate more consistent image descriptions and alt text in my like social media practice generally.

And I've noticed that it really like, slows me down and challenges the like immediacy of the culture.

Of constant rapid fire image in taking like doom scrolling is just in taking thousands of images.

What an hour or whatever it can be right?
And so.
00:47:08 Speaker 4

I feel like.
00:47:10 Speaker 4

There is this like value to being concise, of course, because we don't want to get lost in superfluous endless language.
00:47:19 Speaker 4

And there is access.
00:47:22 Speaker 4

There there's like a increased point of access for short descriptions, I think, but also it challenges me as a person creating image descriptions and I'll text to slow down my like shooting out content so quickly that I'm not considering access.
00:47:40 Speaker 4

And so I feel like.
00:47:43 Speaker 4

Yeah, there's just.
00:47:43 Speaker 4

It's not like right or wrong, there's just like a balance that I'm experiencing as I integrate this new practice of like wanting to be concise and short and fast, and also like recognizing that the speed that I have been operating at in my life is.
00:48:00 Speaker 4

Like conducive to all kinds of lack of awareness about accessibility?
00:48:04 Speaker 4

Uhm, so that's just something I've been reflecting about as I try to be more consistent in that practice and.
00:48:12 Speaker 4

And I also want to say while I'm here, that I did check while we were talking about the Facebook Instagram.
00:48:17 Speaker 4

Flow because I have been trying to to do this practice in my life and it does not transfer automatically for me.
00:48:26 Speaker 4
Image image descriptions in the captions.

00:48:28 Speaker 4

If your captions go over.

00:48:30 Speaker 4

That can go over, but the alt text does not transfer it, but Facebook does do that creepy artificial.

00:48:38 Speaker 4

Artificial intelligence, barely alt text and it says this might be an image of us talking in an indoor setting or whatever, so I that was good for me to know 'cause I want to go back in edit.

00:48:50 Katie Miller

Yeah, thanks Jay.

00:48:51 Katie Miller

I tried to Google it and I couldn't find an answer and then I was trying to crosspost from our like inclusive arts, Instagram to Facebook but it's like not tethered correctly to my personal social media.

00:49:00 Katie Miller

Blah blah blah.

00:49:02 Katie Miller

But what I did find out is if you use a program like Hoot Suite which is a social media like content management.

00:49:09 Katie Miller

Tool that you can add.

00:49:10 Katie Miller

We all text in there and it will go to all of the media platforms you're posting.

00:49:15 Katie Miller

From from there.

00:49:16 Katie Miller

David, go ahead.

00:49:19 Speaker 9

Hi, my name is David I use he.

00:49:21 Speaker 9

And him I'm a.
Pale skinned man with blue eyes and blonde hair and a mustache and beard with a green button up shirt sitting in my kitchen and I was just curious, you know, obviously all these descriptions are so subjective and especially I’m sure getting into the art world and longer descriptions, but I’m curious if there's discussion about you know, like unconscious.

Biases and.

You know, obviously I have my perspective on the world and I would you’d think with this short caption like Happy Snowman, it wouldn't make a difference, but I'm sure it would in a lot of circumstances.

Curious if you could speak to that at all.

Yeah, so we come.

I have run into this in a few different ways, specifically, most recently related to skin color and verbal description.

Uhm, it came up.

Oh gosh, what a couple of years ago now Heidi, right uhm.

When essentially the conundrum was like how do you it in relation to it could be skin, color, gender, all sorts of different things, how?

When you're writing a verbal description, you're very often choosing to put identifying markers on something or someone.

We have come into the practice of when we can bring in like so if we're describing artwork bringing in the artist to to look at the verbal description and make edits where they see fit.
If we’re putting someone headshot on the Internet, that’s someone on our staff or board, or volunteer somebody we know we asked them to just sort of look over the verbal description and say what do you think?

00:50:58 Katie Miller

About this uhm.

00:51:01 Katie Miller

And people often do have edits or changes, I think.

00:51:08 Katie Miller

It is, like most things complicated and nuanced, and I wish there was a clear cut answer or way we have a practice of a bringing people in and B, not guessing if we have to guess.

00:51:21 Katie Miller

We don’t uhm.

00:51:24 Katie Miller

Especially I, I think in terms of.

00:51:30 Katie Miller

When you’re describing people.

00:51:32 Katie Miller

And allowing that space for someone to identify themselves.

00:51:35 Katie Miller

So if we come.

00:51:38 Katie Miller

Are going to describe someone very often will use the word person instead of woman.

00:51:43 Katie Miller

Man, uhm.

00:51:47 Katie Miller

And we’ll describe maybe the color of skin, but not necessarily add in.

00:51:55 Katie Miller

Race unless we either know, like we’ve heard from that person, how they choose to identify or uhm.

00:52:03 Katie Miller

Yeah, does that make sense and answer your question.
And I just want to add on that absolutely.

There’s power in language, and if you slow down to write about something outside of you or you’re going to notice some biases, you know we are humans and there’s a lot of this, I think it just parallels some of what’s happening in our society.

At this time, where we’re questioning, we’re wondering we’re looking at power and we don’t have time or space in this.

Workshop to talk about it, but I love that we get to end with a question around you know what is it that you’re describing and is there anything that you know was unexamined before you put words to it, especially around people that was going to be exercised too, but we kind of got into the questions with this one.

Katie and I will have office hours.

Next week, if you want to talk about it more, these are questions that are happening nationally and in other places at the intersection of access and you know all sorts of other you know diversity things, which is one of the reasons we invite, and the practice is to invite people, describe themselves and their surroundings.

Because that invites somebody to describe how they want to be known in this space, and verbal description is the visuals.

But people change that in their interpretation into race or ethnicity rather than skin tone and and as we do this as introductions, there’s not a right or wrong, but I think it’s in flux in our world, and so of course.

It’s going to be in flux in the practice and the noticing, and you may not always be able to check with the person, but you know, looking at context and function and the words that you use to describe inconsistency are just all important things to consider as.

Well with people.
00:53:47 Heidi Swevens
So thank you for that question and I know we're nearing the end, so Katie.

00:53:51 Katie Miller
Yeah, there is one question in the chat box.

00:53:53 Katie Miller
I want to get to you really quick from Michelle and it was something I was going to say and then.

00:53:57 Katie Miller
We moved on so we came back to it, which is great.

00:54:00 Katie Miller
Uhm, Michelle says.

00:54:01 Katie Miller
I’m curious about the quote happy snowman phrase I I have been taught that happy interprets emotion and I should not do that.

00:54:08 Katie Miller
It would be more appropriate to.

00:54:09 Katie Miller
Describe the snowman.

00:54:12 Katie Miller
What the snowman is doing.

00:54:12 Katie Miller
Like smiling snowman, is that correct?

00:54:14 Katie Miller
The answer is yes, because anything that is a value statement or interpretive of the emotion.

00:54:22 Katie Miller
Or the value of.

00:54:26 Katie Miller
What something looks like you should avoid and so instead we would describe it as a smile or a mouth with upturned corners.

00:54:35 Katie Miller
If you really want to get.

00:54:36 Katie Miller

Uhm, none.

00:54:41 Katie Miller

Like not placing emotion on the snowman itself and.

00:54:43 Katie Miller

I think the actual description.

00:54:45 Katie Miller

Wound up being something like that.

00:54:46 Katie Miller

It's a piece of artwork I should.

00:54:47 Katie Miller

Go get it.

00:54:48 Katie Miller

It's a piece.

00:54:48 Katie Miller

Of artwork that hangs on the wall in our office.

00:54:52 Katie Miller

And we don't have a description of it online anywhere, but yes.

00:54:55 Katie Miller

That's why as a verbal describer when I'm describing things in person like artwork, I wouldn't describe it as a beautiful painting.

00:55:04 Katie Miller

I would because that's subjective and I might think it's beautiful, but someone else might not.

00:55:08 Katie Miller

Uh, I would describe that it is colorful, vibrant, etc.

00:55:14 Katie Miller

Alyssa did have a hand up and we have two minutes, so Alyssa do you want to ask your question?

00:55:24 Speaker 8
World Cycler Woman Holding a 6 month old baby and I'll be quick.

00:55:29 Speaker 8

I just got a follow up question come with the describing people issues.

00:55:35 Speaker 8

So for instance, I work with state of Vermont solid waste program.

00:55:39 Speaker 8

I do, and one of the people who maintains our websites.

00:55:42 Speaker 8

We do have some images of people.

00:55:44 Speaker 8

Well, batch.

00:55:45 Speaker 8

Are a variety of races and things obviously the point of the images is not that it's, you know they have very specific, like related to composting or whatever.

00:55:56 Speaker 8

Uhm, we're realizing we definitely have been negligent about altex.

00:56:01 Speaker 8

I would love to start doing an audit and going in and fixing that.

00:56:05 Speaker 8

But that's just a really challenging area, so I was mostly wondering if you had resources that you recommended to Reeves as we don't have much time for discussion.

00:56:14 Speaker 8

At the moment.

00:56:19 Heidi Swevens

I don't have a resource off the top of my head, Katie to you.

00:56:22 Heidi Swevens

I think it's resources in development.

00:56:24 Heidi Swevens

Uhm, the way I've been learning is by observing what organizations that I look through are doing in terms of their practice and.
Uhm, I think I can speak for inclusive arts Vermont by saying we're sort of in transition with some of that.

Just like the rest of the world in terms of our consistency, some of what was on the website before or past time, you know, I?

I don't know if we buy skin tone and all.

MM so the short answer is we will look for resources and get back to you, and I don't think I can't think of anything right now because I think it's a conversation that's still happening.

Putting in.

Marie asked the question recommendations for screen readers so we can hear.

What are alt text sounds like?

Uhm, if you are on a Windows computer, you can go to.

Is it navigator?

Yes, it navigator narrator OK, so on any windows computer, if you open up the narrator app, it will narrate what's on screen for you, and that's screen reader software that's embedded into a Windows computer on any Mac product.

Any Apple product, it's called voice over and you get to that by the settings.

And it's embedded in all of them, so you can test it out in here.
OK, thank you.

00:57:58 Katie Miller

All so much for joining us today we will be sending out an email today or tomorrow with all the links we shared as well as the link to find this recording when it's available.

00:58:07 Katie Miller

Thank you so much to all of you for your time and your dedication to this work and being here today.

00:58:13 Katie Miller

And thank you to the Arts Council and the state legislature.

00:58:16 Katie Miller

For funding this series and making it free to all.

00:58:20 Katie Miller

Of you so.

00:58:22 Katie Miller

We will see you all next week for office hours. Heidi and I will be here from 9:30 to 10:30.

00:58:26 Katie Miller

Just hanging out answering any questions you have, so feel free to come on and hang out with us next Tuesday.

00:58:32 Heidi Swevens

And if anybody has any last minute questions for today, Katie and I will hang out for a little bit longer today as if we were in physical space the the lingering.

00:58:43

Thank you.

00:59:10 Katie Miller

Alright, I think I'm gonna stop recording.