Accessible Spreadsheets

Creating accessible spreadsheets in Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel can be daunting for many users across the State. As we create these products to show and share things like data, trends, or status, we want to be sure that they are usable by everyone who views them.

What if one or more members of your intended audience are using assistive technology to view your sheet or table? Good news! They can still receive and understand the data you share when you employ standard techniques.

* **Start with a template.** Using existing templates can save time and improve accessibility for the spreadsheets you create. Both Google and Microsoft offer templates that have accessibility features built in.
* **Make content easier to see.** Format text to between 12 and 18 points for all cells, and use sufficient contrast (at least 4.5:1)
* **Alt-text? Always.** Be sure to use alternative (alt-text) for charts, graphs and images.
* **Use titles.** Giving meaningful document and workbook titles helps an assistive technology user search and navigate files efficiently.
  + Name sheets with a sheet name that describes its content.
  + Delete unused sheets to avoid unnecessary navigation.
* **Use split and merged cells thoughtfully.** While not forbidden, they can present issues with how your data is interpreted. The key is to ensure every piece of data has its own cell, and that empty cells are truly null data.
* **Implement borders.** Borders are incredibly helpful visual aids.
* **Format cells.** Ensure your cells are formatted to properly represent your data, including number and text attributes.
* **Add visual organization.** Structural markup can help identify what is part of a particular table and what is not. Having well-defined row and header columns will allow a user to understand and interact with your document.
* **Naming the different data** ranges within your spreadsheet makes it easier to navigate the document and find specific information. By associating a meaningful name to a data range, you will be enhancing the readability of your document.

Well-built spreadsheets are good for business and essential for users of assistive technology. While there is no surefire way to guarantee accessibility across the board, considering and implementing techniques like those listed above can go a long way.