

USDLA Trendsetter Innovation Award/Accessibility and Inclusion

Award description: This award recognizes faculty, instructional designers, schools, or organizations that exemplify visionary leadership in the use of digital tools and platforms. Award recipients demonstrate their commitment to advancing the field of online and virtual learning by establishing creative, effective, and forward-thinking approaches that are redefining traditional learning experiences. Their work reflects innovation that forges beyond conventional practices to set new standards of excellence in the era of digital education.

Accessibility and Inclusion

This award recognizes agencies, corporations, institutions, programs, organizations, or schools that demonstrate an unwavering commitment to accessible, equitable, and inclusive digital learning environments for learners with disabilities and/or exceptionalities and learners from underrepresented populations. Recipients set a standard for accessible and adaptive technologies for diverse learners through cultural and equitable learning experiences that include responsive pedagogical practices to ensure all learners—regardless of ability, background, or circumstance—have multiple and responsive opportunities for success. Their work reflects the belief that true innovation in education must be accessible, equitable, and inclusive.

Rubric:

Criterion	Strong (10)	Medium (5)	Weak (1)
Commitment to Accessibility	Demonstrates comprehensive application of universal design and accessibility principles.	Some accessibility features are applied but inconsistently.	Little to no evidence of accessible design.
Equitable & Inclusive Practices	Advances inclusive learning environments and practices that support diverse learners (e.g., cultural,	Some inclusive practices are limited in scope or depth.	Minimal or absent inclusive practices.

	exceptionalities, linguistic, etc.).		
Impact on Diverse Learners	Clear, measurable improvements in access, outcomes, and participation for underrepresented learners.	Some improvements demonstrated but limited in reach or impact.	Minimal or unclear impact on diverse learners.
Innovation in Inclusive Design	Creative and forward-thinking approaches to accessibility and inclusion.	Somewhat innovative but mostly builds on existing approaches.	Lacks innovation in inclusive practices.
Evidence of Effectiveness	Robust evidence (data, case studies, testimonials) demonstrates success in accessibility and inclusion efforts.	Some evidence was provided, but it was limited in quality or scope.	Little to no supporting evidence.