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Welcome

This webinar is part of a series showcasing "Best Practices in Federal Section 508 Implementation".

- Other presentations can be viewed at:
- www.adaconferences.org/CIO/archives and
 - www.fedlink.org/ai/aiqual/resource-shared-webinars.cfm

- A best practice is a policy, process, procedure or technique proven effective over time and repeatable by multiple agencies.
- A best practice is generalized so that diverse agencies may use it in their own organizations but specific enough to provide useful guidance and instruction.
- The CIO Council's Accessibility Community of Practice has published a library of 508 Best Practices at www.Section508.gov.

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Section 508 Best Practices Webinars

Webinars are bi-monthly:

- January, March, May, July, September, November

Next Webinar:

January 28, 2019

- Topic: 508 Q&A with the Access Board and GSA
- Time: 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Eastern

This webinar series is a collaborative program between the Accessibility Community of Practice of the CIO Council and The U.S. Access Board.

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Section 508 in the Acquisition Lifecycle

Michael Horton – Accessible Design & Development Advisor, GSA
Yolonda Humphrey, Program Manager – Section 508 Coordinator, IRS
Betsy Sirk – Information Technology and Section 508 Program Manager, NASA

CIOC Section 508 Best Practices Webinar Series
November 26, 2019

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Overview of the Procurement Lifecycle
- Agency Perspective on Procuring Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Agency/Industry Challenges Integrating Section 508 Conformance into Procurements
- Creating a Consistent ICT Accessibility Experience Across Government
- Conclusion/Next Steps

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Overview of the Procurement Lifecycle

Michael Horton, GSA

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The Procurement Process – How to incorporate accessibility

- Step 1: Determine accessibility requirements
- Step 2: Conduct market research
- Step 3: Develop solicitation language
- Step 4: Evaluate proposals
- Step 5: Validate contractor compliance
- Step *n*: Ongoing Lifecycle Activities

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Step 1: Determine Accessibility Requirements

All **technology** your agency buys, builds, maintains or **uses**, including software, hardware, electronic content, and support documentation and services, **must** conform to the **Revised 508 Standards**. These standards contain scoping and technical requirements to help your agency ensure ICT is accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.

To begin, you must determine **accessibility requirements** and, if applicable, any exceptions to the standards. You have the option to conduct either a manual or automated review to make this determination.

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Step 1: Determine Accessibility Requirements (2)

Option 1: Manual

- Access how to *Determine 508 Standards & Exceptions* and complete the *Standards Applicability Checklist*.
- Use the *508 Standards and Exceptions Chart & Examples* template to clearly communicate which standards and exemptions apply to each item in a solicitation that contains ICT.

Option 2: Automatic

- Use the *Accessibility Requirements Tool (ART)* to generate customized solicitation language.
- ART also contains downloadable pre-determined accessibility requirements and solicitation language for over 40 standard ICT procurement categories.

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Step 2: Conduct Market Research

- Step 1: Determine your **business need**; what *functionality* do you **require**?
- Step 2: Conduct market research to find possible solutions.
- Step 3: Try to find at least two possible solutions.
- Step 4: **Document** your research, to **compare** solutions and find one that is the best fit. Include (at a minimum) vendor name, version, and model number, and describe how the solution will/not meet your business need.
- Step 5: **Document** your **justification** for the solution you select, and explain why other possible solutions were not chosen.

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Step 3: Develop Solicitation Language

- Include language in your contract/solicitation that defines all accessibility provisions, clauses, and acceptance criteria.
- Specify the accessibility requirements, provisions and clauses
 - Request an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) for each ICT item (Refer vendors to section508.gov/sell for guidance on ACRs and VPATs™)
 - Let the vendors know the government will evaluate proposals for accessibility
 - Outline how contractor compliance will be validated throughout the life of the contract

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Step 4: Evaluate Proposals

After you issue the solicitation, you'll receive proposals from vendors. Evaluate each proposal to validate vendor claims against your stated accessibility requirements.

Trust but verify; before awarding a contract or deploying custom-developed deliverables, conduct accessibility testing to validate vendor claims against your stated accessibility requirements.

- Review the Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) and/or product *Voluntary Product Accessibility Template™ (VPAT)* to determine how well the product conforms to the Revised 508 Standards.
- Test for Accessibility - Learn how to test documents, websites, and other electronic content for accessibility.

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Step 5: Validate Contractor Compliance

- ICT must **remain** accessible throughout the contract period of performance
- As products and software are updated/modified, **re-test each new version** and/or product against the terms and conditions originally established in the contract.

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Step *n*: Ongoing Lifecycle Activities

Key Question

How does the information get passed on to the next phases

- Design
- Development
- Testing
- Change Management
- Implementation
- Operations & Maintenance

after the product has been acquired?

Next Steps...

1. Ensure that Section 508 requirements are baked into your IT procurement
2. Introduce yourself to your agency's Section 508 Program Manager, and build alliances across your organization to ensure IT accessibility throughout the product lifecycle
3. Bookmark Section508.gov for quick access to guidance on how to buy, sell, design, create, test, and manage accessible IT products and services

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Summary: How to Incorporate Accessibility

- Step 1: Determine accessibility requirements – *what do you need?*
- Step 2: Conduct market research – *what's available commercially?*
- Step 3: Develop solicitation language – *write down the requirements!*
- Step 4: Evaluate proposals – *evaluate options and justify selection!*
- Step 5: Validate contractor compliance – *trust, but verify!*
- Step *n*: Ongoing Lifecycle Activities

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Summary: Importance of 508 Requirements

- Ensures technology purchases are accessible **from the start**
- Underpins **universal design** methodologies for creating products which are more **inclusive**, adaptive and easier to maintain
- Accessible products cost less over time
- Remediation-based conformance costs more, and increases **risk**
- Complies with **law**, provides independence and the dignity of work

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Agency Perspective on Procuring Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Yolonda Humphrey, IRS

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Procure ICT – Overarching Considerations 1/2

- COTS – Commercial Off the Shelf versus Custom Development
 - **Q** - Are there substantial differences between BUYING software, rather than DEVELOPING it?
 - **A** – Other than the obvious, boxed code opposed to custom developed code, the thoughtful consideration of the following is key to a successful outcomes:
 - **WHO** is performing the development (in house developers or contractor resources)
 - **HOW** thorough are requirements being expressed (as a part of an internal requirements development/allocation process opposed to an allocation of requirements within a contract vehicle.
 - **WHAT** methods are being specifically established to validate the soundness of outcomes (demos, approved test methods/matrix – external support or thorough test plan development/execution – internal effort)

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Procure ICT – Overarching Considerations 2/2

- Software As A Service (SAS) & Platform As A Service (PAAS)
 - These types of purchases require some different considerations throughout the RFI and Award process.
 - Environmental considerations – internal infrastructure, internal software update cycles, etc.
 - Problem Reporting Feedback – contractually establish the methods and timeframes for trouble reporting and scope of support.
 - Gain clear understanding of what FedRAMP might mean for your integration effort.
 - During the RFI process – if using either Statement Of Objectives (SOO) or Scenario Based Information gathering process – explicitly ask the vendor to describe their 508 practices. Ask them to describe how they establish and maintain the product/solution accessibility baseline. Ask what is the level of expertise/bench strength they have.

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IRS 508 Program Structure & Engagement Model

- IRS Program is different from most other 508 Programs
- Two Sections make up the IRAP Program Office
 - 508 Program Support – Focus on projects within the software development lifecycle. Review contract requirements to determine accurate allocation of 508 standards and clauses. Provide technical guidance on 508 testing procedures and proper interpretation of 508 standards
 - 508 Customer Support – Partner with the Reasonable Accommodation Office to deliver technical and non-technical accommodations to Agency employees. Manage the distribution of the software licenses and other peripheral devices to customers either directly or through the IT provisioning organization. Conduct assessments to determine customer needs. Maintain catalog of approved products for installation.

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508 Integration Case Study – Acquisition Activities

- Ideally 508 is a consideration from the time of capability discussions/determination of requirements on through to the final award
 - 508 is essential to:
 - Capability Discussions
 - Market research
 - Requirements analysis
 - Project description in the Statement of Work (SOW)
 - Technical Evaluation for the award
- The Procurement Office and the Program Office sponsoring the product purchase work together as partners with the 508 Program Office.

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508 Integration Case Study – Acquisition

- What happened –
 - 508 SME allocated to participate in all pre-award activities. But....508 considerations were not given proper weight during the process.
 - Procurement Office did not know how the 508 requirements should be factored into the technical evaluation/award process.
 - Program Office did not view the 508 responsibility from the perspective of an owner that had direct responsibility to deliver the accessible outcome.
- RESULT:**
 - 508 was Not properly rated during various phases of assessment and evaluation through the award process.
 - Bottom line – Some wins and Some losses.

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508 Integration Case Study – Conclusions

- **Lessons Learned**
 - Be Persistent – no matter what.
 - Listen intently to the things that matter to your delivery partners and look for opportunities to partner/share.
 - Create opportunity to cultivate relationships outside of the regular meeting cadence.
 - Identify existing Governance Boards/Change Control Boards (boards with investment responsibilities) to integrate Section 508 expertise.
 - Be relentless in pursuit of your intentions and don't be discouraged. Use the GPAR method – **G**entle **P**ersuasion **A**ppplied **R**elentlessly.
 - Give More and Stay Optimistic.

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Agency/Industry Challenges Integrating Section 508 Conformance Into Procurements

Betsy Sirk, NASA

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Overview

- NASA develops and acquires a substantial amount of ICT to support its missions.
- NASA requires ICT accessibility be incorporated into design and assessed as part of procurement processes (an also for software being released by NASA to other agencies).
- Revised Section 508 Standards are significantly more comprehensive and complex than the original (e.g. 28-page VPAT, WCAG A, AA guidelines).
- Complexity of standards impacts Agencies' and Industry's ability to assess relevant aspects to integrate into development or procurement processes.

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Section 508 Conformance Assessments

- Conformance with each applicable technical standard must be tested/assessed and reported to determine Section 508 compliance.
- Conformance captured using Section 508 Checklists, Accessibility Conformance Reports, VPATs.
- Revised standards focus on functionality vs type of product adds to the complexity (e.g. electronic content, not just website or software).
- NASA leading effort along with GSA to simplify the ACR/VPAT completion process.

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Challenges

- When procuring ICT, Agencies rely on vendor or manufacturer to provide ACR or VPAT.
- Complexity of revised Section 508 standards impacting small and medium-sized businesses' ability to address them.
- Agencies often interpret and leverage Section 508 requirements on vendors differently, contributing to industry confusion.
- Misunderstanding of the Section 508 exceptions (must be determined by Federal Agency based on use case and not industry claims).

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Actions

- Small businesses provide innovative ICT solutions to benefit government.
- ACoP Industry Outreach team established a Small Business Focus Group process in which businesses share their challenges completing an ACR or VPAT and recommended process improvements.
- NASA Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurements (SEWP), a government-wide acquisition contract (GWAC) program, provides Section 508 training for its 140+ contract holders, representing thousands of companies that develop and sell millions of ICT products and solutions.
- NASA SEWP requires contract holders to provide Section 508 ACR or VPAT at time of quote for product, services, or solutions, enabling Agencies to complete their Section 508 processes.
- NASA developed "Section 508 in the Acquisition Lifecycle" roadshow, presenting at national conferences and events to promote awareness of ICT accessibility requirements.

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Best Practices Summary

- Collaboration among OCIO/Section 508 Program Managers, acquisition experts, customers, and industry yields solutions that are responsive to needs and accessible.
- Identifying accessibility requirements early in the acquisition lifecycle prevents rework on solicitation.
- Use Best-In-Class or existing contract vehicles which have built-in processes for assuring accessibility requirements are included.
- When developing solicitation, use Section 508 checklists and automated requirements tools when possible to help identify Section 508 requirements.

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Creating a Consistent ICT Accessibility Experience Across Government

DISCUSSION

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Conclusion/Next Steps

- Make inclusion of accessible ICT a must from day one.
- Remember to review/validate Accessibility Conformance Reports or VPATs.
- Communication/collaboration among Industry, Agencies, Procurement, and IT Professionals needed to ensure roles are understood in the acquisition lifecycle.
- Accessibility Community of Practice- continue to educate Agencies and Industry on steps to promote ICT accessibility.

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Questions from the Audience?



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Resources and Contact Information

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Resources

- **ICT Final Standards (2017)** - <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-ict-refresh/final-rule>
- **Overview of the Procurement Lifecycle References**
 - Section 508.gov - <https://www.section508.gov/>
 - Determine 508 Standards & Exceptions - <https://section508.gov/buy/determine-508-standards-exceptions>
 - Standards Applicability Checklist - <https://section508.gov/sites/default/files/508-standards-applicability-checklist.docx>
 - 508 Standards and Exceptions Chart & Examples - <https://section508.gov/buy/standards-exceptions>
 - Section 508 Program Manager - <https://www.section508.gov/tools/coordinator-listing>
 - Section 508 Voluntary Product Accessibility Template™ (VPAT) form - <https://www.wtlic.org/policy/accessibility/vpat>
 - GSA Accessibility Requirements Tool (ART) - <https://buyaccessible.gov/>
- **NASA Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP)** - <https://www.sewp.nasa.gov/>
- **21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA)** - <https://www.congress.gov/bills/115th/congress/house-bill/5759/text>

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Next session:
January 28, 2020
508 Q&A with the Access Board and GSA

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