UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE INFORMATION RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

IMPACT

PROGRAM FOR ACCESSIBLE COMPUTER/COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) Policy & Information

What is a VPAT?

A VPAT is a vendor-generated statement (using the required template) that provides relevant information on how a vendor's product or service claims to conform to the Section 508 Standards.

The VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template) product is a tool developed by **ITIC – Information Technology Industry Council** and government **GSA – Government Services Administration** to help facilitate the market research responsibilities of Federal IT professionals, by enabling government requestors to compare vendor products.

The VPAT was designed to provide information on how a product or service conforms to the Section 508 Accessibility Standards (from the U.S. Access Board) for Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) in a consistent fashion and format. In general, Vendors should generate a VPAT whenever they develop products or services that are determined to be EI T and are to be sold in the Federal market place. In each VPAT, the vendor is expected to make specific statements, in simple understandable (recommended) language, about how their product or service meets the requirements of the Section 508 Standards (section by section, and paragraph by paragraph).

Department of State and the VPAT

At the U.S. Department of State a VPAT is required and can be requested from vendor by contracting officers and other Federal IT professionals:
- ✓ As part of market research, procurement, RFP, etc
- ✓ In a procurement (making it mandatory)
- ✓ When answers to accessibility features are needed

A generic Section 508 statement by Vendors is not adequate. The State Department expects to be presented with a complete and correct VPAT (following the Best Practices guidance by ITIC, mentioned below), which should be produced by the company for each product (and version) or proposed EI T service contract. It is not assumed that all products are 100% compliant with the Section 508 Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) Accessibility Standards. A VPAT provides relevant information on how a vendor's product or service claims to conform to the Section 508 EIT Accessibility Standards, so that procurement officials can compare vendor

products to ascertain which product meets MORE of the Section 508 requirements. They are required to purchase the one that is MOST compliant (provided it meets the business need).

The criteria by which IMPACT reviews a VPAT presented by vendors are exactly the same as those that are suggested by Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) in their VPAT Best Practices, using the **VPAT Review Checklist.**

What are VENDORS supposed to do?

E&I T product and service vendors need to follow the Information Technology Industry Council (ITIC) requirements for **VPAT Best Practices** and then develop their company VPAT that complies with the recommendations and templates of the ITIC. The Best Practices guidance requests that all sections of the standard be addressed, even those that appear to not be applicable. Each VPAT should be product and version specific and dated appropriately.

Vendor should have an electronic VPAT readily available for each product or service that is procured by a federal official who may request them.

IMPACT recommends that vendors post their VPATs on their own company's web site, as well as link and record those VPATs on the "Products and Service Providers" database at the **GSA's Buy Accessible web site** so that procurement officials can easily access them while performing their market research.

IT CCB Originator, Representative or Procurement Official Responsibilities

At the U.S. Department of State a VPAT is required and can be requested from vendors by contracting officers and other Federal IT professionals:
- ✓ As part of market research, procurement, RFP, etc,
- ✓ In a procurement (making it mandatory),
- ✓ When answers to accessibility features are needed.

The IT CCB Originator, Representative or Procurement Official as an IT CCB Change Request (CR) or Assessment Request (AR) Originator will need to instruct the vendor of the product you are interested in procuring (including those developed, maintained, or used) to send to you their VPAT for that E & IT product or service. This VPAT will need to be listed under the 'Supporting Documentation' section of the IT CCB Change Request Form. Send a copy of the VPAT to **IMPACT** using similar syntax in the subject line as shown in this example "VPAT Review Requested for: (CRI-03055) Cerenade INC's, Enterprise Visual EForms Vers 3.2". IMPACT will review the VPAT for completeness and proper format criteria from the VPAT Best Practices of the ITIC.

As the Procurement or Requiring Official will need to know PIB 2001-17 and how to use it to determine Section 508 compliance, if it applies. One section you will be utilizing and filling out often is the E&I T Accessibility Standards Checklist, for each EIT procurement, to assist you in determining which standards apply and the commercially availability of the procurement request.

The PIB 2001-17, EIT Accessibility Standards Checklist, contains the identical information that is listed and required in a vendor VPAT. You will need these two documents to complete the market research of procurement request.

IMPACT's Responsibilities

IMPACT's responsibility is to review each VPAT provided to IMPACT by the IT CCB Originator, Technical Reviewer, procurement official or other Federal IT Professional for completeness of information and proper formatting. We do not review a VPAT to determine whether the product meets the Section 508 Standards. IMPACT's review process is to ascertain if the VPAT was submitted using the format recommended in the VPAT Best Practices guidance.

IMPACT responds to the requestor on its review of each VPAT and making appropriate suggestions as needed.

The criteria by which IMPACT reviews and accepts a VPAT presented
by vendors are exactly the same as those that are recommended by Information Technology Industry Council (ITIC) in their VPAT Best Practices guidance.

IMPACT is always ready to assist you with any further questions that you may have about the VPAT and Section 508. Our contact information and location is available below.

IMPACT Outreach Center

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