



6 Things E&IT Vendors Can Do to Assist Agencies with Section 508



- 1. Promote Awareness and Communication:** It is an agency responsibility to comply with Section 508, but it is in vendors' best interest to develop accessible products and services. E&IT vendors need to be aware of where Section 508 applies. If a vendor sees a solicitation that seems to involve E&IT, they should ask the contracting or requiring official about Section 508 requirements. Accessibility can be part of a protest, whether or not it was asked for by the agency in the solicitation.
- 2. Assess Functional Performance:** All E&IT procurements of products and services are subject to functional performance criteria. Performance criteria are "intended for overall product evaluation and for technologies or components for which there is no specific requirement under the technical standards." Vendors should assess their products and services to make sure they meet accessibility functional performance criteria either directly or through support for appropriate assistive technologies.
- 3. Provide Accessibility Information:** Agency program officials are responsible for identifying the specific Section 508 provisions that apply based on their program needs and technical environment. Vendor products and services are assessed on how well they meet program and accessibility needs. It is in the vendor's interest to provide information on how their product or service meets these accessibility needs.
 - For products, an easy way to provide accessibility information is by using the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) developed by GSA and the Information Technology Industry Council (<http://www.access-star.org/>).
 - For services, vendors should also provide information such as a concise accessibility statement outlining vendor accessibility approach or capability.Information about the accessibility of E&IT products and services can be provided in a consistent way using the Buy Accessible Data Center sponsored by GSA at (<http://emgbaw.altarum.org/DataCenter>).
- 4. Identify Accessibility Features:** If a vendor proposes a product or service that has accessibility features beyond the identified program requirements, these additional features are also subject to Section 508 requirements and should be identified.
- 5. Explain Equivalent Facilitation:** E&IT products or services may either meet an identified technical provision directly or through the use of equivalent facilitation that satisfies functional performance criteria. Equivalent facilitation allows for the use of designs or technologies that are alternative to those prescribed by a provision provided they result in substantially equivalent or greater access to and use of a product or service for people with disabilities.
- 6. Consider Information, Documentation and Support:** Federal agencies are required to provide accessible information, documentation, and support for the E&IT they acquire, use, and maintain. Having accessible information, documentation and support for E&IT products or services can make it easier for vendors to bid on federal E&IT contracts and increase the likelihood of success.

Do you want to register accessibility information with GSA about your E&IT products and services? Go to the Buy Accessible Data Center at <http://emgbaw.altarum.org/DataCenter>.