



VPAT Evaluation Scoring for RFPs - DRAFT

Overview

The State of Minnesota evaluates the accessibility of vendors' proposed IT solutions through the use of documents called Voluntary Product Assessment Templates, or VPATs. Vendors use these documents to self-assess their product's accessibility.¹

The State provides two VPAT forms that make up the [MN Accessibility Standard: Section 508](#) (of the Rehabilitation Act) and [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#). Scoring uses information from both VPATs. Many large vendors may have Section 508 VPATs on file and may ask if that is sufficient. It is not; they are required to submit both VPATs. Complex systems, such as those with multiple interfaces, may require multiple VPAT documents, such as a [WCAG 2.0 VPAT](#) for each interface.

We recommend that vendors have access to the document "[VPAT-Vendor Guidance](#)," and that all reviewers also read this guidance as it provides a recommended taxonomy of answers.

Each VPAT will have a raw score assigned to it by the evaluator. Scores are assigned from a range of 0 to 10, as defined below. The maximum possible score is 10X, with X representing the number of VPAT documents required:

- 0 No value: The responder has not met any of the requirements for Sections 508 or WCAG 2.0 level AA or provided no information.
- 1-3 Poor: The responder's solution meets some of the requirements for Sections 508 or WCAG 2.0 level AA, but either provides incomplete documentation or clearly lacks significant accessible functionality.
- 4-6 Average: The responder's solution appears to meet most of the requirements for Section 508 and WCAG 2.0 level AA.
- 7-8 Good: The responder has demonstrated an above-average capability, approach, or solution that satisfies the requirements for Section 508 and WCAG 2.0 level AA.
- 9 Excellent: The responder has provided an excellent solution that far exceeds the requirements for Section 508 and most of the requirements for WCAG 2.0 level AA and shows a roadmap toward remediating or fixing areas of non-compliance.
- 10 Exceptional: The responder has provided an exceptional solution that embraces the true spirit of the requirements for both Section 508 and for WCAG 2.0 level AA.

¹ As with any vendor claims or guarantees, it is critical that the contents of the VPATs regarding product accessibility carry into the final contract language.

Scoring a VPAT

The VPATs require that the respondent include comments for each item. As a result, most VPATs should look like a bug list. Even if there are no “bugs,” the comment detail should re-state that or show how the vendor resolved any key accessibility issues.

For example, compare these two vendors’ responses to the same question about keyboard accessibility:

This vendor claims full support, but offers no documentation:

Item	Description	Supports?/ Supporting Features	Comments (provide comments even when you determine that the standard doesn't apply to your product)
(a)	When software is designed to run on a system that has a keyboard, product functions shall be executable from a keyboard where the function itself or the result of performing a function can be discerned textually.	Supports	

This vendor claims less than full support, but details the issue:

Item	Description	Supports?/ Supporting Features	Comments (provide comments even when you determine that the standard doesn't apply to your product)
(a)	When software is designed to run on a system that has a keyboard, product functions shall be executable from a keyboard where the function itself or the result of performing a function can be discerned textually.	Supports with Exceptions	<p>All features within Windows SharePoint Services are keyboard accessible save for freehand drawing tools and the following exceptions:</p> <p>In the Explorer view of document libraries, keyboard access is not available for the “Show Approver” function. Workaround available in alternate view.</p> <p>Pop-up date picker not available to the keyboard in forms. Work-around in keyboard entry of dates.</p> <p>Rich Edit control has no Microsoft Active Accessibility (MSAA) name due to limitation within frames.</p>

Even though the first vendor claims full support, if the entire VPAT is filled out in this way, without useful documentation, the VPAT should score close to zero unless the reviewer has other information that somehow provides assurances for accessibility. In contrast, while the

second vendor's product is not fully accessible, the issues are clearly documented, including workarounds. If the entire document similarly demonstrates reasonably strong accessibility with relatively limited flaws, the vendor may score in the "Average" to "Good" range.

If the vendor does provide comments but the comments do not reveal any particular knowledge of the issues, or if the vendor broadly groups compliance areas in a textual format rather than addressing the detailed requirements, then it is unlikely that the product(s) meet accessibility requirements, even if the document claims so. Such VPATs should be scored as "Poor" or less. For example, one vendor used the following statements as the entirety of their response to two significant multipart segment of the Section 508 VPAT:

We meet all the requirements of Section 508: 1194.22 Web-based Internet information and communications of the VPAT.

We meet all the requirements of Section 508: 1194.21 Software Applications and Operating Systems as well but there is one caveat

(i) Color coding shall not be used as the only means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.

Our main indicator of status of logged in or out is via color except on Firefox where we have different shades or different icon choices available (for accessibility purposes)

This sort of generality is unacceptable. As noted earlier, score any such responses at 3 or less.

Overall, scoring should reflect document analysis on two levels:

- a. Quality of the content, especially in the comment column, and
- b. Product/service's stated accessibility (the assumption is the VPAT's contents are included in any resulting contract; any negative discrepancy is the vendor's responsibility)

Resources

- [VPATs - Vendor Guidance](#)
- [VPAT – RFP Guidance](#)
- [VPAT Scoring Form](#) (blank)