

VPAT® Guidance for Vendors

Version: 3.00

Purpose Statement

This document provides general guidance for vendors in completing VPAT® (voluntary product assessment template) documents for inclusion in a proposal in response to a Request for Proposal (RFP) or similar solicitation.

This guidance is purely advisory; it is intended as a tool to help vendors understand their obligations when communicating the accessibility of their products and services. If the vendor plans to present the completed VPAT, formally known as an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) to other government entities, the vendor should take care to read Information Technology Industry Council's (ITI) introductory information (see link in next section) in its entirety before completing their template. This document is not a replacement for the template's instructions on creating an official Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR).

We recommend vendors also read the companion document "VPAT Evaluation Scoring for RFPs" to understand how State of Minnesota evaluators score ACRs.

Roles and Responsibilities

This guidance and related resources are referenced in State of Minnesota RFPs and other solicitations. Vendors who submit completed VPATs (also termed ACRs) to the State of Minnesota are expected to have read this guidance.

Applicability

ACRs provide the potential buyer with your company's assessment of your product's accessibility. The State recommends vendors use the latest version of the [ITI's VPAT® template](#). Of the versions offered, the State recommends vendors use the "Section 508" version, which includes WCAG 2.0. The submitted ACR must include all aspects of the [State Accessibility Standard](#), which incorporate both the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 levels A and AA and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, refreshed.

Should the State enter into a contract with your company, your ACR **may become part of the final contract** as it details your product's capabilities and creates specific expectations for deliverables. It is critical you have confidence in your ACR's clarity and accuracy.

The ITI's VPAT provides an extensive set of instructions within the template. This guidance, and the related evaluation scoring document noted earlier provides additional information specific to the State of Minnesota.

VPATs/ACRs apply only for an existing technology or technical service related to a good or set of goods. A product eligible for a VPAT/ACR can be any one or a combination of the following technologies:

- Website or web application
- Software
- Video
- Electronic documentation
- Hardware
- Training delivered in electronic formats

A service, such as developing a new website, cannot have an ACR. However, an RFP may request vendors to submit ACRs of past work as an example of their qualifications.

How to Complete a VPAT

We recommend technical staff with training in accessibility complete your VPAT forms. If there is no such person on your staff, you may want to hire a vendor who specializes in accessibility assessments to perform the task.

Note: the completed VPAT or ACR **may be entered into the final contract as a legal document detailing expectations of deliverables.**

The WCAG and Section 508 portions of the template each provide tables listing content in 3 columns:

- **Criteria:** Identifies the segment of the relevant standard. The WCAG criteria includes a hyperlink to the success criteria.
- **Conformance Level:** Your product's level of support for the technical requirement. This cannot be a yes or no answer. (See "Recommended language" below).
- **Remarks and Explanations:** The rationale for your answer in the previous column.

Vendors are expected to add content to the second and third columns. Several items to note:

1. **Conformance level applies to all components of the vendor's offerings.** For example, if a vendor provides electronic training documents or user manuals, the vendor is expected to note, where appropriate, the accessibility of those documents.
2. **Remarks and Explanations are mandatory.** If a vendor states a product "Supports" a criteria but does not provide explanatory information, the State of Minnesota will deem that information unsatisfactory. Restating or pasting the success criteria in this space is not considered sufficient.
3. **The quality of the comments also indicates the company's depth of product and accessibility understanding.** This is a key indicator of the vendor's commitment for and approach toward accessibility and therefore the product's viability as a candidate for procurement.

Recommended Language

The recommended language is based on guidance from the ITI template. There are five core terms:

- **Supports:** The functionality of the product has at least one method that meets the criterion without known defects or meets with equivalent facilitation.
- **Partially Supports:** Some functionality of the product does not meet the criterion.
- **Does Not Support:** The majority of product functionality does not meet the criterion.
- **Not Applicable:** The criterion is not relevant to the product.

Note: When filling in the WCAG tables, a response may use “Supports” where one might otherwise be inclined to use “Not Applicable.” This is in keeping with WCAG 2.0 Understanding Conformance: This means that if there is no content to which a success criterion applies, the success criterion is satisfied.

- **Not Evaluated:** The product has not been evaluated against the criterion. This can only be used in responding to WCAG 2.x Level AAA criterion.

This table provides some information on the level of detail expected in the Remarks and Explanations column:

If Conformance Level is:	Then vendor’s comments should:
Supports	List exactly what features of the product meet the criterion; and Describe how they are used to support the criterion.
Partially Supports	List exactly what functions or features have issues; and How they do not fully support the criterion; and Whether they have plans to fix the issues. (Can include workarounds.)
Does Not Support	List exactly what functions or features have issues; and How they do not support the criterion; and Whether they have plans to fix the issues.
Not Applicable	Describe exactly why the criterion is not applicable to the product.
Not Evaluated	Describe exactly why the criterion has not been evaluated. (Only for AAA criteria)

A note about Chapter 3: Functional Support Criteria

Vendor should complete Chapter 3 when:

- The technology is innovative or works in a way which WCAG, or other 508 criteria, only partially applies (e.g., success criteria has yet to be written)
- When a vendor does not support or partially supports a WCAG success criteria relevant to the [Functional Performance Criteria](#)
- Vendor provides a workaround or alternative means/equivalent facilitation

If none of the above apply (such as if the vendor provides complete documentation of either limited or full support in all the relevant success criteria), then the vendor can leave that particular functional support criteria blank.

Please reference the companion document “Evaluation Scoring for RFPs” for more information on how the State evaluates functional performance criteria.

Related Information

- [Section 508 \(Revised\)](#) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#)
 - [WCAG Quick reference](#)
- [Office of Accessibility](#) at Minnesota IT Services
- Evaluation Scoring for RFPs [link]
- [Information Technology Industry Council VPAT page](#)

History

Table 2 provides a history of version updates for this document

Version	Description	Date
1.0	Initial Release	12/06/2013
2.0	Updated and reformatted	02/09/2015
3.0	Updated and reformatted	01/11/2023

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