Accessibility and Procurement: Start at the Beginning

Obligations

Civil rights laws
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Sections 503 and 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act

Web Accessibility Standards
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (Version 2.0, Level AA)
- PDF-UA

Vendor Obligations under the Law
- Non-existent (it's up to you as the purchaser or user)

Tips to Make Accessibility Part of your Procurement and Use Decisions
- Don't assume that a vendor that works with a federal agency creates accessible work
- Include accessibility in procurement and contract paperwork
  - Request for Proposal, et al.
  - Scope of Work
  - Requirements documentation
  - Contract
  - Scoring matrix
  - Internal guidance (try to reach those that don't go through central purchasing)
  - Require a current Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT)
The Voluntary Product Accessibility Template

- Self assessment of product under question
- Aligns with web accessibility standard
- Needs to be mandatory part of your procurement or use decision making
- Needs to be an early step in the process, not the end of your attention to accessibility
- New version of the VPAT is available here
  - https://www.itic.org/policy/accessibility/vpat
  - Includes WCAG 2.0 standards, asks more questions about assessment process that candidate vendor uses

Vetting a VPAT

- Check date and software version to make sure that VPAT is current
- Ask questions about responses, even when VPAT says that a product supports a standard
  - Supports? Ask specifically how
  - Does not support? Ask when it will

Testing and Demonstrations

- Helpful to test if testing environment matches up with actual product
- Ask vendor about accessibility as part of product demonstration
- Ask for specific accessibility demonstration

Contracting and Accessibility

- Contract is the only way to enforce accessibility requirement in procured product
- Set achievable and measurable goals and timelines, then document in contract
- Organization must have the will to cancel if deadlines are not met or product deemed too far from stated accessibility (in VPAT, for example)

Resources

- VPAT 2.0/2.1
  - https://www.itic.org/policy/accessibility/vpat
- Section 508
  - https://www.section508.gov/blog/Building-Accessibility-into-your-Procurement-Process
- NCDAE
  - http://ncdae.org/resources/articles/procurement.php