

Section508.gov

Opening Doors to IT

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Section 508 Roles - Procurement Official

Guidance on Creating 508 Compliant IT Solicitations

Accessible information technology (IT) is technology that can be used by people with disabilities. Electronic documents, web sites, software, computers, kiosks, and other IT that are inaccessible put persons with disabilities at a disadvantage relative to gaining information that is accessible to persons without disabilities – a technological discrimination. Section 508 is important in that it supports employment of people with disabilities, it improves public access to government IT, reduces the need for individual accommodations, encourages improvements in accessible design, increases the availability of accessible products and raises general awareness of disability issues.

Accessible IT is not just the right thing to do, it's the law. Federal agencies are required to provide "comparable access" to data and information technology for people with disabilities to those without disabilities.

This is Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and it is implemented through the procurement process which means that all IT procured (and used, developed and maintained) by the Federal government must be accessible. As a contracting officer or procurement official, indicating that accessibility is required for your IT purchases is essential to complying with the law. While understanding the law¹, the standard² and the FAR³ is important, the critical aspects of ensuring you purchase accessible IT is easy to accomplish!

A well written solicitation goes a long way toward ensuring agency compliance and accessible IT. [Click here for further information](#)

If you are a procurement official you can use BuyAccessible.gov website to:

- Determine if your purchase is subject to Section 508;
- Find language for your solicitation;
- Find companies and do market research to buy Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) products or services;
- Provide documentation for Section 508 compliance

As a procurement or contracting official you are often responsible for producing specific language for your solicitations for EIT products and services. This will include basic language regarding Section 508 relevance, Section 508 applicability, Section 508 factors for proposal evaluation, and Section 508 criteria for deliverable acceptance. In addition the procurement official will evaluate acquisition deliverables based on generally accepted inspection and/or test methods.

Similarly, the contracting officer--the person with the authority to enter into, administer, and/or terminate contracts and make related determinations and findings--must understand the requirements of Section 508 as it relates to procuring EIT products and services.

The Contracting Officer's responsibilities include:

- Awarding the contract or order after complying with procurement statutes and regulations (generally summarized and discussed in the Federal Acquisition Regulation), and any additional agency regulations and order.
- Planning the acquisition along with the rest of the acquisition team, including the user (the Requiring Official)
- Assisting the Requiring Official in performing market research for accessible E & IT.
- Assisting the Requiring Official in drafting specifications and minimum requirements/agency needs, when these are needed for procurement.
- Ensuring there is competition and that the contracting file shows what happened, as the FAR directs.

In either role, you can use the BuyAccessible System (<http://www.buyaccessible.gov>), which has four components, all made available to any agency at no cost to help with the quick, easy and efficient implementation of all Section 508 standards. This free tool guides requiring officials through the steps necessary to conduct acquisitions that comply with Section 508. CAOs and CIOs may incorporate the use of this tool into their procurement procedures to improve compliance with the law. You can also take advantage of our [free on-line training courses](#).

If you have a procurement or other Section 508 question, please email 508Procurement@gsa.gov or contact the Section 508 Website help desk at: 202-208-7420 or email section.508@gsa.gov for assistance.

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