Evaluating ICT Accessibility – Suggested Questions for Vendors

Background
In its commitment to diversity and inclusion, Syracuse University seeks to assure that individuals with disabilities are afforded equal access to Information and Communication Technology used by the University and its constituents. As such, the University commits that Information and Communication Technology products shall be accessible to individuals with disabilities. In the effort to meet these requirements, this document contains sample questions that can be used by Syracuse University departments to help them evaluate web-based products and software for accessibility during the procurement process with vendors. While not every product will be 100% accessible, priority should be given to competing vendors that have significant awareness and commitment in making sure their products are accessible.

Vendor Awareness of ICT Accessibility

- Does the vendor understand and comply with the Section 508 Accessibility Guidelines?
- Does the vendor understand and comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Level AA (WCAG 2.0 AA).
- Does the vendor know what a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) is? If yes, ask the vendor to explain to you what it is and ask them if they have one. If they do, ask for a copy.
- Was the VPAT or WCAG review completed in-house or by an independent 3rd party? If by a 3rd party, please identify.

What to do with the vendor's VPAT

- Submit the VPAT to your contract/purchasing person.
- Submit the VPAT to AccessibleIT@syr.edu for review.

Suggested Questions to Consider When Evaluating the Functionality of a Product or Service

Product Behavior/Implementation

- Can the vendor demonstrate how to operate their product without a mouse?
- Can a user navigate the application by using traditional operators (such as the Tab Key)?
- Are shortcuts to the necessary functionality provided by the system or application?
- Are sounds the sole way of providing information (such as a warning or error indication)?
- Are visual cues available for audible events built into the application or system?
- Are there audio equivalents, such as captioning, available for any spoken text?
- Is there an option to adjust audio within the system or application?
- Is color used in a way that it is the only way to convey information (such as warnings, status, etc.)?
- Are there sound cues available for visual alerts?
- Are videos captioned, including audio description?
- Do transcripts accompany audio content?
- Can the text within the application be accessed using alternative output devices?
- Do they implement their product using CSS (cascading stylesheets)? If so, do they use separate CSS files?
- Does the product ever use tables for layout, rather than the recommended div-based layout? Can they explain the difference between those two approaches?
- To what extent does the vendor include adjustment code to make sure their product work properly in a range of browsers?

Product Testing

- What is their process for testing their product for accessibility?
- What sort of testing have they done with users with different ranges of abilities and disabilities?
- Has the system been tested with any assistive technologies? If yes, which ones?
- Can they supply you with their accessibility testing results?

Level of commitment to accessibility

- Do they have an individual(s) on staff to ensure the accessibility of their product? Have them explain the details of their responsibilities.
- If the vendor product is not fully accessible, do they have a roadmap including timeframes for making their product fully accessible? If yes, can you get a copy of that?
- Is the vendor willing to include a clause in the contract for remediation of their product if it is determined that the site is not fully accessible? If yes, can they include that mitigation will be completed in a reasonable timeframe and at no charge to the University?
- Is the vendor willing to provide references to other institutions of higher education that are currently using or evaluating their products? These contacts can yield a good deal of information not available directly from a vendor, such as technical issues, accessibility, and willingness to address issues.