



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICERS
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS

FROM: Daniel I. Gordon
Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy

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Federal Chief Information Officer

SUBJECT: Improving the Accessibility of Government Information

The President identified transparency, participation, and collaboration as the principles of an open government in his January 21, 2009, Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government¹, which requires that government information and data be accessible to all citizens. To ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to their government, agencies must buy and use accessible electronic and information technology (EIT), as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C 794d), as amended.

For example, accessible EIT allows a person who is blind or visually-impaired to consume information on an agency's website; a federal employee who is deaf or hard of hearing to access an agency's webcast training; and an individual in a wheelchair to make photocopies. While some agencies have made progress in this area, all agencies must make accessibility a cornerstone of their open government plans. The purpose of this memorandum is to make agencies aware of existing resources and direct agencies to take stronger steps toward improving the acquisition and implementation of accessible technology.

Increasing Awareness of Responsibilities and Requirements

Building and maintaining an accessible environment requires that the information technology and acquisition communities partner when developing, procuring, using, or maintaining EIT. The General Services Administration (GSA), as part of its statutory requirement to provide technical assistance to agencies on Section 508 implementation, has created a number of tools, available at www.Section508.gov, to help agencies to develop accessible requirements, test the acceptance process, and share lessons learned and best practices. For example:

- the BuyAccessible Wizard² helps build compliant requirements and solicitations;
- the Quick Links site³ provides pre-packaged Section 508 solicitation documents;

¹ http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment/

² www.buyaccessible.gov

- the BuyAccessible Products and Services Directory⁴ provides a registry of companies and accessibility information about their offerings; and
- the Section 508 blog⁵ provides a venue where stakeholders may share ideas and success stories, or engage in conversations on improving accessibility.

Emerging technologies and the introduction of new applications can present challenges for the implementation of accessibility standards. To assist agencies:

- a) Within 180 days, the GSA Office of Governmentwide Policy (OGP) will provide updated guidance on making government EIT accessible. This guidance will build upon existing resources to address challenges, increase oversight, and reduce costs associated with acquiring and managing EIT solutions that are not accessible.
- b) Within 180 days, the GSA OGP will update its general Section 508 training to offer refreshed continuous learning modules that can be used by contracting officers, program/project managers (especially those managing IT programs), and contracting officer technical representatives (COTRs) as they fulfill their Federal Acquisition Certification requirements.

Improving Agency Accountability and Accessibility Performance

As with any requirement, agencies must monitor their accessibility performance and should consider a variety of internal controls to ensure that agency managers are accountable for providing an accessible environment. To help agencies achieve an accessible environment, the Chief Information Officers Council (CIOC) recently created an Accessibility Committee. This new Committee is collaborating with GSA, the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the U.S. Access Board. Together these entities will take the following steps:

- a) In September 2010, the GSA OGP and the DOJ will issue a survey to allow agencies to assess their implementation of Section 508, including accessibility of websites and other technology used by the agencies. This information will be used by the DOJ in preparing its next assessment of agency compliance as required by the Rehabilitation Act. The CIOC Accessibility Committee will also use this information to identify best practices and lessons learned.
- b) In the spring of 2011, the DOJ will issue a progress report on Federal agency compliance with Section 508, the first since 2004. Going forward, DOJ will meet its obligation to issue a report biennially.
- c) Beginning in FY 2011, the GSA OGP will begin providing OMB a quarterly summary report containing results of Section 508 reviews of a sample of solicitations posted on FedBizOpps.gov. GSA will provide the agencies a summary of the sampling results to facilitate sharing of best practices and successes, and to address common challenges.

³ <https://app.buyaccessible.gov/baw/KwikLinksMain.jsp>

⁴ <https://app.buyaccessible.gov/DataCenter/>

⁵ <http://buyaccessible.net/blog/>

Improving Outreach and Communication

Citizen and employee engagement is important for understanding the needs of diverse communities and providing better solutions. Within 60 days, the GSA OGP and the U.S. Access Board⁶, in collaboration with the Chief Acquisition Officers Council (CAOC) and CIOC, will design listening sessions and will research technology solutions to facilitate such sessions. The sessions will be an opportunity for the government and interested members of the public to address concerns and propose ideas. Feedback from the sessions will be used by, and shared across, agencies to improve accessibility and usability.

Promoting equal access to government for persons with disabilities will improve the delivery of services to the public and ensure that all federal employees have the information and data they need to do their jobs. If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Karen Pica in the Office of Federal Procurement Policy at 202-395-3302 or Janice Nall in the Office of Electronic Government and Information Technology at 202-395-0368.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

⁶ The Access Board is required by Section 502 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to develop and maintain design criteria for the built environment, transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment, and for electronic and information technology.