

VHEAP Lunch & Learn

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VPAT Session #2

Presenters:

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Background on Virginia Information Technology Access Act – requires vendors to conform with WCAG 2.1 AA standards. Vendors should supply a VPAT/Accessibility Conformance Report (used interchangeably), and areas of nonconformance should be documented with a vendor accessibility roadmap highlighting areas requiring improved accessibility, including a timeline for completion.

How to Judge Accuracy of a VPAT?

- Recency (date of VPAT, within one year)
- Version (did they review the same version of the software that you are using? Or did they send one for a previous version?)
- Is the scope comprehensive? Does it look at the whole application? (as opposed to one page, form or feature for the whole software platform).
- Does it provide details when it only “partially supports” or “does not support”? This helps judge whether it was done well, where the issues are, and what they are. The standards are pretty general, so the details are really great to see if they took the time to do the whole test.
- Is the VPAT completed by a third party, such as Deque, Level Access, etc.? A lot depends on the maturity of the company. Some have great internal accessibility teams that can do accurate VPATs, but otherwise it is a good thing to see a third party.

- Manual testing against the VPAT is key, but not always possible. Are you finding more than what you are finding on the VPAT?

Kristine then gives examples.

Great to be able to test against a VPAT. What do you do when you are in a position when you can't test (time, resources, etc.)? A lot of us are not invited to RFP meetings, for example, so how do we ensure that software is being reviewed and assessed?

Using a rubric to get a score is a good place to start. A lot of rubrics out there. But first, let's look at some VPATs to help us understand.

VPAT Examples:

Example 1: public VPAT available for Perusall software. The areas in which the software only partially supports is very detailed; it has a lot of information. They also give information on the scenarios they use for testing... this is a gold standard. A really good example.

Example 2: a redacted VPAT from another vendor, this one is a poor example. At the top, the information is the template instructions; they left them there. They haven't actually filled out any information. They did complete the checklist, but no information or details for areas of non-conformance. Still long (14 pages), but little information actually there. This is not a very reliable VPAT.

Scoring Rubrics

Looking to get an accessibility score and a reliability score. Both how accessible (according to them), but also, how reliable is the VPAT as an accurate assessment of their software? You can add weights for different areas, such as level A being a higher weight because it is a lower standard that would create a greater roadblock (such as not being able to navigate via a keyboard). Use both the accessibility AND the reliability score to classify vendors into risk (high, medium, low) which will inform your level of review.

Demonstration of an AI prompt to help with the review:

Uploading the VPAT to ChatGPT with a prompt that Kristine will share out; Kristine did a demonstration. Kristine put through the poor example, and showed us the weighted score. Gives a lot of information for the reliability for Level A and Level AA, and also points out the greatest, key failures (i.e. potentially high priority issues). It gives good questions to ask the vendor.

Key takeaways: you can follow these steps and have some accessibility findings with very low technical skills, or if you have no central support staff. Also allows accessibility reviews earlier in the procurement process.

Making Decisions: Approval or Rejection

Risk Assessment: Is the vendor willing to cooperate? Provide documentation and testing environment? Make required remediations within a reasonable timeframe? Are they willing to talk, engage with a third party review, do a roadmap? Are they fixing what they say they will?

What happens when the application is mandated, legacy, or too big to fail? There are always applications that are mandatory for whatever reason (such as only products in their class, legacy established within your system, etc.) Continue documenting issues, send those to the vendors. As you are able to negotiate things into your contracts? Ideally something to work towards, but not a quick process.

Developing a Remediation Timeline

Focus on high-impact items

What needs to be done prior to implementation? What can be scheduled, and when?

Strategy idea: get a commitment letter. The vendor gives a letter that they understand the legal and technical requirements that we are following, and that gives more assurance for the institution to move forward with that vendor. The more we do this from each of our institution, it becomes easier to work with these vendors.

On the EduCause listserv, lots of chatter about which vendors various institutions have worked with, and how easy they have been in this area. Helps vendors be more competitive in markets, as well, as we are giving them free quality assurance information. That's

actionable for any development team. The more “defensive” of a response you get from a vendor, the more you should be wary.