



What Is a VPAT and ACR?

A VPAT and an ACR are related, but they are not exactly the same thing.

VPAT stands for Voluntary Product Accessibility Template. It is the official template a vendor uses to report how well a technology product meets accessibility standards. Once the vendor fills out the VPAT, the completed document becomes an ACR, or Accessibility Conformance Report.

In simple terms: the VPAT is the form, and the ACR is the completed report.

Agencies, schools, businesses, and procurement teams use ACRs to make an initial decision about whether a website, software platform, mobile app, hardware product, or digital service appears to meet accessibility requirements.

Why VPATs and ACRs matter

A good ACR helps buyers understand the accessibility status of a product before they purchase, renew, or approve it for use. It can also help vendors show that they have tested their product and understand where it supports accessibility and where it may still need improvement.

For state and local governments, this is especially important because digital accessibility is no longer optional. Websites, mobile apps, online forms, portals, documents, and vendor software may all be reviewed as part of ADA Title II, WCAG, Section 508, procurement, or internal accessibility requirements.

For vendors, an accurate ACR can be the difference between moving forward in a procurement process and being delayed, questioned, or disqualified.

ACR Conformance Criteria

An ACR uses five main conformance levels to describe how well a product meets accessibility requirements:

Supports

The product fully meets the accessibility requirement.

Partially Supports

The product meets some, but not all, parts of the requirement.

Does Not Support

The product does not meet the accessibility requirement.

Not Applicable

The requirement does not apply to the product. For example, this may apply to a software-only product that does not include audio features.

Not Evaluated

The requirement was not tested. This is most often used for W-CAG AAA criteria, which are rarely required in standard procurement reviews.

Note: If a vendor selects “Partially Supports” or “Does Not Support,” they should provide clear remarks and explanations in the ACR so buyers understand the issue, impact, and any planned remediation.

Who maintains the VPAT?

The Information Technology Industry Council, often called ITI, maintains the official VPAT templates. Vendors use these templates to report accessibility conformance for information and communication technology products.

Even though the word “voluntary” is part of the VPAT name, many buyers still require vendors to provide a completed ACR before they will purchase or approve a product. This is especially common in federal procurement, state government procurement, higher education, and organizations with formal accessibility policies.

The four VPAT editions

ITI provides four main VPAT editions. The right one depends on the customer, the product, the market, and the accessibility standards that need to be reported.

VPAT edition	Best used for	Plain Explanation
508 Edition	U.S. federal procurement and Section 508 reporting	Used when the buyer needs accessibility information tied to Revised Section 508 requirements.
WCAG Edition	Websites, web applications, mobile apps, and digital products	Used when the buyer wants reporting against WCAG requirements, such as WCAG 2.1 or WCAG 2.2.
EU Edition	European public-sector and EN 301 549 reporting	Used when a product needs to report conformance against European accessibility requirements.
INT Edition	Products sold across multiple markets	Combines major standards into one broader international template.

Which VPAT edition should you use?

The customer’s requirements should drive the decision. If a solicitation, procurement office, or contract asks for a specific VPAT edition, use that edition. If the requirement is unclear, ask the buyer which standard they expect you to report against.

- If your primary customer is the U.S. federal government, the 508 Edition is often requested because it is tied to Revised Section 508 requirements.
- If your product is a website, web app, SaaS platform, or mobile app, buyers may ask for the WCAG Edition so they can review conformance against WCAG Level A and AA success criteria.
- If your product includes hardware, non-web software, support documentation, or support services, the 508 Edition may be more appropriate because it includes sections beyond web content.
- If you sell to international customers, the INT Edition may be useful because it combines multiple accessibility standards in one report.
- Some vendors complete more than one edition when they sell to different markets or when customers request different reporting formats.

What should an ACR include?

An ACR should clearly state how the product performs against each required accessibility criterion. It should not be vague, overly optimistic, or filled with marketing language. A strong ACR gives buyers enough information to understand what works, what does not work, and what the vendor plans to improve.

A useful ACR should include:

- The product name and version tested.
- The VPAT edition and version used.
- The accessibility standards being reported, such as WCAG, Section 508, EN 301 549, or a combination of standards.
- The testing methods used, including automated testing, manual testing, keyboard testing, assistive technology testing, and workflow review.
- Clear conformance levels for each criterion, such as Supports, Partially Supports, Does Not Support, Not Applicable, or Not Evaluated.
- Plain-language remarks that explain known issues, limitations, workarounds, and planned fixes.
- The date of the evaluation and the person, team, or third party responsible for completing it.

Why automated scans are not enough

Automated accessibility tools are helpful, but they cannot prove that a product is fully accessible. They can catch many common problems, such as missing alternative text, color contrast issues, empty buttons, missing form labels, and some ARIA mistakes.

However, automated tools cannot reliably determine whether a person using only a keyboard can complete a full workflow, whether screen reader output makes sense, whether alternative text is meaningful, whether focus order is logical, or whether a vendor's ACR accurately reflects the real product experience.

That is why a credible ACR should be based on a combination of automated testing, manual review, keyboard testing, assistive technology testing, and practical accessibility judgment.

How ACRs are used during procurement

During a purchase or RFP process, the ACR is usually reviewed by an accessibility specialist, procurement team, IT team, legal team, or outside consultant. The review helps the buyer decide whether the product appears acceptable, whether more testing is needed, or whether accessibility risks must be addressed before purchase or renewal.

A typical process may look like this:

1. The vendor provides a completed ACR with the proposal, renewal package, or product documentation.

2. The buyer or reviewer checks whether the ACR is complete, current, specific, and credible.
3. The product may be tested to confirm whether the ACR matches the actual user experience.
4. If issues are found, the buyer may request clarification, remediation commitments, a corrective action plan, or an exception process.
5. The vendor may be required to fix issues, provide timelines, update the ACR, or support retesting.

What happens when accessibility defects are found?

Accessibility defects do not always stop a purchase, but they do need to be understood and managed. If a product has known issues, the buyer may ask for a corrective action plan or similar documentation that explains how the issues will be resolved.

Depending on the organization's policy, the next step may include:

- Asking the vendor to remediate the product within a defined timeline.
- Accepting a temporary exception while fixes are completed.
- Requiring workarounds or support options for affected users.
- Requiring retesting before the product is approved or renewed.
- Choosing a different product if the accessibility risk is too high.

A VPAT is for products, not general services

A VPAT is intended to report the accessibility of a technology product. It is not usually the right document for a general service, such as consulting, training, research, or the act of building a website for a client.

However, if a vendor provides a software product, SaaS platform, mobile app, web application, hardware device, or digital tool, an ACR may be appropriate or required.

Who should complete a VPAT?

A VPAT should be completed by someone who understands accessibility standards, testing methods, product behavior, and the reporting rules of the template being used. It should not be completed only by a salesperson or someone who has not tested the product.

An inaccurate ACR can create serious problems. If the report says the product supports accessibility requirements but actual testing shows major barriers, the vendor may face procurement delays, contract concerns, customer frustration, or legal and reputational risk.

Why accuracy matters

An ACR is more than a sales document. It is often part of an official procurement record. Buyers rely on it to evaluate accessibility risk and determine whether the product can be used by people with disabilities.

A complete and accurate ACR can help a vendor:

- Respond to federal, state, local government, and higher education solicitations.
- Support procurement and renewal decisions.
- Build trust with accessibility, IT, legal, and compliance teams.
- Show that the product has been tested and that known issues are being addressed.
- Avoid vague or unsupported claims that may create contractual risk.

When should an ACR be updated?

An ACR should not be treated as a one-time document. It should be reviewed and updated whenever the product changes in a meaningful way.

As a practical rule, vendors should consider updating an ACR:

- At least every 12 to 16 months.
- When major new features are released.
- When the user interface changes substantially.
- After significant accessibility remediation is completed.
- When a customer, procurement office, or contract requires a newer report.

Summary

The VPAT is the template. The ACR is the completed report. Together, they help buyers understand how accessible a technology product is and help vendors explain their product's conformance to accessibility standards. The best ACRs are clear, current, honest, and based on real testing. They do not simply say "supports" everywhere. They explain the evidence, identify known issues, and help buyers make informed decisions.

For state agencies, local governments, and technology vendors, a strong VPAT/ACR process supports ADA Title II readiness, WCAG conformance, Section 508 alignment, better procurement decisions, and more accessible digital services for everyone.