

SSA Guide to Completing the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template

Purpose:

This document will provide Vendors with instructions as to how they are expected to complete the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) for the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Background:

In 2001, the Information Technology Industry Council partnered with the General Services Administration to create a tool that would assist Federal contracting and procurement officials in fulfilling the market research requirements specified in Section 508. The result of their collaboration was the VPAT – a simple, web-based checklist that allows Vendors to document how their product **did** or **did not** meet the various Section 508 Requirements.

How the VPAT is organized:

The VPAT consists of a long series of tables. The initial one, the **Summary Table**, is used to provide a sense of your product’s **overall** “level-of-compliance” with the Section 508 Standards. Subsequently, the **Section 1194.xx Tables** contain the detailed subparagraphs that a Section 508 Standard is composed of. It is within this **Section 1194.xx Tables** that you will define in detail how your product **did** or **did not** comply with a specific requirement.

Understanding the columns

Use the following to understand the use of the three columns in the VPAT’s tables:

Summary Table	
Column Name	Use
Criteria:	Describes Subparts B, C, and D of the Section 508 Standards.
Supporting Features:	To Enter information summarizing a product’s overall “level-of support” for the corresponding Subpart or, when appropriate, to specify Not Applicable .
Remarks/Explanations:	To Enter general comments regarding a product’s overall “level-of-compliance” with the Applicable Subpart.

Section 1194.xx Tables	
Column Name	Use
Criteria:	Describes a specific guideline that a Subpart is composed of.
Supporting Features:	To Enter information summarizing a product’s “level-of-support” for a specific guideline.
Remarks/Explanations:	To Enter detailed information on how the product did or did not support a specific guideline.

What information do I enter in columns 2 and 3?

The **Supporting Features** and **Remarks/Explanations** columns are used to document exactly how a product **did** or **did not** meet the Section 508 Standards. In order to promote consistency in Vendor responses, which will ensure a quicker review process by SSA's contracting and procurement officials, we encourage you to answer these columns in the following manner:

Supporting Features (second column on VPAT)	
Language	Description
Supports	Product FULLY meets the letter and intent of the Criteria.
Supports with Exceptions	Product does not ENTIRELY meet the letter and intent of the Criteria, but does provide some level of access.
Supports through Equivalent Facilitation	Product provides <i>alternative</i> methods to meet the intent of the Criteria.
Does not Support	Product does not meet the letter or intent of the Criteria.
Not Applicable	The Criteria does not apply to the product.

Remarks & Explanations (third column on VPAT)	
If 2nd column states...	Then...
Supports	List exactly what features of the product do meet and describe how they are used to support the Criteria.
Supports with Exceptions	List exactly what features of the product do meet and describe how they are used to support the Criteria. AND List exactly what parts of the product do not meet and describe how they fail to support the Criteria.
Supports through Equivalent Facilitation	List exactly what <i>alternative</i> methods exist in the product and describe how they are used to support the Criteria.
Does not Support	Describe exactly how the product does not support the Criteria.
Not Applicable	Describe exactly why the criteria is not applicable to the product.

Typical Scenario for Completing a VPAT:

To begin the process of completing the VPAT, you should enlist the services of your company's technical specialist for the product being sought for purchase. The reason for this is because SSA requires a measure of technical detail in your responses. Once you've enlisted their assistance:

- 1) Determine which sections of the **Technical Standards (Subpart B-1194.21-26)** apply to your product. * Keep in mind that you **always** must complete the **Functional Performance Criteria (Subpart C – 1194.31)** and **Information, Documentation, and Support (Subpart D – 1194.41)** sections of the VPAT.
- 2) For each section that applies, determine if your product does or does not meet the specific Criteria elements.
- 3) Using the information found in the ***How the VPAT is organized*** section, document in the **Section 1194.xx Tables** exactly **how** your product **did** or **did not** meet the applicable standard.
 - If your product **supports** the standard, provide detailed examples of **what** accessibility features exist and **how** they are used to support the standard.
 - If your product **does not support** the standard, remember that Section 508 allows for products to meet the Access Board Standards in innovative, non-traditional ways. Your product can meet the standard by providing an innovative solution, as long as the feature performs in the same manner as it does for any other user.
 - If your product **does not** possess an **alternative means** of access to the standard, provide detailed examples of exactly **how** the product **did not** meet the standard.
- 4) Once you've documented in the **Section 1194.xx Tables** exactly how your product **did** or **did not** meet, return to the **Summary Table** and document the product's overall "level-of-compliance" in each of the applicable sections.
- 5) Post your final VPAT on your company's web site. You may also want to link to your VPAT through [GSA's Buy Accessible web site](#), a resource that many government procurement officials use when conducting their market research.
- 6) Please keep in mind that it is the Vendor's responsibility to maintain the integrity of the data on the VPAT. The information provided on your VPAT is considered to be a self-representation unless expressly affirmed otherwise.

*** Please Note:** Any **WEB** application being purchased by SSA also **requires** the Vendor to complete **Section 1194.21** of the VPAT in addition to **Sections 1194.22, 1194.31, and 1194.41**.