SBA Policy Notice

Section 508 Policy –
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Introduction:

The Section 508 ICT Policy highlights the SBA's unwavering commitment to ensuring that all ICT within our organization is accessible to individuals with disabilities. This policy aligns with the mandates of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, reflecting our dedication to creating an inclusive digital environment for all users.

Policy Statement:

The SBA is committed to ensuring that our ICT is accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities, and complies with accessibility standards in accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 794d).

Scope:

This policy applies to all SBA employees and contractors. The scope of this policy is to ensure that all ICT procured, developed, maintained, or used by SBA is accessible to individuals with disabilities. The policy covers a wide range of internal ICT, external-facing ICT, including but not limited to:

- Software applications and operating systems
- Websites and web-based application
- Telecommunication equipment - Telecommunications equipment, as defined under Section 508, includes a wide range of devices and technologies that facilitate communication (e.g., telephones, fax machines, video conferences systems, telecommunication devices for the hearing impaired (TTY)).
- Video and multimedia products
- Desktop and portable computers
- Electronic documents and other forms of information technology.

The specific accessibility requirements for telecommunications equipment and ICT in general can evolve over time. SBA will stay updated with the latest standards and guidelines to ensure compliance.

The goal of the Section 508 Program policy is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to information and services provided by federal agencies, thereby promoting inclusivity and accessibility for all.

Our commitment to accessibility includes the following principles:

- **Compliance:** We will comply with Section 508 standards and guidelines, as well as other relevant accessibility standards and guidelines, including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, to ensure that our ICT is accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- **Responsibility:** We will ensure that all employees, contractors, and vendors involved in the development, procurement, maintenance, or use of ICT are aware of their responsibility to ensure accessibility and receive appropriate training and resources to support accessibility efforts.
- **Accessibility by Design:** We will design and develop ICT with accessibility in mind, following best practices and industry standards for accessible design, and will consider accessibility throughout the entire lifecycle of our ICT.
- **Testing and Evaluation:** We will conduct regular testing and evaluation of our ICT to ensure that it is accessible to individuals with disabilities and will remediate any identified accessibility barriers.
- **Continual Improvement:** We will continually improve our accessibility efforts by seeking feedback from users with disabilities, monitoring emerging accessibility standards and guidelines, and staying up to date with accessibility best practices.

We recognize that accessibility is a shared responsibility and are committed to working collaboratively with our employees, customers, and stakeholders to ensure that our digital content and technologies are accessible to all. By adopting this policy, we reaffirm our commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible workplace and community.

Purpose:
The purpose of this ICT Policy is to establish a comprehensive framework that guides SBA in its commitment to ensure that all ICT products, services, and digital content are accessible to individuals with disabilities. In alignment with the principles of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, we seek to create an inclusive digital environment, breaking down digital barriers, promoting equal access, and empowering individuals of all abilities to participate fully in the digital landscape.

Through this policy, we aim to foster a culture of accessibility within our organization, integrating it into every facet of our ICT development, procurement, and maintenance processes. We recognize that accessibility benefits all users and enhances the overall user experience, thereby reinforcing our commitment to deliver high-quality, inclusive digital solutions.

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Furthermore, this policy provides the necessary guidance to ensure that our employees, and stakeholders are well-informed about accessibility standards, practices, and their roles in achieving our accessibility goals. It sets the stage for training, monitoring, and continuous improvement, ensuring that we remain proactive in our efforts to provide accessible and usable ICT offerings. We are committed to providing equal access to our digital content and technologies for individuals with disabilities, to promote inclusivity, and to ensure that no one is excluded from the benefits of our products and services due to a disability.

Section 508 requires federal agencies to make their ICT accessible to people with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired, hearing impaired, or have mobility impairments. This includes websites, software applications, mobile devices, computers, telecommunications equipment, and other ICT.

SBA also requires purchases of ICT that is already accessible or can be made accessible with reasonable effort. They must also develop and maintain an accessibility policy and provide training to their employees on accessibility requirements.

Section 508 has had a significant impact on the way federal agencies approach accessibility. It has helped to increase awareness of accessibility issues and has encouraged the development of accessible technology. Additionally, it has helped to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the same information and opportunities as those without disabilities.

Roles and Responsibility:

Chief Information Officer (CIO)
The CIO manages all aspects of this Directive. The CIO is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented and adhered to throughout the organization.

This includes:
- Overseeing the strategic alignment of the ICT policy with the agency's goals and objectives.
- Monitoring and enforcing compliance with the ICT policy across the agency.

508 Program Manager (PM): The 508 PM is responsible for the coordination of the organization's Section 508 program for overseeing and implementing ICT accessibility initiatives.
- Developing, implementing, and maintaining the agency's Section 508 program to ensure accessibility of ICT.
- Developing and implementing accessibility policies, procedures, coordinating accessibility efforts, providing training, and ensuring compliance with Section 508 and other relevant accessibility standards.
- Overseeing accessibility assessments and audits to identify and address barriers in ICT products and services.
- Collaborating with stakeholders to promote awareness and understanding of ICT accessibility issues.
- Monitoring advancements in ICT accessibility technologies and incorporating them into the organization's policies and practices.
- Serving as a liaison with external partners, agencies, and individuals involved in ICT accessibility initiatives.
- Reporting on the agency's progress and outcomes related to ICT accessibility and compliance efforts.

Federal Employees and Contractors: SBA recognizes that ensuring accessibility is a shared responsibility. All employees and contractors involved in the development, procurement, maintenance, or use of ICT are responsible for ensuring that their work is accessible to individuals with disabilities. They are expected to adhere to this policy and support SBAs efforts to create an inclusive and accessible environment.

This includes:
- Designing and developing ICT with accessibility in mind, following best practices and industry standards for accessible design.
- Procuring ICT that is accessible or can be made accessible through reasonable accommodations or modifications.
- Maintaining ICT to ensure ongoing accessibility.
- Using ICT in a manner that is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

To support these responsibilities, the 508 Program Office will provide appropriate training, resources, and tools to enable employees, contractors, and vendors to meet their accessibility responsibilities. Additionally, we will conduct periodic reviews and assessments of our accessibility efforts to identify areas for improvement and ensure that this policy remains effective in achieving its objectives.

Procurement:

Procurement plays a crucial role in ensuring accessibility and compliance with ICT requirements. All employees and contractors involved in the procurement process are responsible for considering accessibility when evaluating, selecting, and purchasing ICT. The agency will include the following Section 508 requirements in all solicitations and contracts for ICT products and services:

- Ensure that all ICT products and services procured comply with Section 508 accessibility standards to ensure they are accessible to individuals with disabilities, promoting inclusivity and equal access.
- Incorporate Section 508 compliance standards requirements into solicitations and contracts for ICT products and services. Integrating 508 requirements into these documents, the SBA can guarantee that the products and services they procure align with accessibility guidelines and promote inclusivity for individuals with disabilities.
- Verify that vendors and contractors adhere to accessibility standards and guidelines.
  a. A requirement for the vendor to provide a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) or Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) or other documentation of accessibility compliance.
- Conduct thorough evaluations of product accessibility during the procurement process.
- Collaborate with the agency's Section 508 Program office to address accessibility needs and requirements.
- Monitor and enforcing adherence to accessibility requirements throughout the procurement lifecycle.

Training:

All employees and contractors who develop, procure, maintain, or use ICT products and services must be trained on the agency's Section 508 policy, procedures, and guidelines.

Monitoring and Reporting:

SBA will regularly monitor and report on its Section 508 compliance efforts.

- **Compliance Monitoring:** Regular audits and assessments shall be conducted to ensure compliance with this Section 508 Policy.
- **Reporting Mechanism:** A reporting mechanism shall be established to enable employees and stakeholders to report accessibility concerns, issues, or violations.

SBA is committed to monitoring and reporting on our compliance with Section 508 and other relevant accessibility standards and guidelines. Our goal is to continually improve our

accessibility efforts and ensure that all individuals, including those with disabilities, can access and use our digital content and technologies without barriers or limitations.

To achieve this goal, we will:

1. Conduct periodic accessibility audits and assessments to identify areas for improvement and ensure that our ICT is compliant with Section 508 and other relevant accessibility standards and guidelines.
2. Provide training to employees and contractors involved in ICT development, procurement, maintenance, or use to ensure that they understand their accessibility responsibilities and can implement accessible design and development practices.
3. Engage with individuals with disabilities and disability advocacy groups to gather feedback and insights on our accessibility efforts and identify opportunities for improvement.
4. Monitor emerging accessibility standards and guidelines and incorporate them into our accessibility efforts as appropriate.
5. Report on our accessibility efforts to relevant stakeholders, including employees, customers, partners, and regulatory bodies, as required.

The 508 Program office will be responsible for overseeing our monitoring and reporting efforts and ensuring that they are conducted in a timely and effective manner. The 508 Program office will also work with other stakeholders, such as IT and Human Resources (HR), to ensure that accessibility considerations are integrated into all relevant policies and processes.

By monitoring and reporting on our accessibility efforts, we aim to demonstrate our commitment to accessibility, foster a culture of inclusion and accessibility, and ensure that we are meeting our legal and ethical responsibilities to provide equal access to all individuals, including those with disabilities

Standards and Guidelines

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Final Standards and Guidelines - Read the Revised 508 Standards (final rule)
- About the Update of the Section 508 Standards and Section 255 Guidelines for Information and Communication Technology - High-level overview ICT
- Revised 508 Standards Transition Guide - An overview of changes your agency needs to make to transition to the Revised 508 Standards.
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 (w3.org) - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) explains how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. WCAG covers web sites, applications, and other digital content. It is developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). WCAG is an international standard.

Revised Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)

- [Federal Acquisition Regulation: Section 508-Based Standards in Information and Communication Technology](#) as published August 11, 2021
- [Tabular Comparison of the Previous FAR text against the 2021 Update](#)

Additional Resources

- [Section508.gov](#) — GSA's Government-wide IT Accessibility Program
- [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. §794d)](#)
- Final Regulatory Impact Analysis ([FRIA](#))
- [Comparison Table of WCAG 2.0 to Original 508 Standards](#)
- [Mapping of WCAG 2.0 to Functional Performance Criteria](#)
- [ICT Testing Baseline for Web Accessibility](#)

Glossary

- [Glossary of Section 508 Terms | Section508.gov](#)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Section 508 policy pertaining to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a crucial role in ensuring accessibility for individual's disabilities. By adhering to the guidelines outlined in the policy, the SBA can strive to create an inclusive, accessible and socially responsible digital environment that promote equal access to all users. Embracing accessibility features and practices not only helps the SBA meet legal requirements but also demonstrates the agency's unwavering commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusivity. By prioritizing accessibility in ICT, the SBA can effectively engage with wider audience, enhance user experience, and contribute to a more equitable digital landscape. Section 508 serves as a guide towards creating a more accessible and inclusive future for all users.

Revision History:
SBA will review and update this Policy as necessary to ensure compliance with Section 508 accessibility standards, technology, and other relevant laws and regulations.

If you have any questions regarding this Policy, please contact Janice MacLean, 508 Program Manager, at 508@sba.gov.

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Stephen Kucharski
Acting Chief Information Officer

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