



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON

**VENDOR READINESS FOR ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

FOR

EMPLOYMENT & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA (ESDC)



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

VENDOR READINESS FOR ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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1. Background and Purpose of this Request for Information (RFI)

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is starting to develop the next set of regulations under the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA). These regulations would deal with removing barriers and improving accessibility in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

ICT covers all the things we use to communicate and do business in the digital world. New ICT accessibility regulations made under the ACA would apply to federally regulated entities. This includes sectors like banking, pipelines and the Government of Canada itself. Sectors like retail, health, education and manufacturing usually come under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Regulations made under the ACA would generally not apply to them.

The first step in the process is conducting early consultations with stakeholders. While ICT suppliers are generally not federally regulated entities, they provide ICT products and services to federally regulated entities.

Through this Request for Information (RFI), the Accessible Canada Directorate, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and its partner departments are seeking to understand vendors'/suppliers' readiness toward any international ICT standards, the challenges to meeting those standards, as well as the impact those standards have on the disability community.

ESDC is also seeking vendors'/suppliers' feedback on their experience with international accessible ICT standards and/or ICT procurement tool kits.

This RFI is neither a call for tender nor a Bid Solicitation. No agreement or contract will be entered into based on this RFI. The issuance of this RFI is not to be considered in any way a commitment by the Government of Canada, nor as authority to potential respondents to undertake any work that could be charged to Government of Canada. This RFI is to be considered as a commitment to issue a subsequent solicitation or award contract(s) for the work described herein. Although the information collected may be provided as commercial-in-confidence (and, if identified as such, will be treated accordingly by Canada), Canada may use the information to assist in drafting performance specifications (which are subject to change) and for budgetary purposes.

Respondents are encouraged to identify, in the information they share with Canada, any information that they feel is proprietary, third party or personal information. Please note that Canada may be obligated by law (e.g. in response to a request under the Access of Information and Privacy Act) to disclose proprietary or commercially-sensitive information concerning a respondent (for more information: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-1/>).

2. Nature of Request for Information

This is not a bid solicitation. This RFI will not result in the award of any contract. As a result, potential suppliers of any goods or services described in this RFI should not reserve stock or facilities, nor allocate resources, as a result of any information contained in this RFI. In addition, the procurement of any of the goods and services described in this RFI will not necessarily follow this RFI.



3. Legislation, Trade Agreements, and Government Policies

The legislation, trade agreements and government policies that could affect any follow-on solicitation(s) will be determined at solicitation stage.

4. Enquiries

Because this is not a bid solicitation, Canada will not necessarily respond to enquiries in writing or by circulating answers to all potential suppliers. However, any questions from respondents concerning this RFI must be made in writing to the Contracting Authority stated below, **via e-mail** on or before the closing date.

Name: Ekaterina Suvorova
Title: Senior Procurement Specialist
Employment and Social Development Canada
Procurement and Contracting

Address: 140 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, QC K1A 0J9

E-mail address: NC-SOLICITATIONS-GD@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Canada reserves the right to not respond to questions received after the closing date or to any question not related to this RFI. Enquiries that are of a proprietary nature must be clearly marked "proprietary" at each relevant item. Items identified as "proprietary" will be treated as such, except where Canada determines that the enquiry is not of a proprietary nature. Canada may edit the questions or may request that the respondent do so, so that the proprietary nature of the question is eliminated, and the responses will be made publicly available through the Government Electronic Tendering Service (<https://buyandsell.gc.ca/>).

Changes to this RFI may occur and will be advertised through an amendment on the Government Electronic Tendering System. Canada asks Respondents to visit [Buyandsell.gc.ca](https://buyandsell.gc.ca) regularly to check for changes, if any.

5. Response Costs

Canada will not reimburse any respondent for expenses incurred in responding to this RFI.



6. Treatment of Responses

- a) **Use of Responses:** Responses will not be formally evaluated. However, the responses received may be used by Canada to develop or modify procurement strategies or any draft documents contained in this RFI. Canada will review all responses received by the RFI closing date. Canada may, in its discretion, review responses received after the RFI closing date.
- b) **Review Team:** A review team composed of representatives of the client (where applicable) and ESDC will review the responses. Canada reserves the right to hire any independent consultant, or use any Government resources that it considers necessary to review any response. Not all members of the review team will necessarily review all responses.
- c) **Confidentiality:** Respondents should mark any portions of their response that they consider proprietary or confidential. Canada will handle the responses in accordance with the Access to Information Act.
- d) **Follow-up Activity:** Canada may, at its discretion, contact any respondents to follow up with additional questions or for clarification of any aspect of a response.

7. Format of Responses

- a) **Title Page:** The first page should be the title page, which should contain:
 - (A) the title of the respondent's response and the volume number;
 - (B) the name and address of the respondent;
 - (C) the name, address and telephone number of the respondent's contact;
 - (D) the date; and
 - (E) the RFI number.
- b) **Numbering System:** Respondents are requested to prepare their response using a numbering system corresponding to the one in this RFI. All references to descriptive material, technical manuals and brochures included as part of the response should be referenced accordingly.
- c) **Number of Copies:** Canada requests that respondents submit **[1]** copy of their responses.

8. Closing Date and Submission of Responses

- a) **Closing Date:** Responses to this RFI must be submitted electronically to the Contracting Authority and will be accepted until 2:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST) on January 31st, 2023.



- b) **Time and Place for Submission of Responses:** Suppliers interested in providing a response by email nc-solicitations-gd@hrsdcc.gc.ca to the Contracting Authority by the time and date indicated above.
- c) **Responsibility for Timely Delivery:** Each respondent is solely responsible for ensuring its response is emailed on time to nc-solicitations-gd@hrsdcc.gc.ca.
- d) **Identification of Response:** Each respondent should ensure that its name and return address, the solicitation number and the closing date appear legibly of the response.
- e) **Responses after the Closing Date:** We welcome any information that will be shared after the deadline too. Please send responses to accessible.canada.directorate-direction.canada.accessible@hrsdcc.gc.ca after the closing date.



ANNEX A – Statement of Requirement

1. Title: Request for Information (RFI) on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Standards

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is launching this RFI to understand vendors' / suppliers' awareness and usage of any international accessible ICT standards.

2. Objectives

Through this Request for Information (RFI), the Project Authority ESDC and its partner departments is seeking to understand vendors'/suppliers' readiness toward any international ICT standards, the challenges to meeting those standards, as well as the impact those standards have on the disability community. ESDC is also seeking vendors'/suppliers' feedback on their experience with international accessible ICT standards and/or ICT procurement tool kits.

The RFI will consist of questions that will seek information from ICT vendor community pertaining to different ICT products and services such as websites, hardware and software. It will enquire regarding their current conformance to accessible ICT standards and their readiness for potential new Canadian ICT regulations.

3. Background

The Accessible Canada Act (ACA), which came into force on July 19, 2019, aims to create a fully accessible Canada without barriers by January 1, 2040. It focuses on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers in the following priority areas:

- employment
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces)
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication, other than information and communication technologies
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- the design and delivery of programs and services, and
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders).

The first set of ACA regulations, were published in Canada Gazette Part II in December 2021. It set out the planning and reporting requirements for federally regulated entities to create accessibility plans, descriptions of feedback processes, and progress reports in consultation with persons with disabilities. In addition, these ACA regulations established the administrative monetary penalty framework for any violation of the Act or its associated regulations.



Any regulations made under the ACA apply to federally regulated entities. This includes sectors like banking, telecommunications, broadcasting, international and interprovincial transportation, pipelines and the Government of Canada itself.

We are seeking to understand ICT vendors' and suppliers' current state of compliance and/or readiness to comply with ICT accessibility standards, the challenges to meeting those standards, as well as the impact those standards have on the disability community. The information received will help with an assessment of ICT industry readiness and/or compliance with ICT accessibility standards and any gaps between existing ICT products and future ICT accessibility regulatory requirements.



ANNEX B – RFI Questions

	Question to supplier	Supplier's response
1	Please indicate which ICT goods or services your business produces/supplies (select all that apply):	
a	Web content development and maintenance, including websites, web applications, non-web documents	
b	Mobile applications	
c	Software: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-web software • platform software • authoring tools • software that operates as assistive technology • other software – please specify: 	
d	Hardware: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smartphones • computer equipment like keyboards, mouse etc. • office equipment like printers, scanners, copiers • special peripherals like keyguards, trackballs, large monitors, or head-pointing systems, • input and/or output connection points that are compatible with Assistive technology • other hardware – please specify: 	
e	Assistive technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recording equipment or portable note-taking devices • multimedia players for e-books and audiobooks • special keyboards or input devices • speech recognition software, high tech or low tech Aided Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) etc. • other assistive technology – please specify: 	
f	Fixed ICT, such as electronic payment terminals (EPTs), and accessible self-service interactive devices like information kiosks and ATMs	
g	Biometrics	
h	Relay services	
i	Other, please specify	
2	Would you consider your business to be a small or medium enterprise (SME)? Please specify.	
3	Is your company's principle place of business in Canada?	



	Question to supplier	Supplier's response
4	Does your business consider accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities?	
5	Have you engaged users with lived experience in the accessibility assessment of your product or service? If so, how? If not, do you plan to engage those with lived experience?	
6	Do the ICT products or services supplied by you meet or comply with any ICT accessibility standards? For example, European Standard EN 301 549, Revised US Section 508, WCAG, Integrated Regulation under AODA, Canadian Standards Association (CSA).	
7	What are the considerations for your choice of a particular ICT accessibility standard for your products and services? Example, adaptability, availability, cost benefit etc.	
8	Do you exceed any of the basic guidelines recommended by any standard? If yes, which specific elements?	
9	If your products and/or services are not conforming with any standards, is there an intention or plan to be partially or fully compliant with any international standards in the future? If the response is no, please indicate why not.	
10	Does your business have experience using accessible ICT tool kits, such as the EN 301 549 ICT accessibility tool kit or the BDI IT Tendering tool kit), or any other ICT accessibility tools? Please specify and provide examples.	
11	Have you ever prepared an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) using the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®) ¹ for any of your products or services? If yes, which of the following VPAT®s have you prepared? <u>VPAT 2.4Rev INT (March 2022)</u> <u>VPAT 2.4 Rev EU (March 2022)</u> <u>VPAT 2.4Rev WCAG (March 2022)</u> <u>VPAT 2.4Rev 508 (March 2022)</u>	
12	Have you faced challenges in preparing an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) using the VPAT® for any of your products or services? If yes, please list the challenges. Examples could be lack of	

¹ [VPAT - Information Technology Industry Council \(itic.org\)](https://www.itic.org/VPAT-Information-Technology-Industry-Council)



	Question to supplier	Supplier's response
	awareness, lack of training, time consuming, resource intensive, not following any standards, etc.	
13	Do you apply exemptions or exceptions to any of the standards you follow? If yes, which specific elements do the exemptions or exceptions apply to?	
14	Are your businesses, products and services well positioned to conform to the European Standard? Please explain why or why not.	
15	How long do you think it would take your business to be able to supply products and services that will meet the European Standard? Please indicate as 1-2 years; 2-5 years; 5-7 years; 7-10 years; more than 10 years	
16	Do you have any other comments or feedback on accessible ICT that you would like to share?	

[An accessible version of Annex B – RFI Questions is available](#)



ANNEX B – RFI Questions – Accessible Format

Question to supplier

1. Please indicate which ICT goods or services your business produces/supplies (select all that apply):
 - a. Web content development and maintenance, including websites, web applications, non-web documents
 - b. Mobile applications
 - c. Software:
 - non-web software
 - platform software
 - authoring tools
 - software that operates as assistive technology
 - other software – please specify:
 - d. Hardware:
 - smartphones
 - computer equipment like keyboards, mouse etc.
 - office equipment like printers, scanners, copiers
 - special peripherals like keyguards, trackballs, large monitors, or head-pointing systems, input and/or output connection points that are compatible with Assistive technology
 - other hardware – please specify:
 - e. Assistive technology:
 - recording equipment or portable note-taking devices
 - multimedia players for e-books and audiobooks
 - special keyboards or input devices
 - speech recognition software, high tech or low tech Aided Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) etc.
 - other assistive technology – please specify:
 - f. Fixed ICT, such as electronic payment terminals (EPTs), and accessible self-service interactive devices like information kiosks and ATMs
 - g. Biometrics
 - h. Relay services
 - i. Other, please specify
2. Would you consider your business to be a small or medium enterprise (SME)? Please specify.
3. Is your company's principle place of business in Canada?
4. Does your business consider accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities?
5. Have you engaged users with lived experience in the accessibility assessment of your product or service? If so, how? If not, do you plan to engage those with lived experience?



6. Do the ICT products or services supplied by you meet or comply with any ICT accessibility standards? For example, European Standard EN 301 549, Revised US Section 508, WCAG, Integrated Regulation under AODA, Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
7. What are the considerations for your choice of a particular ICT accessibility standard for your products and services? Example, adaptability, availability, cost benefit etc.
8. Do you exceed any of the basic guidelines recommended by any standard? If yes, which specific elements?
9. If your products and/or services are not conforming with any standards, is there an intention or plan to be partially or fully compliant with any international standards in the future? If the response is no, please indicate why not.
10. Does your business have experience using accessible ICT tool kits, such as the EN 301 549 ICT accessibility tool kit or the BDI IT Tendering tool kit), or any other ICT accessibility tools? Please specify and provide examples.
11. Have you ever prepared an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) using the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®)² for any of your products or services? If yes, which of the following VPAT®s have you prepared?
[VPAT 2.4Rev INT \(March 2022\)](#)
[VPAT 2.4 Rev EU \(March 2022\)](#)
[VPAT 2.4Rev WCAG \(March 2022\)](#)
[VPAT 2.4Rev 508 \(March 2022\)](#)
12. Have you faced challenges in preparing an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) using the VPAT® for any of your products or services? If yes, please list the challenges. Examples could be lack of awareness, lack of training, time consuming, resource intensive, not following any standards, etc.
13. Do you apply exemptions or exceptions to any of the standards you follow? If yes, which specific elements do the exemptions or exceptions apply to?
14. Are your businesses, products and services well positioned to conform to the European Standard? Please explain why or why not.
15. How long do you think it would take your business to be able to supply products and services that will meet the European Standard? Please indicate as 1-2 years; 2-5 years; 5-7 years; 7-10 years; more than 10 years

² [VPAT - Information Technology Industry Council \(itac.org\)](http://itac.org)



16. Do you have any other comments or feedback on accessible ICT that you would like to share?