Accessible Procurement: Building capacity for acquiring e-resources for all

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# Library e-resources need to be accessible!

# Agenda

1. Context for PLSB
2. How to incorporate accessibility principles into procurement
3. Accessibility requirements: Deep dive
4. Lessons learned
5. What if my library does not do procurement?

# Introduction: The experience in Alberta

## Public Library Services Branch

* Accessibility as policy priority
  + Library Resource for People with Print Disabilities operational policy
  + Best Practices for Public Libraries in Alberta
  + Staffing dedicated to accessibility
* Support for accessible platforms
  + NNELS
  + CELA

## GoA procurement

* Subject to various government policies, legislation, and intergovernmental trade agreements
  + NWPTA, CFTA, CETA, WTO GPA, FOIP, Financial Administration Act, Procurement and Sole-sourcing Directive, Canadian competitive bid law
* Procurement principles
  + Integrity
  + Fairness
  + Transparency and openness

## Request for Proposal (RFP)

* Open tender
* Mandatory vs. Desirable requirements
* Canadian competitive bid law
  + Duty to disclose
  + Duty to conduct a fair procurement process
  + Duty to reject non-compliant responses
  + Duty to award to winning vendor
  + Duty to award contract as tendered

# How to incorporate accessibility principles into procurement

## Accessibility statement

* Include a statement in your RFP that describes your organization’s commitment to accessibility.
  + Example: “Accessibility is a priority for PLSB. As such, PLSB strives to acquire a Solution that has sufficient accessibility features to enable Patrons with Disabilities to access the available content. Please see X and Appendix X for further information.”
* Ask for the vendor to include their organization’s accessibility statement.

## Accessibility requirements

* Describe specific and measurable accessibility requirements
* Electronic resources: can be based on WCAG
* Have vendors assess the accessibility of these requirements

## Accessibility testing

* Need to verify the vendor’s response with accessibility testing
* Engage people with lived experience and who are well-versed with specific assistive technology to perform accessibility testing
* Make sure you ask for access to the resource for testing purposes. Specify how long you will need access for testing

## Request an automated accessibility test

* Ask vendor to prescreen their product
* Have vendor run an automated accessibility checker on their product and provide the results
  + Automated testing will not catch everything, but it will catch some things
  + Gives the vendor an opportunity to address some accessibility concerns before responding
* Full transparency: we have not included this step yet

## Debrief and feedback session

* Record the testing results (both the score and the justification for the score)
* If vendor is interested, a feedback session is an excellent opportunity to describe the results of the testing
* If possible, include the testers in the feedback session

## Build accessibility into the contract

* Use the vendor’s responses to the accessibility requirements as part of the contract
* Examples:
  + If the vendor says that building an accessible feature is on their roadmap, build that into the contract
  + If the vendor says that all images have alt-text, include that as part of the contract

## What if something breaks? It happens!

* Sometimes updates can break the accessibility of an electronic resource
* Sometimes a vendor will add something new and will forget to incorporate accessibility
* Develop a process for feedback about inaccessible features of the product (who can we contact and what actions can be taken?)

# Accessibility requirements: Deep dive

## Requirements overview

* List individual, specific requirements
* Requirements should be measurable
* Allow the vendor the opportunity to respond to the accessibility of the requirements
  + This gives the vendor an opportunity to reflect on the accessibility of their product
* Finally, test and validate the vendor’s response
* Visit accessible procurement resources for full list

## Requirement: Access to all controls

* Enable Users to operate the Solution with a keyboard, headtracking, voice control, or switch device (e.g., have access to all controls and be able to move to them in a logical manner).

## Access to all controls demonstration

## Requirement: Interact with all elements

* Enable Users to identify and interact with all elements in the Solution (e.g., input field, buttons, checkboxes, links etc.). All these elements should have text labels.

## Requirement: Adjustable features

* Visual appearance such as font size, spacing, font type, etc., should be adjustable as features of the Solution.

## Adjustable features demonstration

## Requirement: Navigation

* The Solution should enable all Users to determine where they are on the interface in the Solution. Structure (headings, landmarks, and changing of the <title> on page load) is important to help users distinguish where they are on the interface. This should also include highlighted elements to show the focus visually.

## Navigation demonstration

## Requirement: Alt-Text

* Enable Users to access information that images convey. (Images should have alt-text, for example)

## Alt-Text demonstration

## Requirement: No separate version

* Enable all Users to have access to the same Solution, not a different and "accessible" version.

## Requirement: Accessibility of pre-loaded content

* The Solution will have considered accessibility for the pre-loaded content available in the platform. Please describe what accessibility features the content has prioritized.

# Lessons learned

## Evolution of evaluation process

* Initially we asked proponents for:
  + WCAG compliance, optional submission of VPAT and/or accessibility statement, accessibility road map
* Over time we modified the process to include:
  + Specific and measurable accessibility requirements
  + Accessibility testers – validation of accessibility claims

## What we will do differently next time

* Review and modify the requirements (iterative process)
* Reframe: What will render a resource irredeemably unusable for a print-disabled user?
* Kickoff meeting before testing to discuss requirements and how they will be tested
* Make sure the RFP posting and associated documents are accessible (walk the talk)
* Ask the vendor to prescreen with automated accessibility test

## Other considerations

* More integration with other functional requirements?
* General UX vs. WCAG requirements
  + WCAG is a starting point
  + How do we measure user experience?

## Key takeaways

* Ask users with lived experience
  + Include people with lived experience from the beginning and right through until the end of the RFP process
  + Pay them
* Establish accessibility as a priority when evaluating current or new resources

## What if my library does not do procurement?

Why should I learn about accessible procurement?

## Because ALL libraries do procurement

* Even if you are part of a library system or a consortium that procures electronic resources on your behalf, you are still purchasing e-content.
* Get involved: ask questions about how they evaluate the accessibility of resources.
* Offer assistance if they have not thought about it.
* We are all learning together!

## Because it makes you a better librarian

* Understanding accessible requirements will help you to understand accessibility
* You can recommend accessible e-resources and know what accessibility features they have
* You will be better equipped to understand accessibility-related concerns
* Visit the NNELS reading app reports to learn about the accessibility of library resources

## Because you will be able to provide better patron experience

* Being able to talk about the accessibility (or lack thereof) of your e-content provides the patron with a better library experience
* For example, one platform might have excellent adjustable features, so you might recommend that to someone who prefers to modify the font size or colour.

## Because it demonstrates a commitment to accessibility

* Thinking about the accessibility of your e-resources, whether you are purchasing them directly or not, demonstrates a library’s commitment to accessibility
* Visit the accessible procurement resources page on the PLARC website for resources about accessible procurement and accessible e-content

# Library e-resources need to be accessible!

# Questions?

# Thank you!

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