# Accessible Procurement Webinar Transcript

[Riane Lapaire] Hi everyone, my name is Riane Lapaire, I am the Braille and Accessibility Testing coordinator at the National Network for Equitable Library Service and I'm also on the Public Library Accessibility Resource Center project, project team. And welcome to our webinar on Accessible Procurement. I'm very pleased to introduce our guest speakers today. From the Public Library Services branch in Alberta we have Kerry Anderson and Kim Johnson. And then we have the lovely Laetitia Mfamobani from NNELS as well.

And um with that, our presenters today come from across this land, living and working in what we now know as Canada. We respect and affirm the inherit and treaty rights of all Indigenous peoples and will continue to honour the commitments to self-determination and sovereignty we have made to Indigenous Nations and peoples. We respectfully ask for you to all take a moment to acknowledge the lands on which you reside. And I'd like to note that Kim, Kerry, and I are all living, working, and playing on Treaty 6 Territory. The homeland of the Métis nation, and we are spread out kind of across that territory.

And just a couple housekeeping items for today: so to help minimize distractions we ask you to please keep your microphone muted for the duration of the webinar unless it is your turn to speak. If you are speaking please keep background noise to a minimum. Please use the chat for questions and other important messages rather than a water cooler. Excessive chat notifications can become can become quite disruptive for many participants, especially those using screen readers. The webinar will be using the built-in Zoom captions and please note that this webinar will be recorded and posted to the AccessibleLibraries.com. We will have a question and answer period at the end of the webinar, but we will stop the recording, before the questions. So if you can put your questions in the chat. If they're kind of urgent and timely we'll answer them during the webinar, but if you can save your questions to the end. We'll also open up the mike at that time for anyone to ask questions as well. With that, I would like to turn it over to Kim to get things started... or Kerry.

[Kim Johnson] Kerry

[Riane] Kerry

[Kerry Anderson] Well, it's going to be very brief because I'm actually just going to turn it over to Laetitia to um introduce our session with basically the foundational principle of the presentation. So Leticia, next slide, please.

[Laetitia] Thank you, Kerry. So why, so the title here is Library... sorry sorry too many notifications give me a second. Okay, perfect. Thank you. So library e-resources need to be accessible. Why? When libraries make efforts to have all the e-resources, I mean um electronic content, website application applications, and e- readers, etc. What it does is this it allows, it makes a vast majority of patron or users to access the information or services regardless of their abilities. It also helps to minimize the need for individualized accommodations. This is what I mean here, like for instance, as a screen reader user if I want to read a book, the first thing I do is to go to my public library online resources and search for the book. The book, if the title is available, I can either...here we go so all of our slides are... Can you hear me now?

[Riane] Yes.

[Kim] Yes.

[Laetitia] Okay, I had like a popup that just came asking me to check it. I don't know why, um. What is the last thing that you

[Riane] You're on your second item.

[Laetitia] Oh second item, minimizing um individualized accommodations. Okay, so um I guess I explained it already. The third reason why having your e-resources accessible is that it promotes inclusivity and equity. I'll give an example, for instance in the education world when a student with print, when students with printed disabilities are able to access all the resources what it does is it gives them that opportunity to to be able to fully participate to things like research project, etc. There's nothing like, you know, meeting your team for a project and being able to discuss, to contribute, to say this is the research that I did, and this is what/how I think we should write this research paper. And on the other side, when you can't access the articles that you need, the journals that you need and you come to the to the meeting. You feel, it really feels bad because you just sit there. You don't have anything to present and it doesn't make you really shine the way you want to to as a student should be. So really, it's very important to have all your resources available; again electronic document, website applications, e-readers, etc. Back to you Kim.

[Kim] Thank you. Next slide, please. So here's our agenda for our presentation. We're going to talk about the context for PLSB, that's Public Library Services Branch in Alberta. How we came to be doing this work and sort of our environment. We are going to talk about how we can incorporate accessibility principles into our procurement processes and then we're going to do a bit of a deep dive on accessibility requirements. So we'll cover a few, a sampling if you will, of the accessibility requirements that we have used in the past and we'll talk about what they are, what they mean, and even have some demos for you. We will talk about the lessons learned from our perspective. And then finally we'll wrap up talking about what if my library doesn't do procurement? How does this relate to me? Well I'll tell you and five items. Okay so I'm going to turn it over to Kerry to talk about the context for PLSB.

[Kerry] Thanks, Kim. So this probably be the most boring part of the session, but I'll do my best to keep it lively. So for PLSB, here in Alberta, accessibility has actually. Oh, sorry, next slide please. Always forget about that. Accessibility has been a policy priority for us here in Alberta since 2014, and so as part of that work, we actually developed a policy, library resources for people with print disabilities, operational policy and then we also have a a corresponding best practices document that we have incorporated some accessibility principles into as well. Both of those are available on our website. And actually I've just popped a link in the chat there that'll take you to our dedicated page on our work dedicated to services for persons with print disabilities. In addition to having some policy documents, it's lovely to have policies, but you need to kind of enact some of, actually do stuff.

We do have our own accessibility team here in PLSB. There's actually four positions devoted to, currently three people. So Kim actually leads that team, she's our Network Advisor, specializing in accessibility. We also have Kels Banks, who's an Accessible Document Quality Assessor, I think they're on the call, and Camille Campbell is also on the team, she's called the Accessible Digital Information Advisor. And so, we of the four positions, two of the individuals actually have a lived experience being print disabled, so and it's been really helpful for us as a branch to have those folks to work alongside and to sort of have the day-to-day experience of of working and and being alongside someone with a print disability. It's been very enlightening for sure for us. So we also, so we have the policy, we have some staff, part of the work that we do also is to support the major accessible platforms, specifically NNELS and CELA, so we have provided funding for the residents in Alberta to have, with print disabilities, to have access to those resources.

In addition to the these accessible platforms, PLSB also provides province-wide access to a suite of e-resources that that suite currently includes resources like PressReader, Pronunciator, which is a language learning platform, OverDrive, e-audiobooks, Niche Academy, and then we also have what's called our Read Alberta ebook and e-magazine collection, which also includes the Prairie Indigenous ebook collection, and those collections are currently housed on an online platform called Cantook station. And in addition to that, we also provide access to some other online tools, Relais D2D for inter-library loan brokering and a library statistics collection tool called LibPAS.

And I mention all of these is partly because all of these resources have been acquired through our GoA procurement process, which I'll talk to you about right now. So next slide, please. PLSB is a branch within the government of Alberta, also known as GoA. We just shorten that to GoA and therefore we're subject to GoA rules when it comes to procurement or basically acquiring for us, our e resources. So the rules are comprised of all of those acronyms you see on the screen. It's a large suite of legislation regulation, government policy, intergovernmental agreements, and all of these require compliance for us and, in some instances, non-compliance may result in financial or other penalties. So it's a little bit high-stakes. The the acronym, I mean the alphabet soup, is probably not super relevant, but the two primary trade agreements that we pay attention to are the first two: the New West Partnership Trade Agreement or NWPTA and the Canadian Free Trade Agreement CFTA, in addition to that we have of course our provincial legislation and policy. We have something called the Financial Administration Act, there's a Procurement Directive related to sole-sourcing resources. And then there's also Canadian competitive bid law, which is essentially common law around, around competition and procurement, so kind of have this melee that we're operating in, with all of these rules and regulations. And so we have to abide by certain principles and the proc, procurement principles arise out of the GoA procurement accountability framework there's a framework within, which we operate. So you know, there's... every year the GoA acquires like literally billions of dollars of goods and services and so to you basically reinforce ethical behaviour in the acquiring of those resources and make sure that the process has integrity, and ensure value for money, and to meet the requirements of all of the rules. All of our procurements have to be driven by those principles that you see there on the screen - Integrity, fairness, and transparency and openness - and what that does is it also creates consistence consistency and discipline across government. Next slide, please. So all that to say is that the GoA procuring environment requires that all of our resource acquisitions be done through open tender. In other words, by issuing an RFP, or a request for proposal, and the RFP itself will include a suite of requirements, some of which are mandatory, some of which are desirable, and vendors then submit proposals to meet those requirements. And then we score those against a predetermined rubric, that we have as part of the RFP as well. And then once that is all completed, both of those pieces, the vendor proposal as well as the requirements that are embedded in the RFP, form part of the final contract that we have with the successful vendor. So I mentioned Canadian competitive bid law on the last slide that, i.e., those legal obligations found in common law, and what that does is it requires GoA, and pretty much anybody else that's in that space, in the competitive bid law space, to comply with five major duties. So we have the duty to disclose, and that includes disclosing our evaluation criteria, which is part of the RFP and it has to be clear and measurable. The duty to reject non-compliant responses, so if... oh I'm not doing in the right order, but that's the third bullet, duty to reject non-compliant responses. If a vendor's response fails to meet a mandatory requirement the GoA is required to reject it, so we can't kind of say "Ah it's close enough, we'll take it." If it doesn't meet the requirement it's out. The duty to conduct a fair procurement process, that's the second one, be kind of pretty clear. Make sure that all stages of the procurement are conducted in a fair and transparent manner, transparency is pretty important and to make sure that we're ensuring the integrity of the process by avoiding conflict of interest, unfair by advantage, or any kind of bias. There's also the duty to award to the winning vendor, which kind of sounds funny, but basically we have to follow through. We do the process, we have the pre-established criteria, and a weighting system, and we score everything, and and once we have a winner then we have a duty to proceed; to award the contract to that winner. We can't just kind of go through this process and say "Oh we didn't want that guy, he got the highest score, but we don't want him so forget it." No, we have to proceed and that's part of being fair. And then finally there's also the duty to award the contract is tendered. So what the, what the contract is should be consistent with what we say we're going to do in the RFP, so kind of, have to say what we're going to do and then do it. So all of this kind of dry boring stuff about government procurement process does have a point and that point is to demonstrate that for us, for PLSB, we operate within a pretty restrictive environment, you know, we have a lot of rules and and processes to follow. However, we still have been able to find a way to incorporate accessibility principles into, and requirements, into our process, so that we have been, I think, being able to move the needle with some vendors, to ensure that some of our resource have some accessibility. It's not perfect, but have some accessibility features, whereby people who need them can actually access those e-resources and not sort of be left on the sidelines as Laetitia described in her in her description. I believe that's all I'll say for now. I'm going to turn it over to Kim now to talk about the next section. [

Kim] Thank you. Yeah, so I'm going to give kind of a broad overview about how to incorporate and how we've Incorporated accessibility principles into procurement and then we'll actually start talking about those requirements. Next slide, please. So one of the first things we do, you can do, include an accessibility statement seems simple but it's kind of important and it describes your organization's commitment to accessibility. So I have an example, here this is from our most recent RFP and actually I have some of your faces covering it so I need to minimize, minimize. Okay, thank you. So this is, yeah this comes from our most recent RFP and it is quote "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." I mean it's very dry in government language but it's to the point. So it demonstrates our commitment to accessibility it a vendor. We are committed to this and we hope that you are committed to this and then we actually point them in the direction in the RFP, where they can find the other the accessibility requirements and discussions, so that they can go to those places and then we ask for the vendor to include their organization's accessibility statement. So next slide, please. And then the requirements, so Kerry sort of mentioned these requirements. When we go to RFP we're looking to buy something and we need it to do certain things, so we need it to do certain things, and that is that's where that list of requirements comes from, and we've included specific accessibility requirements as part of the larger suite of requirements and they are in their own section. We have a fairly lengthy list of requirements that we have included, but yes describe, we describe specific and measurable, this is important, measurable accessibility requirements. For the electronic resources, we have based our requirements on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and corresponding principles. We've also developed them in collaboration with NNELS, and they have actually been modified every time we have gone to RFP for a new, a new e-resource. And then we have the vendors actually assess the accessibility of the requirements. So when they, when they're responding to the RFP, when they're putting in their proposal, they say "Yes, my product does this. No, it doesn't do this. Yes it can do this at an additional cost." And doing this actually gives the vendor an opportunity to review their own the accessibility of the resource and maybe even fix things, if they can, before the proposal goes in. Next slide, please. And then we do the accessibility testing. So the the vendor has put in their proposal; they've said my thing does this; my thing doesn't do this; and then we verify the vendor's response with accessibility testing. It's important for us to engage people with lived experience who are well versed with specific assistive technology to perform that accessibility testing. So it's basic: it is again verifying whether or not the thing actually does what it says it's going to do, if it is accessible or not. And if you are thinking about incorporating accessibility testing into your procurement process one little tip is make sure you ask for access to the resource for testing purposes, so make this really clear in your RFP or in whatever communication you're putting out there. The vendor needs to know that they, that you will require access and how many sort of testing accounts or demo accounts you will need, how many people are going to be testing their platform, and how long you'll need access for the testing. And yeah just make sure that you have that right up front. Next slide, please. Okay so another thing that we can do is ask the vendor to pre-screen their product, so have a vendor run an automated accessibility checker on their product and provide the results in their proposal. So automated testing, we know this doesn't catch everything, it is a complement to manual testing, but it can catch some things and it can catch some things right up, right at the beginning, and it gives the vendor an opportunity to address some of the accessible accessibility concerns before actually putting in their proposal. And I need to mention, full transparency, we have not done this. This actually came out of our our most recent RFP. It was during the debrief session with the with the procurement team and the NNELS testers, this sort of came up as a discussion point and we think it's a really good idea. Although we don't have, we don't know how well or not well it works yet. So I know that there are some automated testing tools out there. I think Deque has some. I know that WebAIM, they have their tools and they have some paid tools and some free tools.¬†So we don't know exactly how we would get the vendor to do this, what this looks like, what this will look like in practice, but we think it's a really... I, we're going to consider it in our next, in our next RFP. Next slide, please. And also I would like to mention if anybody out there has ever done that previous step, requesting an automated test, we would love to hear from you. Okay and I'm gonna pass it over to Kerry for debriefing.

[Kerry] So a couple of the other things that the principles, that we incorporate. There is a, it's good to debrief and get feedback. Of course, what you should do is record your testing results, both the score and the justification for the score. For us that's actually a requirement we, we have to do; that we have to make it clear why we've given a particular score and and what, you know, what was good or what was bad about the various elements. And so those final scores of course determine who the successful vendor is and so you will have some unsuccessful vendors or people that you're not entering into a contract with. If the vendor is interested, it's good to have a feedback session. It's a really opport, excellent opportunity to to tell them the results of the testing, particularly because for a lot of vendors, at least that we've found this, is very new and some of the things they haven't thought of before or they're, you know, they're trying their best and so if we have kind of some feedback back, some information that came out of the testing that we can share with the vendor. I think that's a a good thing and can only benefit the vendor as well as the, hopefully, eventually, the print disabled community. If possible, it's good to include the testers in that feedback session. We we haven't quite done that yet mostly not all, not all vendors are interested in doing a feedback session. We haven't done too many, but the ones that have, I will say that they they were pleased and and glad to have the feedback, so they are interested in that. So definitely providing that feedback is is valuable to them. Next slide please. Next, what you want to do is once the contract is awarded you want to build accessibility into the contract and you use the the vendor's responses in part to to incorporate that. So kind of kind of, they've submitted their proposal, they say this is what we, what we want to do or what we can do and you say "great" we'll put in the contract, so that you do it. So there's a couple examples here where if the vendor says that that building an accessible feature is on their road map you want to build that into the contract, so that they actually do it. A road map is not a guarantee that something will happen but if you're embedding it into the contract then there is an obligation on the part of the vendor to meet that obligation or to to do what, what that obligation requires them to do. If the vendor says that all images have alt text, you want to include that as part of the contract. These are just examples but there are certain things that you may want to actually specifically articulate as part of the contract. To say this is what we are expecting from this e-resource or this product that we are acquiring from the vendor and then because the contract is binding there is something for you to go to if, if the vendor isn't meeting those it's expectations. Next slide, please. And related to that, like if something breaks, so sometimes if they're doing an update or if they've done some development, implementing something could break the accessibility of of a part or a portion of the resource, or the vendor may add something, something that was on their road map for instance and they might forget to incorporate accessibility into that new that new feature. So what you want to do is also incorporate a process for feedback about inaccessible features of the product, and that possibly could also be in the contract. Sort of like maybe there will be a schedule for touch, you know, having touch-base meetings or some kind of review. Or at the very least having some kind of contact, to kind of say this is who we will talk to about inaccessible pieces and what actions can or should be taken. So those are the kinds of things you want to be sure to incorporate as part of any agreement that you're entering into. I will just say before we move on, for us in GoA, we do, we draft our own contracts. That's not always the case, there are vendors that have their own contracts that they may wish to, I'll just say impose, and so what you'll want to do is review those contracts and if there's anything that that you think would be helpful to include, like some of the things that I just discussed about incorporating those accessibility pieces. You know, saying this road map thing, we want to have that in the contract, then you should try and negotiate to have those things added because again if it's not in the contract then it's probably not going to happen. You know, you're reliant on, you know, how somebody feels on a Monday morning as to whether or not something gets fixed. So definitely something to be cognizant of when you're looking to sign any of those, any agreements from a vendor. Okay and I believe we are now into the deep dive of the accessibility requirements. I'm going to turn that over to Laetitia first.

[Laetitia] Thank you Kerry.

[Kim] I'm just gonna start Laetitia, I'm just going to start with the first slide in the accessibility requirements and then I will hand it over you, to you, to talk about the actual requirements. So next slide please. So just an overview of requirements as we're talking about them. I know we mentioned them, Kerry mentioned them, I mentioned them, again these are the list of things you want the product to do. So for accessibility requirements list individual specific requirements and these should be measurable and we'll talk about testing in a moment. And then again allow the vendor the opportunity to respond to the accessibility of the requirements and this does again give the vendor an opportunity to reflect on the accessibility of their product and sometimes fix things that are maybe easy fixes, so they can include that in their proposal. And then finally the measurable piece, test and validate the vendor's response. So we are going to talk about some of the accessibility requirements that we've included in our RFPs and this is just a sampling of them. We, I think in our most recent RFP there was about 14 accessibility requirements which was part of the larger requirements, which was, I don't know, maybe like 30 or 40 or something, so there's a lot of requirements. And then we have our accessibility requirements separated out, so that the vendors address those specifically and then from those we're just going to provide you with a few samples of what these look like. And for a more full some list, please visit the accessible procurement resources web page. Thank you, Riane. I see that you posted that in the chat on the PLARC website. It's very comprehensive. And so this is just a little sampling. So now I'm going to turn it over to Laetitia to talk about those specific requirements.

[Laetitia] Thank you, Kim. As Kim just mentioned we do have a long, like a long list of requirements and today we are focusing only on a few. I call them the basic the ones that have to be implemented otherwise something goes wrong in the user experience. So we, the first one on our list is access to all controls. So it's important to enable users to operate the solution with keyboard head tracking, voice control, or switch switch device. So have, it's like have access to all controls and you know and be able to move them in a logical manner, as you can see on the screen, interact with all elements. So it's important to enable users to identify, so yeah, user to identify and interact with all element on in the solution such as input field buttons, check boxes, and links. And I think the demonstration, we just watch Illustrated clearly as you just saw on the screen. I the first time that I started to to complete the form, I could not access the drop down menus even though they were there. Even when I finally did, I could not select anything. You also saw that I struggled to just write, to complete the form, so it's really important that your website or forms whatsoever your resources are fully accessible to keyboard users. Now let's go to this the next requirement which is adjustable features. Visual appearance such as, such as font size, spacing font, font type, etc. should be typical as features of on of the solutions. Now without explaining too much we have recorded a small a short demo to further explain this require requirement. Let's play it now.

[Michael Krupp] Hi there. So today we'll be looking at iBooks with Apple Zoom. As you can see here, we have it at the two-page view currently. Let's just zoom that in a little bit for someone with my kind of vision, and you can see that we've made it a little bigger and if that's not good enough you can always pin point in and zoom it in even more and be able to flip through the pages with the arrow keys. On top of that we also have the ability to change our Zoom levels manually and we can also pair this with the hovering text to make things even larger for ourselves, just like so. And with a click of a button we can manually minimize or maximize the font size. We can change the background colour of the pages. I'm going to keep it black. And then we can also change the font styling. We can think that's safe enough to click on and you can see the change right there.

[Riane] Back to you Laetitia.

[Laetitia] Oh thank you. Sorry I it was continuing. Okay, so the next, the next requirement is navigation and this is a big one. So it's, the solution should be, should enable all users to determine where they are in the, where they are on the interface. So I mean the interface of the solution, structure such as headings, landmarks, and changing changing of the title on the page loaded is important to help users distinguish where they are on the interface. It should also include highlighted elements to show the focus visually. Now I want to pause here, why navigation elements are so important. This, the way screen reader read, it's different from the way a sighted person will read a web page, where we both can open the same page you may have some icon on the left, on the right you may have some good headings, colour based, etc. When I open the same page it's almost, I can't explain it properly maybe because I'm not a developer, but there's something that happened. It's almost like the screen reader reorganized the page and read it vertically top to bottom. So you may tell me, "Oh there is this link on the left corner." I will not be able to understand what you mean "left corner." I need to know that the link is properly set up as a link. The headings have to be accessible headings, in order for me to be able to identify them and use them as a way to kind of scan the page and create a mental map of the page. So if all of these things are not there, what it means, especially when you have those long you know long pages, I will have to read the entire page until I find what I am looking for and that's not nice at all. So now let's watch the next recording to show you, that talks about navigation features.

[Simon Jaeger] On a web page, there are a lot of different controls that web designers can choose to use or not use. And some of these controls add visual information to the page and some of them just give it markup to allow screen reader users to navigate it and some do both. For instance headings are something that benefits everybody because it gives the page structure, but the other thing they're useful for is letting screen reader users navigate through the page quickly. So using Voice over, I can toggle heading navigation

[Screen reader] headings

[Simon] and then move through the available headings on the page.

[Screen reader] Course materials for educators, heading level one

[Simon] So that's a level one heading. That's a top level, highest level, there is heading that usually headlines the page. If I keep going down by heading...

[Screen reader] Find materials by subject, heading level two, course packs, heading level two main lan...

[Simon] Now if we stop here and then use the swipe right gesture as I was in the previous demo. It will actually start navigating from this point onward. [Screen reader] Supporting teaching materials, heading level three, bullet, use and adapt lesson plans, bullet, engage students with discussion topics. [Simon] Let's go find the Accessibility heading. [Screen reader] Quality, design, rel, search, academic, customize, accessibility heading level two. [Simon] so now we can navigate forward from here. [Screen reader] Access for all, bullet, materials are open to the public and free forever, bullet, easily see which materials meet BC campus accessibility criteria. [Simon] Okay another thing you can navigate by is links, this is why it's generally considered bad practice to have link text like "click here" without explaining what the surrounding text is because some users will be navigating by links and they won't know what they're clicking here to do. So let's go back to the top of the page and find the course materials by subject heading. [Screen reader] Find materials by subject, heading level two. [Simon] Now if we go to links, [Screen reader] links [Simon] we're going to be navigating down by subjects. [Screen reader] Academic/Career, 11 results, Art and Design, 3 results, Biological/Physical sciences, 24 results [Simon] And I could double tap on any of those links to open the results page for that subject. This is just a quick overview of some of the navigation items that are available there are a lot more of them like landmarks and form controls which are also used well here.

[Laetitia] Thank you, Megan. The next requirement is alt text. This is so important because it's like it's really important to enable users to access information that images convey, because if you add images to your, let's say your website, and these images have some meaning, meanings you have to describe them for screen reader users. If you do not describe them, they will not access the full message that you are trying to convey. Also, if your resources are not well are not fully like the PDF and Word document, etc. have being presented as an image then I will not be able to read them because screen reader cannot read anything on the image that not alt text. Now let's see a very short demonstration of how lack of all text can be frustrating.

[Simon] Even though the website that hosts this massive newspaper archive is pretty accessible and it's easy to find a newspaper, an issue, and then an article within that issue there's a problem. Let me touch the page and see what happens.

[Screen reader] Page 48, image and Main, actions available

[Simon] Page 48, image unfortunately that's the only access I get to this article. [Laetitia] So as you can see there's an article there pretty for sure anyone who can see for we just click and open and read, but for a screen reader user we can't access it like as my colleague just said the the platform is fully accessible but then we we are not able to, you know, to read the content, just because it was presented as an image. Okay so let's go to the next requirement, which is no separate version and this is so important. I see this all the time so it's important to enable all users to have access to the same solution. Not a different and quote unquote accessible version. Why? There are so many reasons why this is not a good practice. As a person who is blind, I have seen so many of these websites, I have tried so many of them and I'm not fully satisfied with them. Yes like I said he has so many reasons the first one is having a separate website, sometimes having those two website you can see some inconsistency in terms of information, update and and new features. There are times where you can tell that they have, you know, the website has updated some features or some information, but it doesn't necessarily synchronize to the other webs the so-called accessible website. So if you rely only on the accessible website, you will miss out, you will not access some information or some update. Also, some of these so-called accessible website sometimes are so plain they don't have images, they don't have many other features that the main website has, and as we just saw in the previous slide alt text is important when you add images you're trying to convey something and if you convey a different message on your main website and then on the accessible website, you don't have those images with website. In some ways, I as a user, I feel excluded. So instead of promoting inclusion, what this separate website do, they indirectly promote exclusion because in some ways I feel excluded from the new updates, the new features the new, that images, the message that some images are conveying, etc. The other thing that it does, and I feel very strongly about this one, it's not purposely done, it's not intentional, it's kind of intentionally like promote stigmatization. This is what I mean, by having two different websites the accessible one we are indirectly kind of single out a group of a small group of people with disability. So instead that we, instead of you know website builders, instead of including everywhere they they exclude them intentionally. I mean it's not done purpose, but they exclude them, they send them to a different website and then quote unquote normal or sighted people can use this one and the other ones use the other one. And the last thing I will say here is it gives the impression that accessibility is not a priority, it's kind of an afterthought thing because "Okay, I built my website. I've made it so pretty. I don't want to change my; I do not want to change my colour-based headings, I do not want to add too much alt text and all this thing. Let's just build a more like and, you know, a website for those who can't access these features." So like I said it's not done on purpose, but that's kind of the impression that you can give to those who use um quote in quote accessible website. Let's go to the next one. And here I will not really elaborate much because Kim will talk about it, I just want to explain why it's important that accessibility for of preloaded content. Like my colleague said in the other, in the last demonstration your website can be fully accessible, I mean I can be able to log in, I mean create an account, login, navigate find whatever I'm looking for, but if the resources on your website on solution is you know are not accessible then the whole experience becomes inaccessible. What I mean is this if I go and Download a PDF and the PDF is not accessible, then because I could not access the content then my experience is not a good one. If I want to learn a language and there is some courses online, video that I want to watch, there is no transcript. Or because, you know, there might be a PowerPoint on the screen, I may be able to hear what the teacher is saying on the other side, but the teacher may not be reading the entire PowerPoint. Or sometimes you have those that would say "See here and see here and see here" and I don't know what they are pointing to on the screen. Because there is no transcript, I will not be able to learn the language the way I want to learn it. Somebody who, if there is no captions, the one who is hard of hearing may not be able to learn. So it's important that the preloaded resources that we upload is, and that we have, are also accessible. So I pass it on to Kim.

[Kim] Thank you, Laetitia. That was wonderful, that was really great. Yes, just a little bit more about this specific requirement, the accessibility of the pre-loaded content. So sometimes we purchase a platform, and then we put content into it and sometimes we purchase a platform or an e-resource and the vendor has put other content into it. So they've gone to other groups or they've gotten other resources and pre-loaded it into their platform. So what we ask for this requirement is for the vendor to specify their process for uploading that content, for selecting that content. Do they check for accessibility? How do they check for accessibility? What are their priorities when they're acquiring the content for their platform? So that's sort of what that requirement is about. I am going to I think I'm gonna pass it over to Kerry. I think it's Kerry's turn now. Next slide please.

[Kerry] Yes, yes it is, it is my turn. So now I'm going to talk about a few of the lessons we've learned as we've gone through our our process here in Alberta. Next slide, please. So we've been involved in this space since about 2018 and have done six solicitations or RFP processes so far, just to give you a sense of how long we've been doing this. So initially we had asked, we started by asking proponents to include a few accessibility components in their proposals. So we would ask them to include a statement about their level of WCAG compliance. We had asked for a submission of a VPAT, which is a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template, if they had one. It's a VPAT is essentially a self evaluation of a vendor's accessibility and actually are fairly common down in the states, a lot of American vendors have them. So we asked them to submit those. And if they had one to also submit, include their accessibility statement. And then if they their product wasn't currently accessible or only partially accessible a road map if they had one, as well. So we that's how we started. We kind of said, give us what you got, so you know tell us what you have, and turns out they didn't have much. So we rarely received very much. We got the odd VPAT and never had a a road map or anything like that. The occasional statement, which was a bit of a nothing burger for some of them, but that turned out to be a good starting point for us because then we kind of knew that they didn't have anything so we needed to to kind of produce something on our side. It got us thinking about how to incorporate accessibility in a way that was meaningful, but also made the vendor accountable for their product. So, you know, like a VPAT, it's a it's voluntary, right. So with what we've incorporated, it's sort of compelling the vendor to at least give accessibility a thought, so that's been good. So, over time and over many discussions. We've had many many meetings to discuss this and talked with various people. So for us we've modified the process to include specific and measurable accessibility requirements. Those some of those requirements, including the ones that Laetitia described and demonstrated, and then and they are measurable as Kim mentioned earlier, we've also included accessibility testers that was not, you know, the first foray we didn't actually engage people directly with lived experience, but determined that that was necessary. So we've included accessibility testers in the last, I don't know, four or five I think of our solicitations. Three or four, I guess. And what they do is they basically validate what the vendor says about their, the accessibility of their product and it helps us evaluate the proposal and to score those requirements appropriately. And of course we do pay the testers for their work. It's expertise, and time, and knowledge that we are benefiting from, so we do compensate them for for that work. Next slide, please. So there's a couple things that we have discovered, through the process, that we want to incorporate and want to try differently in the future. The first one we actually, I would say, we actually are doing you know we do continually review and modify the requirements in consultation with the available testers. We've worked quite a bit with Daniella from NNELS. And so that's been an iterative process, where we, you know, we have some requirements, we kind of see where some weaknesses are, maybe the language hasn't been clear, we haven't described it well enough, and so we debrief with the testers after each solicitation and then incorporate our learnings into into the next one. Among the things that we want to do is, we kind of want to maybe possibly reframe the question. So right now it's kind of like "Here's the requirements that we want you to meet." We could have a vendor that meets most or all of the requirements for one of the testers or two or, you know, most a majority of the testers, but there still is the possibility that the the product is inaccessible to someone who, for instance uses a a screen reader or something like that. So you know we wanted to take a step back and think about, you know, what will render a resource essentially completely unusable for a print disabled user that to the point where it's just, you end up having somebody sort of throw up their hands and give up. We don't want to buy stuff that is irredeemably unusable. We do because that's what's out there, but I think we want to definitely put a that kind of a frame around how we think about accessibility in our in the products we acquire going forward. Thirdly, we and we have done this in our last solicitation, we did implement a kickoff meeting before the testing to discuss the requirement and how they will be tested because of course the testers they're all using different methods and so interestingly you know the results are going to to vary. And so we need to be mindful of that and then we also need to let the testers know about how the scoring rubric works. It's a, it's a, it's weird, it's a weird rubric, I'll just say that, and so it's not just kind of like "Out of 10, what do you think of this?" It's it's a very specific process and we just need and we need to make sure that everybody's on the same page for that. So and that's part of that idea of being, you know, having making sure the process has integrity and is consistent, and open, and transparent. And so we just have that kickoff meeting and that's that has proven to be very useful to make sure everybody's on the same page before the testing. I it seemed to me the first time we had the accessibility testers and we didn't do the kickoff, and then we had sort of the consensus meeting to talk about the scoring and we kind of discovered "Oh my, things are all over the place." So it was, it was sort of challenging to get the scoring down to a consensus without that kind of pre-meeting. So one thing we are working on is making sure that the RFP posting and any associated documents that we post with it are accessible. And Lord knows we try, we have, I've drafted documents and then the problem is they go through many hands internally and some of those people will modify the document to suit them and they end up stripping out all of the accessibility components that we've incorporated. So the first time it happened to me I almost cried, it was kind of like "I did all this work and then they just took it out." So it's, that's a work in progress. We know that we need to do it and we're, actually Kim's and the accessibility team are also working on separate project internally with government to build awareness around making documents accessible, so hopefully, that'll help us as we go forward with these documents. And then finally, what we want to do differently is to potentially do that, have where we have the vendor pre-screen with the automated accessibility test that that Kim mentioned. We haven't done it yet, but that's something that's sort of on the on the horizon for us. Okay, next slide, please. Couple other things that we want to, that are things that we're looking at, we're considering, not sort of in the immediate future, but something that as we go we'll want to look at and one of those is that integration of the accessibility requirements with other functional requirements. So if you were to look at one of our RFPs, you would see that the requirements, the accessibility requirements, are their own separate section. So, you know, we have a section user training and security, and then we have accessibility, but we would like to incorporate some of those accessibility requirements, integrate them rather with some of the sections. So like in our last RFP we had, one that was user functionality for staff. So it'd be good to incorporate some of those accessibility requirements into that, so that it's functional for staff with print disabilities as well. You know, we've kind of gone back and forth, there's some pluses, there's some minuses to that approach. One of the pluses to having accessibility still, sort of as its own separate thing is that it is it's a it's a tool to build awareness with vendors. So when they open up our RFP and they see this whole section devoted to accessibility, it communicates quite clearly to them that that is something that is important to us and that they need to pay attention to. So we're going to stick with that approach I think for a while, until, you know, we see more kind of an uptick in in awareness and the ability to incorporate those things is just you know part of doing business on the part of the vendors. Then the second consideration is, you know, general user experience, evaluating the general user experience versus relying on WCAG or the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. I mean WCAG is a really good starting point for us, but it's necessarily focused, just on content that's what, it's what it says in the name. So and for us, we're focused primarily on platforms, which is more than just a website. You know, we have some of those platforms have associated apps for mobile devices, there's often an authentication mechanism, it's there are things beyond just the website that we want to also be considering. We actually did sort of shoot ourselves in the foot with a previous RFP where we did do accessibility testing on the platform, which was web-based, but neglected to include testing for the app that was associated with it. And so we just need to be mindful of more of that, the platforms we're looking at are more of an ecosystem as opposed to just a a single website that we need to be looking at. Next slide, please. So finally some key takeaways from our experience in the procurement space and incorporating accessibility requirements. It's really really important to ask users with lived experience to to give feedback about the, about the product, including them from the beginning, right through the end of the RFP process, something that we are still working on. You know there are touch points throughout the process that we've introduced, and still some room for improvement for us, but what we have done so far has really made a world of difference and so it's really important to to get that sort of very frontline knowledge and expertise essentially to help us evaluate. And then of course you need to compensate those folks, because it's time and effort and knowledge that they have, expertise that they're sharing with you, so you want to make sure that you're compensating them. And then of course it's just establishing accessibility as a priority when you're evaluating any of your any new resources and even current ones. So like our process has been trying to catch everything on the front end before we acquire a product, but maybe you have some products already in place you may wish to conduct an evaluation accessibility assessment of what you currently have. I know NNELS has done some of that work, but there you know it's never too late, but it is really important to try and at least start somewhere to A. identify accessibility as a priority and see and B. see what you can do to incorporate it into your decision-making process around your e-resources. Okay, so I'm going to turn it back over to Kim and she's gonna talk briefly about what happens if you don't do procurement.

[Kim] Okay, good question. So what if my library does not do procurement? Why should I learn about accessible procurement anyway? Good question. Next slide, please. Because, well number one all libraries do procurement, even if you are part of a system or a consortium that procures resources on your behalf, you're still purchasing e-content, so you are still paying that system or that consortium to do that purchasing and you're making it available as part of your collection. So you're still doing procurement, you're still doing e-content for procurement. So what can you do? Get involved. Ask your system or your consortium questions about how they evaluate the accessibility of their resources, the resources that they purchase, and if they haven't thought about it, what an opportunity. Offer assistance, offer assistance, strike a committee, start a conversation. I mean, I think this has been mentioned, but this is fairly new to a lot of us. I feel like there's a learning curve, but we are kind of in this together; we're learning together, so let's take this opportunity to start to start a conversation with our colleagues and our systems and our fellow librarians. Next slide, please. So why do you want to learn about procurement? Also it will make you a better librarian. So understanding those accessible requirements will actually help you better understand accessibility and digital accessibility. You'll be better able to recommend accessible e-resources and know what accessibility features they have and understand what that means. You will also be better equipped to understand accessibility related concerns. So if a patron comes to your library and says there's an unlabelled button on this platform, you will know what that means. You will get it, and you will be able to articulate it to somebody who can maybe do something about it, like the vendor or your system or you might be able to start a conversation, but you will be able to better understand patron complaints. And I mean even if you're not at the point where you're getting directly involved in RFPs or procurement exactly, you can still empower yourself by learning about the accessibility of your e-resources. So Kerry actually just mentioned this, but NNELS has been doing this work for a very long time, about I think it's about five years now, NNELS has been testing reading applications and library e-resources and testing the accessibility of them and writing a ton of reports, a ton of reports about them. So if you want to visit the reading apps reports, reading app reports web page it's on the Accessible Publishing site that's AccessiblePublishing.ca. I think Riane might just put it in the chat, which is great. But then you can see if any of your library resources are there and better empower yourself to, to know what you have and if it's accessible or not. Next slide, please, please. And when you're a better librarian, you are better able to provide a good patron experience. So you being able to talk about the accessibility or the lack of accessibility, will really help you serve your patrons and really help their experience make it a better experience going to the library and asking for support or asking for parts of your collection. So, for example, if a platform, you know, because you read the NNELS testing reports, or you have participated in accessible procurement, you know that one of your platforms has excellent adjustable features and you know a patron, one of your patrons really likes to modify the font size or the colour, you can connect that patron directly with that resource. It sort of alleviates that extra work that so many people with disabilities have to do, evaluating the accessibility of things and then reporting it back. You're doing some of that work up front and you're connecting patrons with resources, which is like what librarians do, right, like one of the big things that we do, and it's just a better experience for your patron. Next slide, please. And finally, thinking about the accessibility of your e-resources, whether you're purchasing them directly or not it, demonstrates your library's commitment to accessibility. So those e-resources, even if you're not purchasing, they're part of your collection and that collection you're making available to your community and you want to make that, you want to make that collection as inclusive as possible right. So thinking about the accessibility of it, it really just demonstrates that you care about the inclusivity of your library and that your library is there to serve everybody. I will say again, please visit the accessible procurements resources page if you don't know where to start. If you're sort of like "There's a lot of things happening here, and I don't totally know where to start with it, accessible procurement or accessible e-content" just visit the PLARC resources page, the accessible procurement resources page. There's a ton about accessible procurement and accessible e-content. And I mean start small, like we all started small, we started small eight years ago, or however many years ago, just starting to think about this. Just start somewhere. And finally, last slide or next slide. It won't be the last slide, but we're going to end where we started. So I think we can agree that library resources need to be accessible to everybody in our communities and we're just trying to provide one way or show you how we have tried to incorporate that into our own practices, and try to make that as meaningful as possible, but we would also, it, it's, this is an ongoing discussion. We are not where we want to be, so we would love to hear what other people have done, start discussions around accessible procurement, because we will get there one day. We will get there, I'm sure of it. And that's the end. I guess we'll go to the next slide if there are any questions.