August IT Accessibility Community Meeting Captioned Text

The August 11, 2020 IT Accessibility Community Meeting was hosted as a virtual meeting by the General Services Administration, Office of Government-wide Policy.

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--- BEGIN CAPTIONED TEXT ---

Please standby for real time captions.

Mary Beth, I did send the API. To the captioner this morning.

This is Mary Beth, Michael, thank you so much.

I want to let you know the interpreter is going to be on the screen. If I recall, we have Holly Schmidt and Jeffrey. We do have a captioner. We have Arthur and Michael today. And later in the afternoon, Gary, Patrick and Jill Snyder. I know from past experience, Patrick is blind or not cited -- so please state your name before you speak.

This is Mary Beth, the interpreter speaking. I want to say, thank you so much.

Thank you, Yvette. Thank you so much.

Mike, is that a virtual background? Or are you on vacation?

This is Great Lakes view, but really, it is a virtual background.

He is sitting in his basement. [Laughter]

We have a young gentleman coming today.

I like your background.

This is Lena, I am here with you guys but I just want to let you know that I am going to mute myself because I do not want you guys to hear my kids in the background.

Good morning this is Misty. I am in Fredericksburg right now.

Good morning, this is Crystal, I am working in Washington DC.

This is Arthur from general services.

Good morning, this is Mark Bennett.

Good morning Mark.

Good morning, Yvette.

We have three more minutes and then we will be starting.

This is Mary Beth, the interpreter speaking. I want to let you know that we do have interpreters that will be speaking.

This is Misty. Thank you so much.

My name is Rachel. And you pronounce my last name, [Indiscernible]. And do not hesitate to feel bad if you cannot pronounce my last name, but before I got married I had to practice pronouncing it. [Laughter]

This is Mary Beth, the interpreter speaking . Will everybody be visible? I know everyone is in the gallery, are we going to see everybody throughout the presentation or just the speakers?

I am going to ask everybody to mute and turn off their cameras.

This is Mary Beth, the interpreter speaking . So it will be just the speaker and the interpreter?

Yes.

Very good and thank you.

Mary Beth, this is [Indiscernible], I cannot turn on my camera.

This is Mary Beth, the interpreter speaking , thank you so much. But I want to let you know that if you are reading a script, please read slowly.

Good morning everyone. Let me just check with my chief, Mike.

Good morning, this is the vet Gibson. I would like to introduce the interpreters but we have Mary Beth. And Rachel. So I would like you to welcome them virtually. And we thank you for being here and joining us. The second thing that I will ask, please make sure that you mute yourself and turn off your camera. So we only see the presenter and the interpreter. Thank you everyone. So welcome again. This is our August meeting, which is our third meeting for the year. We are on a little journey. And now it is time to go back to school. We have some very exciting presenters today, who will take us back to school so we do not forget some of the things that we learned before we went on summer break. The first presenter we have Michael and Arthur from GSA. They are going to talk about accessibility requirements. And we are going to look at correcting requirements. Arthur and Michael it is now up to you. One more thing before they start, when you are speaking please introduce yourself, prior to speaking. And we will answer any questions at the end of each presentation. Arthur and Michael?

This is Arthur. Good morning Yvette and everyone.

This is This is Mary Beth, the interpreter speaking, we have a little feedback, so Arthur can you turn off one of your audio? Can you turn it off on the computer?

This is Arthur. I am going to do my piece first. I am going to share my screen. My name is Arthur Brunson, I work with GSA 508 division with John Sullivan. I am excited about being able to share with you, this team of community, and the changes that we made based on the feedback that we got from the 508 community. And looking at accessibility requirements make it more user-friendly. And overall it will be better for each use. The accessibility requirements, is used to assist us with creating 508 requirements for a solicitation. And it is to be included in the acquisition package as part of the acquisition lifecycle. We have an opportunity to change the look and feel of the tool itself. To make it similar to the section 508 page . As you can see right here, we have radio buttons that we can use. We have a color palette that has been updated. One of the major features that we will present that is different, we made the sample procurement language a separate part of the tool. And now that you do not have to go through and answer questions. But you can choose your procurement language. That is one of the major changes that I will walk through. One of the things that may come up as a question at the end, it is about the user guide. Which we are in the process of updating. And we made a decision not to take it down. It does follow the look and feel of the previous site. And we plan to have that updated by the end of next week. That will be one of the changes that you may notice and this is what is coming. I want to start with the new procurement. It works similar to how it was before. You click on, new procurement. Once you make a selection, it will take you to the homepage. Where you have the option to start and gather requirements. This first page, will ask for the project name. It will give you the ability to select your role. And selecting that role, you have options about the agency and position. Such as contract officer or credit card holder or even IT specialist. There is IT vendor. And I This is Mary Beth, the interpreter speaking coordinator [Indiscernible]. We will update [Indiscernible]. Then you have the ability to provide us with the value of the acquisition. And from there it will give you an option to select your agency. And for this we will put in air National Guard. That is what I selected. And now you have the ability to provide an email address and that was not part of the original set up. And the email address will allow the end product, to be automatically emailed to you. That way you will have a copy. And you do not have to worry about cut and paste. So I am going to put in an email address. I will put in my own.

This is Mary Beth, the interpreter, Yvette, can you turn off your camera?

And next, what you are procuring. I do not want to spent a lot of time on the tool itself. I am going to select, none. You have probably noted, some of the selections that you have have a circular, I am not sure what is the best way to call it, but it is similar to [Indiscernible overlapping speakers]

It is called the accessible toolkit.

Thank you. If you are not sure what electronic procurement, we have examples. To make it more understandable. For this exercise I am going to select, none, for the content. And then the next question is, what software are you procuring? And I am going to say none. And then it will ask you about the hardware, and you have options such as laptops, scanners, multi function office machines, equipment like keyboards. Printers, and tablets. I am going to select computers and laptops. The last question, what I see he documentation -- ICC documentation is required? And our answer is going to be, you know you were going to get some kind of document. Sometimes there are training services offered or a help desk. And also automated self-service and tech support. Usually automated self-service is the most common. The last thing on the first page, you have to solve a math problem, and this is going to be different every time, we want to make sure that you are a human and not a machine. So in this situation, it is one +16 and so I am going to type in 17. If I have to move on to something else and I have to start over, I have this option. So now I will click on, next page. I did not put in a project name, so I am going to type in, test. I will click on, next page. And so the next page will give you an opportunity, to see if there are any 508 exceptions. So the question is, does the general exception applied to your procurement? You will have to answer yes, no or I do not know. So then you have to say why you are choosing the exception and which exception you are choosing. And they are listed on this page if you chose yes. I am going to randomly read three of them. One reason for an exception, the national security system. And another one, undue burden exception. And the last one, best meets exception. It will give you an option to choose an exception. I will tell you what will happen next as opposed to showing you. Whatever exception you choose, will give you an opportunity to fill in your justification for the exception. And it will allow you to print that report and justification so you can send it to IT exceptions but sometimes it will have to go through a process or just presented to a contractor. So they can look at this and know there was an exception that was applied. I for right now in going to select, no. One of the things that I did not address is, I do not know radio button. I do not know if it will walk me through questions. So choosing, no, it will let you know that you are ready to move forward to the next set of questions. In order to generate your requirements. I am going to click on, next page. And from there, you will have to name your hardware. I will just type in the word, computer. And from there, I will click on next page. And the question is now, are you excuse me, are your computers and laptops defined as assistive technology? Your answers could be yes or no.

The differentiation is that the computer or laptop being used used as the assisted technology device versus as the computer you are using does it perform the work?

Thank you, Mike. And in this example I am going to select, no. And because I selected, no, it gave me additional questions about the computer. I will read the questions. Do your computers and laptops have closed functionality? I will select, yes. And it changed some of the questions. I will move to the next question. Do your computers or laptops have a display screen? I will select, yes. Does your computer or laptop use sound output? I am going to select, yes. As you can see my questions have changed. The next question, does your computer provide two-way voice communication? I will select yes. Does it computer or laptop provide nonprivate listening? I am going to say, yes. Because oftentimes we have microphones or speakers, but there is the ability to turn those on and off externally. So I will select, yes.

This is Mary Beth, the interpreters speaking. Mister Anthony thank you so much. We are going to switch interpreters.

This is the interpreter Rachel speaking, we are ready to go.

Next question, does your computer or laptop use variable message signs? I am going to select, yes. Do your computers and laptops use biometrics? I am going to select, yes. And now you will notice that the questions have changed. Do your computers and laptops provide at least two biometrics options?

I am going to select no. Next, do your computers and laptops transmit or convert information? I am going to select, no. Does your computer or laptop provide data connection used for input and output? I will say yes.

Does your computer or laptops include operable parts? I am going to select yes. But let me change this back to you, no. Next are your computers and laptops stationary? I will choose no.

Does your computer and laptop ever E MetLife and flashes? I will select, yes. Do they computers and laptops provide status indicator? I will select yes. Do your computers and laptops provide status indicators question maximum and I will say yes. And if you will notice it did give us more questions. Now it has additional questions. And the last question, does your computer or laptop display or process video with synchronized audio? I am going to select yes but now I have answered all of the questions. So now I have the option again to say save it. Now I can go back to the previous page. I want to pause and talk about if you chose the previous page. If you go to the previous page, we want you to always use the option at the bottom of the screen, click on it, to go back. Never use the back button for the browser. Otherwise it will kick you out of the tool. That is something that I wanted to point out. If I go to the next page, now I have made it through all of the the questions, all of the component questions. Now we are ready for the review. The next question, what is the ICT support and service name? What is the name of your product or service? And in this case we were saying, we were getting documentation. I am going to typing, computer documentation. I have the option to save and continue. I am going to click on next page. Does your product documentation includes support documentation or support services? For the sake of this exercise, I am going to choose it no. But let me show you if we say yes. Now you can see we have additional questions. If you selected, no, then you will be able to move forward. And you have the same option, to save. Do this, because you can always come back. If you needed a different answer for a previous question, you can go back. When you get to this point you are at the end. And it will allow you to preview what your requirements are and what was developed. So the report preview, reads ICT accessibility requirements statement for the revised section 508 of the rehabilitation act. And this is what you are purchasing at the beginning there it will show at the top of the screen. And you can see it has, test, because that is what I chose. And here we have the agency's name. If I had zero exceptions, I would see it right here. Had I chosen hardware, it would show the hardware. On this particular one I only chose the computer. So you only see the technical requirements. And this is for the computer. Then you have the functional performance criteria. At the very bottom of the page, there is a reminder that you cannot change the form once it has been submitted. So if you read through this, if you see anything that you want to change, click on the previous button at this point. It also has instructions at the bottom. It will take you to section 508 homepage. Where we have a program that will help you with what you can do as far as putting this information into this statement of objective, statement of work. Now I will click on submit. Now I have a report. And that report, it looks exactly like it did in the preview. The only thing that has changed, where you see the agency name. It now lists the email address that the report was sent to. We only allow email addresses that are.gov or.edu and .mil.

This is the interpreter, what was the third one?

That was mil which stands for military. Go to the bottom and you will have the option for instructions. It will allow you to start a new procurement. If you decided you wanted to start a new procurement, there is an option, click on, restart the form. At this point it has been emailed to you. If you wanted to start another one you could but you also have an option, we have radio buttons at the bottom, you can print the form. You can download the contract language template. You can download the requirements in a PDF. And it will give you an option to email the report to someone else. And the last option you can copy the report into text. That is the new picture meant. I know I spent a lot of time on it. I am going to ask, that we hold your questions. So I can move through the next two quicker. The new procurement is the longest process and I just wanted to make sure that you were able to see the improvements. And that it is not is slow as it used to be.

This is Mike, we have about seven minutes and tell we take a break.

With that in mind, I am going to click on existing procurements. Under existing procurements we have a tutorial where it will walk you through how you can go through the procurement. Everything you need to know is spelled out on this page. The biggest thing I want to make sure that you are aware of, we only save existing procurements for 30 days. And you will be provided a way to get a key going forward, in order to start your per career procurement and retrieve it. All you have to do is click on the existing procurement. The last thing I want to go through is that sample of procurement language. Let me click on this tab. In the past it used to walk you through all of the questions, like the questions we just went through for the new procurement. Your comments and suggestions, we change that, Michael has made this user-friendly bird now when you click on it it will take you to the page on section 508. Where you have the ability to watch the accessibility requirements, through a webinar, that will walk you through what I just said. This was hosted by John Sullivan. It was well done, so if you get an opportunity I encourage you to take a look at it. And directly under that, we have a sample of language. You can download the template. I am going to click on it. And once you click on the link, it will take you to the procurement sample language, download it and use it as part of your procurement. If you are looking for a bit to kill her requirement a particular requirement. This list is in alphabetical order. This is the complete report on the requirements that you need for your solicitation. And you have the option of cutting and pasting that. So you do not have to go through all of the tool and answer all of those questions. And that is all that I wanted to share with you, regarding the updates and the changes. I hope this is helpful. And at this time we will take your questions.

Arthur, this is even at, we do have a few questions.

Please provide a glossary. Sometimes it is fuzzy which one to pick for a particular procurement.

This is from the LS. Are the reports generated by the procurement tool, language, description, and are the descriptions accessible?

I believe we have gone through that. Michael Horton did work on that so I want to say yes. Mike you want to take that question?

They were asking, the PDF generated by the procurement tool, including the language description, are they accessible?

It is my understanding that it is, yes.

Could the contract language document be turned into a template?

It could be in a word document. It was a Word document at one point in time but based on comments we received we changed it. I will follow-up with Gary, to make sure that I am understanding exactly what he wants. So we can discuss the changes.

This is from Aaron. Is the computer and hardware the same? Can I [Indiscernible]?

There are hardware ask specs aspects in the computer. They are installed and then they are tested. Laptops and CPUs are hardware.

Lisa was asking, why do you ask for a dollar value? There is no dollar threshold for 508 compliance.

It is a measuring tool for us. We are trying to measure, what dollar threshold is impacting the tool. That is why we ask the question.

This is John Sullivan, it is purely for statistics in using the tool. We will compare that to the total of acquisitions. We need that in justifying how we spent our resources. We do not use it for anything other than statistical analysis

Thank you John.

There was one observation, service can be hardware also.

I think that for all of our questions. Please wait a moment. There is a suggestion, if asking for the dollar value for statistics, you need to make that very clear in the tool because it could confuse people.

We can absolutely do that. We will work on making an adjustment.

Thank you.

I understand that will serve as the agency as well as the contractor and billing accessible resources. So does LeadTools serve the agency as well as the contractor in building -- billing?

Now we are in a place to implement the email address, and eliminated the.gov,.edu,.mil.

It is the agency's required, you know the RFQ. The contractor has to respond. It is primarily for the government, you know, to clarify its requirements. So when a vendor comes back with a solution, you have something that you can evaluate in the proposal. And if the requirement is in the contract, you will have to do that before you are awarded the contract. But yes it is for the contractor for clarity. In terms of the level of requirements. But it is not intended for the vendor community other than it is a requirement. Having that said, it is structured to follow this format and ITI has put up a template. You know, a list of requirements. And it could be useful. This is clearly for government use. I hope that helped.

Thank you, John, for your clarity. And thank you Arthur. Excuse me, this is Evette. But thank you for your presentation. We are going to take a 10 minute break. Please come back at 10:20.

[ Session is on a 10 minute break. Captioner standing by. Thank you. ]

Good morning everyone, this is Yvette Gibson. We are going to start the next class. The solicitation review tool, that reef we refer to SRT. Please make sure that you mute yourself and turn off your camera. Thank you.

This is Arthur again. I want to walk through the solicitation review tool. And provide you with some updates. I want to thank those who were able to participate in the UA T. And may the SRT a better tool. And get it ready for production and for use by all of the agencies. The solicitation review tool, is a tool from GSA, where you can go out come [Indiscernible] to look at solicitations that are posted. And to do machine learning. And it is able to go through all of the words in the documents that are out there. And it will search for 508 requirements. When the machine detects there is language, it will mark the solicitation as green. Meaning it has language in the solicitation that was identified by meeting [Indiscernible] and does not have the presence of 508 language. It will show, noncompliance. It will say that language is not there. The machine is not trained to know when exceptions are there. Or requirement language for 508 is not required. So we will solicit more support from the agencies that are helping us train the model on two and three levels. And looking at the exceptions. So with that in mind, I will be doing the presentation on the tool a little later. Levine, who is also on the line will be doing that presentation. At that time I will introduce Anne at that time. SRT, solicitation review tool. Goal, requirements and key processes. To automatically review solicitations for section 508. The reason why we did this, to help agencies identify information communication technology, which is ICT, that require the inclusion for section 508 requirements . How we do this, we connect to beta.sam.gov and scan every one of them every day. For the section 508 requirements. Then we will generate solicitations that have been flagged for a manual review. And the point of context will be your 508 managers who will work with the Seo CO to make updates. And from there, we are using data mining to do this. And provide us with the ability to track what is out there. And if it has been updated, then you can track that. Every time something is posted, it will reread it to see what is there. And you will be able to see that in the tool third. Here we have a history of solicitations. So what is happening, you know, based on the agency or a particular contract office. It is shown within the agency that 90% or 50% of their solicitation includes the language that should have it. And shows if it does not show the language what it should have. This is section 508 what requires additional training. This will give us an opportunity to provide additional training on inclusion of the language. Either introducing them to Art or making sure that the procurement lifecycle includes ways to track and no when or if you should include language and how to do it. That is pretty much the goal for this tool. I will be addressing this further into the presentation. And this tool is not designed to tell or report how poorly or great and other agencies are doing. This tool was intended to help us support improving the 508 language . Especially for agencies who do not have a lot of resources to check solicitations before it goes out. And those that do not have the language, it is easier for the look for that and that is the intent on the tool. Next, protecting your agency's filings. GSA does not report out the findings from SRT. Each agency has access to its own results. Only the admin at GSA is able to see all of the information. The SRT is a web-based portal owned and maintained by GSA. Accessing SRT requires each user to login through the portal. SRT results are derived from public data solicitation that have been posted on beta.sam.gov.

We have a few lessons learned. A lot of the information that is here, came from Robert Baker as well as we got good feedback from DOD, DOE and HHS. One of the biggest things that came back, SRT must be trained to understand exceptions. That is going to help the agencies to support us. And that is something that I will address a little later. And to train the SRT for level two and level III. And purchase, and a quote. This is something that came up from Robert Baker. And based on the research, a decision was made that only one tool should meet the business needs. So 508 language is not always required. That is the understanding that I got from talking to Robert about lessons learned. We are going to review that information as a team. GSA is looking at this information internally. We are also going to meet with and talk with the access board including Robert Baker. On this particular one, it came up a few times and I just wanted to make sure that I addressed it. That we are aware of this concern. And it is going to require more in-depth conversation to make sure that we come up with the best solution. And part of that solution is going to provide SRT with a second level of review for solicitations. SRT review of RFQa, asking for 508 language is a red herring. When looking at that, I believe we have made a change for the first pass of SRT, we will no longer review request for quotes. That is one thing that came out of our lessons learned. And the last one, solicitation for backend and hardware, for which there are no applicable 508 requirements . According to the UHT experts this is a false flag for an example, electrode assembly, controllers, switches, this is hardware where 508 language , it is not required. For the tool itself, we do not review this as a false positive but a second level of training needs to happen with SRT. The machine is only learning what we taught it. What we have taught it to date, if someone uses a code, identified as ICT, there should be 508 language included. And this is why it appears to be a false positive but it is a positive based on the code that was used and there was no language. One of the things that we are going to be doing, my team, and myself, Anne Levine, who is going to do a demonstration in a few minutes. This month we have made arrangement with a few agencies already to come in and walk through the tool. And understand the exceptions. And get a good understanding of things that have been identified already from the second level review. So that we can start to build the second level review, and third level review requirements. So that we get it right the first time. In the near future, many of you will be contacted to set up a time to meet with you. So we can walk through and talk through particular exceptions. And how to improve the tool. As the tool was designed, it is doing exactly what it is supposed to be doing. That is the last statement that I have on the false flags. And we are going to want through a quick demonstration of the tool itself. I am sure we will have a lot of questions. We are going to walk through the tool. At a very high level. Then we will take questions.

This is Mary Beth, the interpreter, we are going to switch interpreters, please switch to Rachel. Thank you everybody.

Thank you, Mary Beth. So then next voice that you will hear is Anne loving.

I am going to walk you through this solicitation review tool. I want to let you know that this is the basic home screen. You have your manage, review workload, view analytics, administration, contact us and frequently asked questions. So the work that you will be doing is going to be in manager workload. If I click on this, it will bring up the solicitation that SRT has pulled. And has reviewed them for 508 language . Here you can see we have explanatory titles. I can now see all of them, or I can search by compliance or search by noncompliance. If I do noncompliance, you will see all of these will be in the color red. Once I come into SRT, I want to take a look at the solicitation to see whether or not that the tool indicates there is an action that I have to take. So I will click on the link. This is going to take me to the result, the summary. And it will give you information. It will tell you the name of the solicitation and the ID. It will give me the solicitation number, date posted and down here it will tell me if it is machine-readable. I am going to click on the link. At this point you can verify and take a look at the solicitation and the SRT. You can also come down to the display the document. So you have everything in this document. When Arthur was talking about the red flag, it could be hardware or something that does not use an interface but so you can come over here, and select, section 508 is not applicable . But then we can go back and train the solicitation bid annually at point of contact information for the solicitation. You can email the particular solicitation. But right now we do not have the email integrated but we do have a template that you can copy..

You can also give them feedback. Then step number three, it says, make SRT smarter. What this does, is a questionnaire that is asking for feedback on the solicitation that you reviewed. We want to know if it is a ICT solicitation. Did the tool correctly predict section 508 ? Did it meet the requirements of [Indiscernible]? And here it says does it or does it not have 508 language ? Now we have another place for comments. You can put in a, comments. And this is going to show us how many times it has been through the machine learning portion. And once it is updated it will come back to the review tool. And so you can see this one went through one time and it is not in compliance and right here is all of the actions. So now you can look at this particular solicitation. And basically, we also have a contact us, form, so if you have any questions or comments you can contact us. We have frequently asked questions. So if you have questions, let's say you want to know what ICT is, you can come over here and look and find out more information. As you review your tool, we have an export feature. If you want to export all of the information about the contracts click on this, and it will take you to Microsoft Excel, it will pull information in the solicitation so you can take a look at it. Let me go back to home. Is there anything else you want me to touch on?

This is Arthur, thank you. That was a review of the tool. I just want to reiterate, some of you will be hearing from us soon. What we want to do is to come out and actually go through the tool with you, so you are comfortable with it. Looking at solicitation and understand how we can make it smarter. So the tool can be more effective and help you. Especially if you are not one of the agencies that have resources to actually go through all of your solicitation before they go out. As a reminder, SRT, does this on a daily basis but every day it is going to go out and take a look at the solicitations that have been posted. Even if you are unaware if the solicitation went out, but it does give you an option or a place to go to see what is out there. So we can improve the inclusion of 508 language . To reduce lawsuits. And more important just to make sure that the products are accessible by those who need it to be accessible. That is all that we have two present on SRT. And once again we do appreciate your participation. We would like to take questions with the remaining time.

Good morning, I will be reading the questions, Arthur. The first question is from Kittrell. SRT language if it is in green, is there a method to tell if section 508 language is present? That was the first question.

Thank you for that question. If I interpret the question correctly, if the color is green, the word should say, compliance. Look at the word, compliance. That means they are in compliance with section 508

It would be nice to set up an option for a email alert in case there is a solicitation that has an issue. I guess that was really not a question but rather a comment.

Thank you for your comment. And John Sullivan shares your sentiment. We have been working for a year now to resolve that. It is on the list of things to change. It will probably be another six months. But we do plan to integrate the email service through GSA. So we can send out an alert.

The next question, is from Dharma. How does the tool determine if it is applicable [Indiscernible] or the correct language has been inserted?

At this point the tool has not been trained to understand if the right language has been included. The first level of training is only identifying language, if it has or has not been included. We will work on this with the second and third review.

Does the tool examine the department of defense solicitations?

Yes, if it was posted to beta.sam.gov . Anything that was posted to beta.sam.gov is being pulled by the SRT.

This is from Annette Johnson. Does the team see GS solicitations?

If your solicitation is posted on sam.gov at this point we are reviewing it. For the future of SRT, we do plan to try to access other platforms.

We do not have any more questions right now. People did ask for the transcript and the slides. I will let you know that the transcript and the slides will be posted on 508 website .

This is Yvette Gibson. Thank you Anne and Arthur. We do appreciate it. We are going to take a 10 minute break. And we will return at 11:00. Our next presenters will be gambling -- giving a COVID talk on 508,503 and 501. It will be very interesting to hear what they are going to say.

[ Session is on a 10 minute break. Captioner standing by. Thank you. ]

Good afternoon everybody this is Yvette. We are about to have a final class for today. And this class is interesting. It is COVID, 508, 503, 501.

We have Gary, Patrick and Joel. You are now in charge.

Thank you, Yvette. Gary would you like to start?

Michael, can you pull up our slides?

I just need to share the right thing. I think you are all set.

Thank you. Pat Sheehan, and myself, have a short presentation. But we would like to have a open discussion between the relationship between the 508 coordinators and the agency. One thing that we have noticed over time, we might be in different offices but I work for the office of public communication and I am a liaison for an example. Disability tends to be in the EEO program. So we do not always have a smooth program. Pat, everybody can see your bio. But give us something that is not in the bio.

My name is Pat Sheehan. I am very happy to be here, I work at the Department of Veterans Affairs. I think it is exciting and worthwhile. We have a mission to implement section 508 within our agencies. What I find interesting is leveling the playing field for individuals who are working for the agency, whether it is the department of veteran affairs or working with [Indiscernible] we need to have an even playing field so they can do what they need to do. I am very blessed. I am very pleased with the mission that I happened I am also please, I would not have been able to do this work unless I had a great team. They are the ones that make it tick here at the VA. And I also want to thank GSA for the work that they do. They do provide a lot of support to us. They do give us a lot of information that is extremely useful. So thank you to this community. And my team works very closely with you.

Thank you, Pat. It is great working with you, and we have gotten to know each other over the last few months. It is such a great community, in section 508 . In addition to my official bio, I joined NIH with a five-year goal. Now I am a coordinator for the national Institute for cancer. It is amazing, to be in a research institute. When people talk about health research and medical research. Especially at this time. Before we were sent home, on a weekly basis I did use the accessible platform. I was working with procurement, to integrate 508 and this is been a great opportunity. And integrate 508 language. And attach the applicable standards. So GSA is a great resource. The work that we do is based on the rehab act, from 1973. We talked about 508, that is the majority of our work in the focus of our work . But there are other sections. That we do not know about or work with them. Some are more active than others these days. Pat and I talked about this, what can we do? As the disability program managers? I know in my own efforts to get the system technology, it is not just getting it, but it is the best kept secret. We need to work with IT desktop support so this technology can be implemented and optimize. It is all well and good to get a piece of technology, if it is not part of the IT infrastructure it really is not going to make a difference. Just because you have assisted technology does not mean that the plane is level. It might be sitting on the desk and just collecting dust. We are going to walk through briefly the nine sections. Section 501 is about hiring peer where discrimination does not a cure -- does not occur. Not only nondiscrimination but [Indiscernible]..

Persons with disabilities, need to be higher, and provide accommodations. But there is always a little loophole, unless it causes on do hardship. And that is a hard one to invoke. At HHS we were advised that it will go up to the secretary for approval for undo burden. There is always a way to fine accommodations. And to make technology accessible. 503, affirmative action. It runs parallel with the rehab act and ADA, state and local and private industry. ADA does not have an affirmative action. So that is why from the EEO office, state we should be aware of all activities that we are doing. So that we are ready, to understand the infrastructure and the technology we have in the business environment. Where employees with disabilities might be coming in and is this infrastructure set up correctly for accessibility? 504 or this is what we hear most often about antidiscrimination in the programs. This is a bigger audience. Not just for federal programs but for contracts. And also grantees. Anyone who receives federal funds cannot discriminate based on disability. 508 , the more technology that is made accessible, less reasonable accommodations might be needed in some cases. Perhaps they are using assisted technology or 508 under Windows or Office. So with this service or product they can do their job easier. But where assisted technology is needed, 508 ensures that assisted technology can work there and that it is designed to be compatible. So 508 is about stepping back, reconstructing the IT system and make sure that it is more accessible. And when non-accessible it is compatible with reasonable accommodations under 504. And some key points to think about. 508 is about technology and it applies to federal programs. There are, here at HHS, grantees as, they have to comply 2504 and make their program accessible. They are not obligated under 508 but we do want them to state that there IT activities are accessible. They need to make the program and activities accessible. And what better way to use the standards. To say, yes there are websites, social media, and it is accessible. So how do we measure this?By using 508 standards . This is a list of exceptions. We know what they are and there are far and few in between. There are times when we know technology may not be 100% accessible. Hopefully the assisted technology, will complement that. So this is getting into the question, if 508 creates accessible IT infrastructure, if we are enforcing this acquisition whether it is procurement or developing something internally or borrowing something from other agencies. We need to make sure that the technology is accessible, and compatible with assisted technology. We should see on the employment side better performance and better promotion or more promotions. Are they moving up the chain? So Pat and I are thinking about, if you follow, [Indiscernible]. I am not sure what happened to my slides.

So the goal this morning, is to open it up for a discussion. We want to hear what people are doing. Are you working with others in your agency?We have the 508 program manager. That is to handle the overall 508 program on the half of the agencies CIO. There is also work with public communication. The first time I did this I was in the EEO program. So we have the 508 program manager in the disability employment program manager. Please go to the next slide. This is how it is at NIH. We have the disability employment manager, David Rice. Who supports the employees of deaf, and disabled employees across NIH. He works in recruitment, retention and promotion. Looking at barriers. With a separate team we have reasonable accommodation consultant team. We had 26 institutes. At each of them in their portfolio at several institutes where they provide supports on individual basis. Working with the person who has a disability, working with their managers, to handle the individual requests for reasonable accommodations. And then we have the reasonable accommodation staff. In a completely separate office multi-Mex -- multi-mac

So this is the NIH construction. This is the agency level program. There is a coordinator at the agencies, and each institute, we have a section 508 coordinator. We are spread across program areas. Many in public [Indiscernible] and some are in acquisitions.

This is Pat Sheehan. Thank you so much for going through all of those slides. But I'm going to tell you how we are set up at Veterans Affairs. We have 501, 508, five 04. The 508 is under IT. And we have the office of inclusion. It was critical for us to work together to make sure that individuals not only have reasonable accommodations. But that the accommodations are going to work effectively with technology. Sometimes I am brought into reasonable accommodation issues. Within reasonable accommodation issues, you will have the supervisor, the person with the disability and the reasonable accommodation coordinator. The only way I am invited into that conversation, if the person with a disability, if they have a question they can bring me in for the reasonable accommodation discussion. I do try to find out, when I am asked from the person with a disability, I will say, what are you looking to try to do? What are the applications that you are working with? So I can make sure that it is a good fit for the particular accommodation. I am visually impaired myself. There are worlds that I am not familiar with but I am trying to become familiar with them right now. But I do have staff members, who do know the world of technology very well and they will give me options but so if there is a question about access, I can rely on my staff. And we can relate information back and forth through 504 and 508 office. Making sure that the individual is gonna get the best information. The last thing that I talk about, one area that we have in difficulty with trying to figure out about access, regarding 504 federal programs versus reasonable accommodations. The way that we interpreted that, the program, if it is mandatory for training, we have to provide them with access. We have to provide them with access as much as we can. Rather than having to rely on the individual. Things like being able to have automatic close captioning within our teams. That is huge for us in the department. Many of our training programs, have captioning as part of our webinars. It is a standard. So we do not have to worry about requesting reasonable accommodations. For the individual. But there has to be great communication between the disabled individual and the office. And the other organizations. And to make sure that people with disabilities are appropriately accommodated as much as we can through the program. But sometimes we have to look at their reasonable accommodations.

Thank you, Pat. I think that sums up how important it is to work together. And to get to know each other and have a relationship established before it the crisis occurs. And that the relation between 508 staff and EEO , diversity and inclusion, [Indiscernible]. Could this be an informal conversation? If there is difficult, do they intervene?

The office of resolution management is part of EEO. And this is Pat again . But if they have problems, we will get that call. It is a formal situation. And sometimes it is a question about the application that needs to be fixed. Or sometimes the application is something that needs to be scripted. So we will make sure that the individual is accommodated. And the and [Indiscernible]. And also received training. Whether it is fixing the application or writing a new script. That will all come through the help desk and that way we can track. And it does work pretty effectively.

How well does that help desk no assisted technology?

Gary, that is a great question. This is Pat. We have been in the process, writing a tier one, so they know how to read off simple things such as installing software. If they run into problems they know to pull up the 508 question and send it to us. We do have an EEO complaint from time to time. So we can research how many 508 questions that we have over the years and it had anything to do with the application. And the use of Nokia helpdesk service, has helped us streamline what we have to do. With the request that we get in. And try to make it more efficient all of the time. It has been a benefit, it has been very good.

I would like to open this up for a discussion at this point. I want to hear from anyone or everyone on the call this morning. Have you established a relationship with your disability office manager? Do you ever relationship with the accommodation staff was Macau have you been working together? What is working? As a 508 coordinator you were able to, ensure that the workplace is accessible? Are there times that you find a cystic technology just -- assisted technology is just not working. Is there something else you think might work? How do we negotiate all of that? What experiences do people have? Had we been able to get involved earlier? With this assisted technology had worked better?

Gary, this is Yvette . The LS has a presentation, that she designed and mentioned other sections like 503 and more and how it works with 508. So she is very glad to have this discussion today. It has been very easy, with programs and other offices that are spread out, that have valuable [Indiscernible]. That it all works together. She said she will update her presentation.

Yes, I think we should follow up and merge the best that we have and also share information. Are we taking lessons learns from other organizations? We are working with such big agencies, who has the central institutional knowledge and what works in division A versus division B? Let's say they are using Edge except [Indiscernible] so you do not reinvent the wheel. Please do speak up.

Mrs. Tatro. I am in an odd position right now. As a federal contractor, I have the knowledge across the division. But often times being so big and sub agencies, it can be very difficult to get information on what others are doing. So I find it useful, personally, to encourage people to subscribe to [Indiscernible] because you can get information that way. So now it is easy to keep in touch with other agencies. We can say, somebody is using Dragon Speaking or somebody is using Joss. That way we do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Are you part of the department of labor?

Yes.

I agree we have to work up-and-down if not we will end up in silos.

Many of our managers do not have the knowledge. We are beginning educational, you know, the importance of 508. We know that we have to do it but why is it important ? As we kind of integrate this, there is a call to see other agencies inside DOL and agencies outside DOL.

Michael just posted, the community that is governmentwide. But sometimes you want internal community. So we are not broadcast staying [ [Indiscernible]

So how can we address this? We do rely on the U.S. access board.

I would just like to wrap up with the questions. I am looking at the notes that I was taking. The things that we used to refer to as reasonable accommodations is now assisted technology like all of our webinars have closed captioning. We are now working, or teleworking. Do we have Zoom meetings, did we turn on the close captioning? Or what meetings do I need to request reasonable accommodations? What is my default? Whether it is captioning, or audio description or any other assisted technology.

I apologize for interrupting, this is the interpreter, Rachel, I just want to let you know that we are going to switch interpreters.

Thank you, Mary Beth.

So how do we carry on this conversation beyond today? How do we foster a relationship?

Gary, I think this is a good discussion we should continue. When we have more meetings like this, or a conference, we look at how we communicate and share successes in this area? Everybody has a different environment so to understand what the environment is an how it works, how do you make sure that individuals have the updated IT? And making sure, you know, that you can communicate people with a disability? To make sure that they not only have the latest updates as far is hardware and software. But have access to the application and that the application has been tested and fixed for 508 I think is critical. I think it is an excellent topic for this discussion. Certainly you and I are available. And we have totally different environment so IT we should pull a discussion together. Whether it is one-on-one or as a small group.

This is Yvette Gibson. Patting Gary we have a question from Davis.

There is a question from Sharon.

What is the best hybrids that Ian -- that you have seen?

At NIH, 504, reasonable accommodation for accessibility is almost always an EEO activity if not it will be in HR. I have not ever seen 504, you know it could be time, schedule, or telework or physical modifications. It is clearly going to be a highbred -- hybrid. Does anybody have any other thoughts on that one?

This is, Pat. I think it is more of an activity under 504. I think making sure that the handoff is there. And people know where the lanes are and how things are decided and who is the authority. And so 508 office can assist them to make the best decision. I think it is critical. So you do not have turf wars between 504 office and 508 office. It is not about which office is making the decision are running the show. But we need to look at that person as a whole person, make sure they get the reasonable accommodation in order to do their job.

Pat, thank you. We want to be responsible. Without getting into who has the right or who gets to make the final decision. Because we just want to support the individual who has a disability.

Gary and Pat there are other questions.

Are there any communities within the federal government for employees with disabilities for themselves? I think it would be useful if they could share their personal experience regarding accommodations.

There is one in the federal government.

I apologize for interrupting, Gary, this is Marianne the interpreter. I cannot see the questions.

I am trying to find the written chat.

The question was from Sarah Lorne.

Okay, I see it.

There is another one, I am trying to find it as we speak. I get it through Gmail. It is a federal employee list serve. I will share this with Yvette . And we will make sure it will get out to everybody. It is a very active program. But it is a federal employee list [Indiscernible] and they get into the nitty-gritty details.

This is Pat, depending on the individual with a disability and what the disability is, you have the national Federation of the blind. They all have groups and divisions that work with federal agencies. With people working in the federal government and commercial establishments but there is a lot of support on the 504 side and technology side. But Gary and I can steer you in the right direction.

[ content edited ]

Yes. We can take additional questions [ content edited ]. Here is our contact information. And the PowerPoint will be available. Thank you, on behalf of Pat and myself. Thank you everybody at GSA for this opportunity.

[ content edited ]

I am going to turn this over to John Sullivan. All of those who are attending, you will receive a survey. Please take the survey, and please be honest. And if you have any comments, let us know so we can provide a better meeting.

Thank you for staying here and thank you to the presenter. Yes we have tools for you to use. It is about if it is useful, please let us know if this is part of your solicitation. One thing that I would work on, find out how your agency does things and like I said, beta.sam.gov is not just the only place you post your solicitation. You do have to do a deeper review not just look at the requirements we would like to know, with mega data, was [Indiscernible] used? That is one functionality that we would like to have. I would like to invite everyone to our user group. Across GSA we want to evaluate the GSA website. Hopefully it is going to be more useful. We are going by topical areas and one is accessibility. It is called All Matters for Accessibility. We are working on rationalizing all of this information so it makes sense and that you can follow along. This should be apparent as a customer journey. Especially someone who is using our information. We have to build accessibility information for you and the Pfizer weight managers, those who are in development, those in testing. And it is for content creators, for all of us, we need to make sure it is accessible. So all of us should be looking at this information. And you will find redundancy information across the sites that we are working on trimming that up. But you, we really need you to be part of the process. We have done an inventory on 250 webpages. We will do we we need to do.

The forum is October 6th and October 7. It is a virtual event. We have great speakers. Many of you have help work to put this together. We have 12 different sessions. It will be different doing this virtually. Last year we did it at HHS and I thought it was phenomenal. It was such a great event. And people really did appreciate it. But going virtual we can get a lot of people. Even international. Just because it is virtual. So mark your calendar October 6 and October 7. The registration process will go out when we get closer to October. Anything else?

No, John.

Thank you, Yvette .

Thank you, this is Mary Beth the interpreter. We are going to sign off.

Thank you Mary Beth the interpreter and thank you Rachel the interpreter.

Thank you.? --

We want to say, thank you to Yvette .

[

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