

# VPAT® Vetting Checklist

Criteria for evaluating your vendor's accessibility conformance report

Purchasing accessible third-party technology isn't just integral to upholding inclusive values—it's required for compliance with many global civil rights laws, including Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in the U.S.

Validating that your vendors' products are accessible begins with requesting a completed Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®), also known as an accessibility conformance report (ACR). But just because your vendor has an ACR doesn't necessarily mean their product meets accessibility standards. So, how do you know whether you can trust the information in your vendor's ACR?

Use this checklist as a starting point to help determine whether your vendor has provided a reliable, accurate ACR.

## Common VPAT evaluation criteria

The following checklist includes criteria frequently used by organizations to evaluate an ACR's quality. However, it is not a complete list of all the factors that may inform your assessment—and it's wise to ask your vendor additional questions before signing a contract. For example, even if a vendor's ACR passes your initial evaluation, it's important to inquire about any processes in place for ensuring that new accessibility issues aren't introduced in the future.



*If you're new to VPATs or ACRs, review [this introductory blog](#) for an overview of the VPAT format and related terminology.*

## Section 1

# VPAT version, edition, and background information

These criteria will help you understand whether your vendor's ACR is up-to-date and relevant to your business needs, as well as start assessing whether it includes reliable information.

Criterion	Pass	Fail
Is a recent and relevant VPAT version used?	The ACR uses a recent version (typically VPAT 2.5 or 2.4).	The ACR uses a version of VPAT older than VPAT 2.4, or the version does not include the specific standards applicable to your organization.
Is the appropriate edition of VPAT used?	The edition of VPAT should include the standards that your organization aims to meet (e.g., if your organization is part of the U.S. federal government, your vendors should use the Section 508 or international edition).	Any edition of VPAT that does not align with your organization's target accessibility standards (e.g., the E.U.-only or WCAG-only edition if you are a U.S. government organization).
Is the ACR more than two years old?	The ACR's date is within the past two years.	The ACR is dated more than two years ago.
Is the product name and product version correct?	The ACR includes a current and accurate product name and product version.	The name and version of the product are outdated or incorrect (e.g., they reference another product).
Does the ACR provide accurate contact information?	A working email, phone number, and the name of an appropriate individual or department are listed.	No contact information is available, or the contact details provided cannot be used.
Is the ACR from a reputable source?	The ACR was produced by a reputable third party or first party and demonstrates knowledge of the process for auditing a product and creating an ACR.	The ACR was created by a non-expert or third-party vendor that is not reputable (this may be determined based on the quality of the ACR itself).
Is the ACR difficult to obtain (e.g., individuals are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement prior to accessing the ACR)?	The ACR is readily obtainable upon request or publicly available.	Obtaining the ACR requires the signature of a non-disclosure agreement or other complicated processes.
Are accurate notes provided?	The ACR includes accurate notes, or the notes section is intentionally left blank.	The notes contain concerning statements (e.g., only automated testing was used, an application won't be used by people with disabilities, or key parts of the product were excluded from the ACR because they weren't accessible).

## Section 2

# Evaluation techniques, standards, and scope

The criteria in this section will enable you to determine whether the product was evaluated using proper methodologies and standards, and whether the scope of the ACR is appropriate.

Criterion	Pass	Fail
Are proper evaluation techniques used?	The product was evaluated using manual testing, or a combination of manual and automated testing, as well as testing by native users of assistive technology (AT).	No information about evaluation techniques is provided, or the evaluation techniques listed are insufficient (e.g., automated testing only).
Are applicable accessibility standards listed?	The ACR includes the standards required by your organization (typically the <a href="#">Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2, 2.1, or 2.0 A and AA standards</a> ).	The ACR does not include standards that align with your organization's requirements.
Are tables for the correct standards complete?	All WCAG tables are complete.	WCAG tables are left incomplete.
Is the scope of the ACR clearly and accurately defined?	The ACR's scope covers the entire product or references other ACRs that cover areas of the product that are not in scope.	Some product components (e.g., third-party technology) are not included in the ACR's scope.
If different ACRs have been created for different areas of a product, have all ACRs been provided?	All ACRs necessary to understand the full product's accessibility have been provided, and it is clear which ACRs apply to which areas of the product.	ACRs for specific areas of the product are missing, or there is a lack of clarity on which ACRs apply to which areas of the product.
Does the ACR cover configured, customized, export, or authoring features of the product?	If the product includes configured, customized, export, and / or authoring features, the accessibility of these features is covered by the ACR.	The ACR does not cover configured, customized, export, and / or authoring features, even though the product includes these types of features.

### Section 3

## Conformance levels and remarks

These criteria will allow you to gain insight into whether the ACR provides clear, accurate, and sufficiently detailed information about the product’s level of conformance with accessibility standards.

Criterion	Pass	Fail
Do conformance levels and remarks distinguish between different types of digital experiences (e.g., software, web, non-web documents)?	The ACR clearly indicates the type of digital experience that a given conformance level or remark applies to.	There is no way to determine what type of digital experience is being referenced by a given conformance level or remark.
Are items marked “not applicable” when they should be applicable?	Only criteria that are “not applicable” to a product are marked as such.	Criteria applicable to a product are marked “not applicable” or not evaluated.
Do the remarks and explanation columns provide sufficient detail?	<p>Details are provided for all support levels (“supports,” “partially supports,” “does not support,” and “not applicable”). These details should contain the following information based on support level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supports:</b> How the product supports the criterion (e.g., what accessibility features or techniques are implemented)</li> <li>• <b>Partially supports:</b> What accessibility techniques are implemented, and any exemptions (including the location of, and a description for, these exemptions)</li> <li>• <b>Does not support:</b> Which aspects of the product do not support the criterion (including a description of these aspects)</li> </ul>	No details, or insufficient details, are provided about one or more support levels.
Do remarks and details demonstrate an understanding of the criteria evaluated?	Remarks reflect that the author of the report understands the criteria.	Remarks raise questions about the author’s understanding of the criteria.
Does the conformance level specified for each criterion reflect the issues documented?	“Supports” is used when no issues are documented, and “does not support” is used when serious issues are documented.	“Supports” is used even though conformance issues are documented in the remarks column.

## How to respond to an inadequate ACR

If your vendor's ACR does not pass one or more of the criteria in this checklist, there's no need to abandon the relationship right away. Instead, initiate a conversation with your vendor about providing more up-to-date and / or accurate conformance documentation. You may also choose to take a different approach to understanding their product's accessibility. For instance, you could request access to a demo environment and obtain your own manual evaluation of the product from a reputable third-party expert. Be sure to communicate any issues identified in this evaluation to your vendor, so they can prioritize addressing them and updating their ACR. Ultimately, your feedback will enable your vendor to build a stronger and more inclusive product.

## Achieve ongoing accessibility and compliance with an expert partner

Level Access has more than 25 years of experience empowering organizations of all sizes to meet compliance requirements, maintain accessibility over time, and confidently report on conformance. Our experts can help your organization navigate the nuances of accessible product procurement, and we can support your vendors with objective, comprehensive ACRs. To learn more, engage with our team today.