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Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability

Federal Exchange on Employment and Disability (FEED) Meeting

Digital Accessibility in the Federal Sector

June 10, 2026

Today's Agenda

Introduction (1:00-1:05 p.m.)

- Akinyemi Banjo, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

Welcome (1:05-1:10 p.m.)

- Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

Digital Accessibility in the Federal Sector: Progress and Opportunities (1:10-2:15)

- Andrew Nielson, Director, Governmentwide IT Accessibility Program, Office of Governmentwide Policy, General Services Administration (GSA)
- Nathan Cunningham, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Project Manager, Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT)

Chat with U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (2:15-2:50 p.m.)

- Elyssa Santos-Abrams, Senior Attorney-Advisor, Training and Outreach Division, Office of Communication and Legislative Affairs, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
- Candace Clark, Management and Program Analyst, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Wrap-up and Closing (2:55-3:00 p.m.)

- Akinyemi Banjo, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

Introduction

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Welcome

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Digital Accessibility in the Federal Sector: Progress and Opportunities

Andrew Nielson, Director, Governmentwide IT Accessibility Program, Office of Governmentwide Policy, General Services Administration (GSA)

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Our Panelists

Andrew Nielson

Director, Governmentwide IT Accessibility Program, Office of Governmentwide Policy, General Services Administration (GSA)

Nathan Cunningham

Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Project Manager, Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT)

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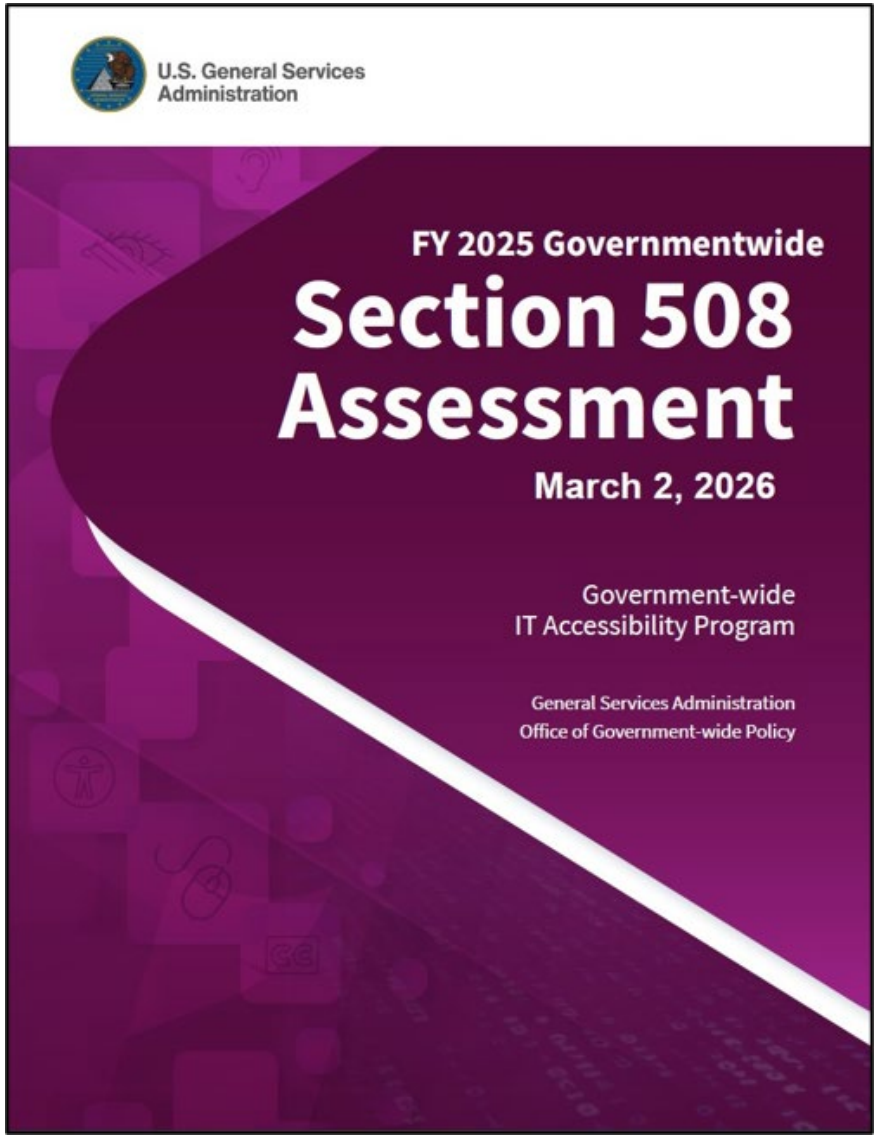
U.S. General Services Administration

FY 2025 Governmentwide Section 508 Assessment Findings

GSA Governmentwide IT Accessibility Team

June 10, 2026



Agenda

1. Executive Overview
2. Recommendations
3. Analysis – Implementation vs. Conformance
4. Findings
5. GSA Efforts

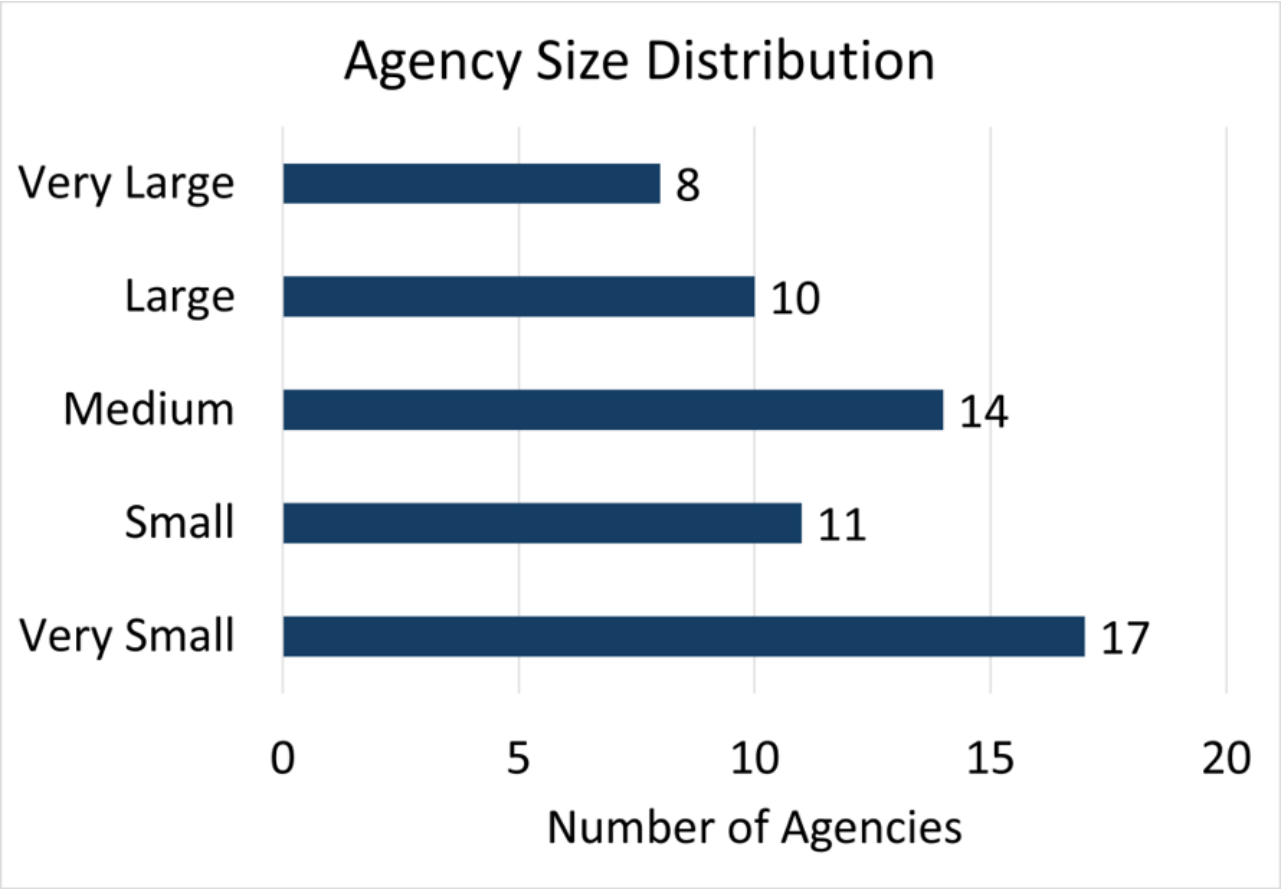
Overview

Overview of Reporting Mandate

29 U.S.C. § 794d-1 directs GSA to produce an annual comprehensive assessment of Section 508 compliance across the federal government. To meet the statutory requirement, the assessment report:

- Evaluates governmentwide compliance with Section 508 requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility
- Describes GSA's efforts to improve governmentwide ICT accessibility.
- Recommends how Congress and agencies can improve governmentwide ICT accessibility.

FY 2025 Respondents



212 Total Respondents

60 Agencies

152 Components

Executive Summary

- Overall ICT **conformance** is **low**, with wide variation across agencies.
- **Testing** coverage is **limited and uneven**, especially for hardware and software.
- **Implementation effectiveness**, not agency size, **drives accessibility conformance** outcomes.
- **Agencies that have decentralized components**, as well as those components, generally demonstrate **higher implementation** outcomes for Section 508 than agencies **without components**.
- **Agencies cluster into distinct implementation–conformance patterns.**

Recommendations

Recommendations to Congress

- **Update and clarify Section 508 statutory requirements** by clearly defining which federal agencies are subject to Section 508 and aligning reporting requirements under 29 U.S.C. §§ 794d and 794d-1.
- **Strengthen enforcement and accountability for Section 508 compliance** by exploring legislative approaches that improve oversight and corrective action.
- **Increase congressional oversight of Section 508 implementation** by requiring agency leadership to report planned corrective actions and directing agencies to independently validate Section 508 conformance for high-use, public-facing digital products and services.

Recommendations to Federal Agencies (1 of 2)

- **Strengthen leadership support and accountability for Section 508** by reinforcing that Chief Information Officers (CIOs) lead the integration of accessibility throughout the ICT life cycle.
- **Integrate Section 508 into core risk management frameworks** by treating ICT accessibility as a component of agencies' security, privacy, and risk management life cycles.
- **Use acquisition as a primary lever for Section 508 compliance** by prioritizing accessible commercial solutions, validating accessibility claims, enforcing contract requirements, and holding vendors accountable.

Recommendations to Federal Agencies (2 of 2)

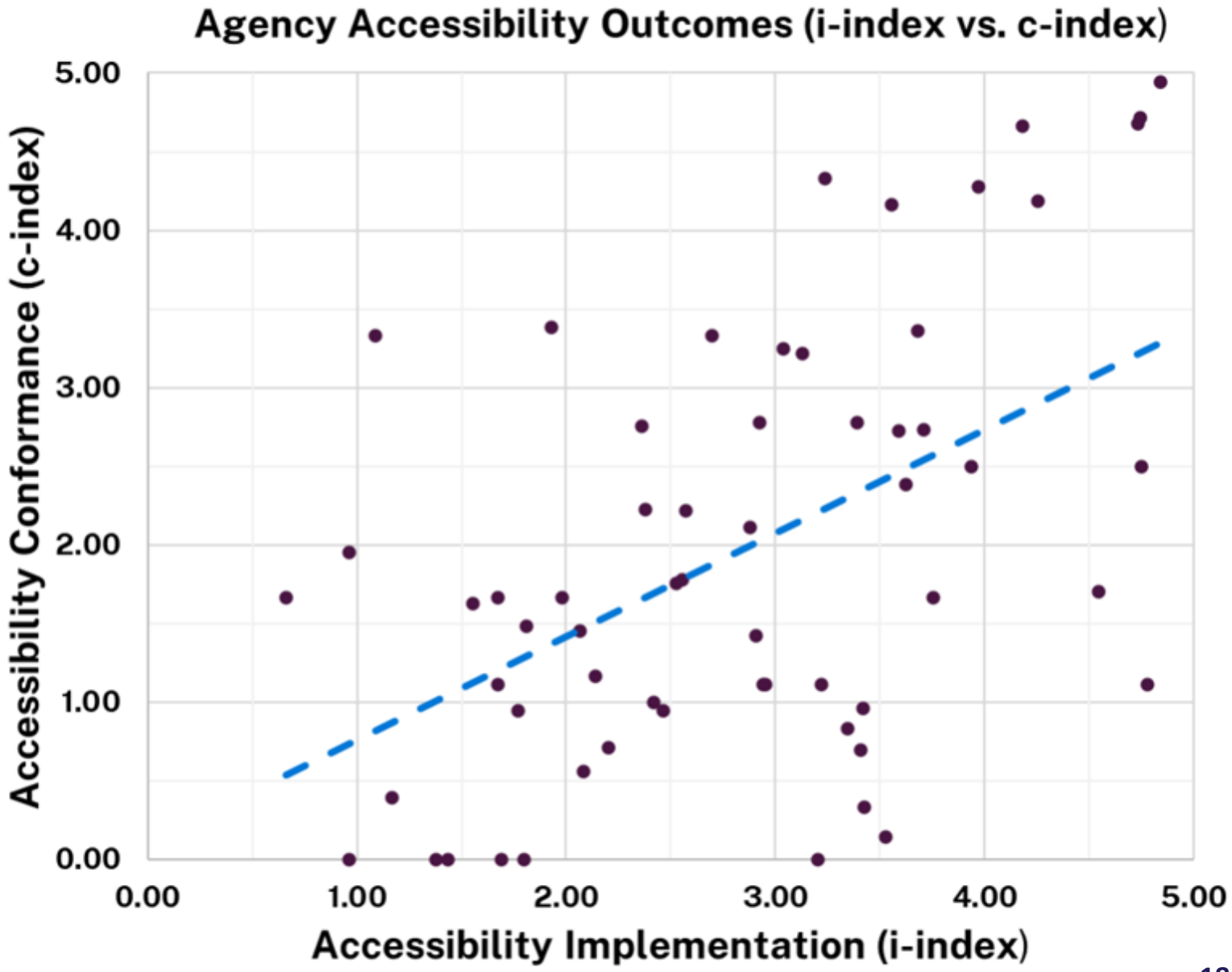
- **Strengthen and optimize Section 508 resourcing and governance** by leveraging shared services, federal buying power, and accessible authoring platforms, to improve outcomes at lower cost.
- **Require annual, role-based Section 508 training for employees** who create, maintain, or contribute to ICT by embedding accessibility training into onboarding and annual learning requirements.
- **Expand Section 508 conformance validation and remediation** by increasing testing prior to deployment, applying a risk-based approach that prioritizes high-impact and high-use ICT, and leveraging AI tools and staff training to support accessible content generation, evaluation, and remediation.

Analysis:
Implementation vs. Conformance

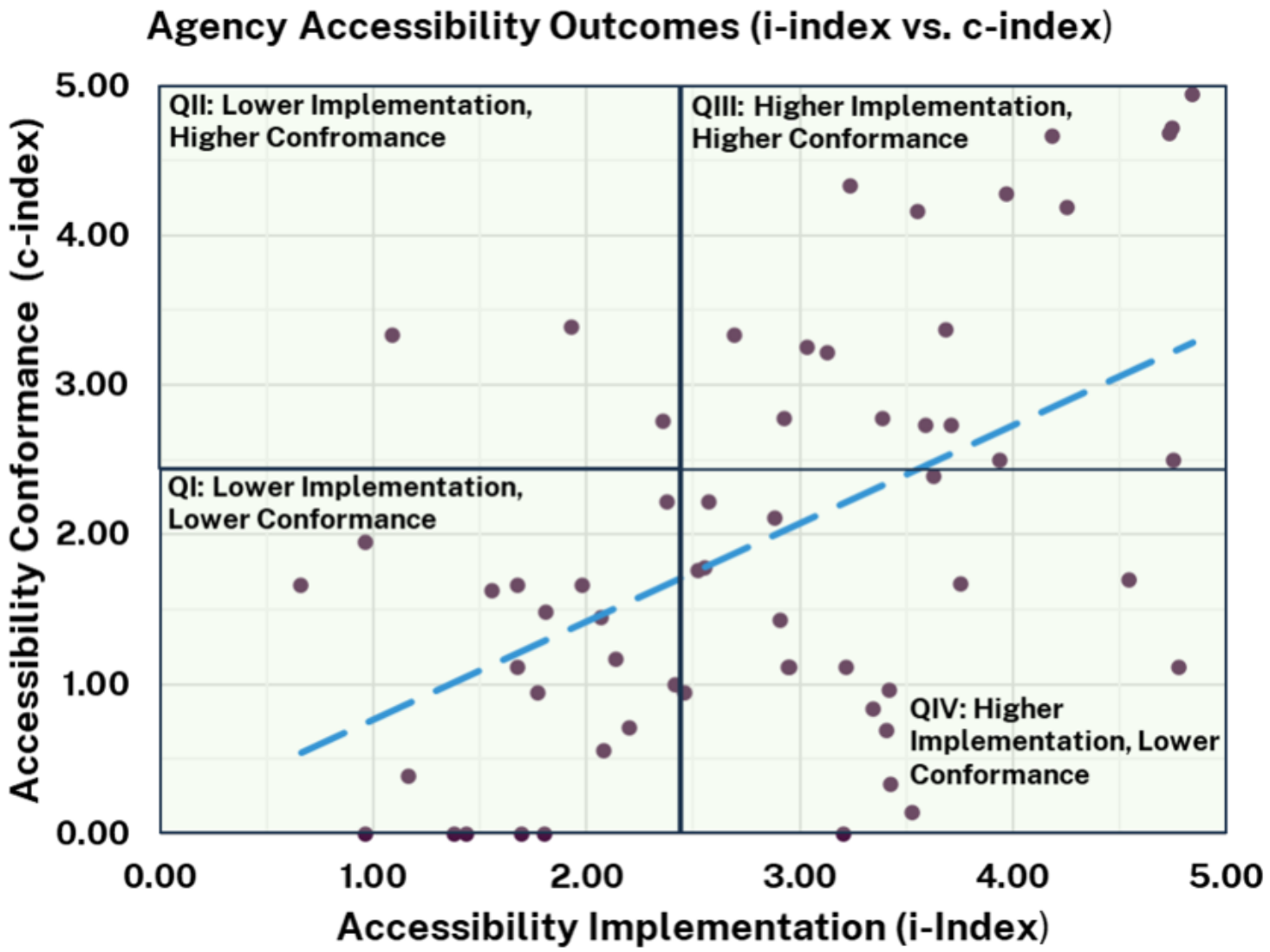
Analysis Results: Scatter Plot

Agencies cluster into distinct implementation–conformance patterns.

Higher implementation effectiveness is associated with higher conformance, reinforcing the importance of governance, acquisition integration, and testing practices.



Agency Accessibility Outcome Quadrants



- → Some agencies achieve moderate conformance despite limited enterprise integration.
- → Agencies with limited implementation also tend to report lower conformance.

Analysis Results: Implementation & Conformance

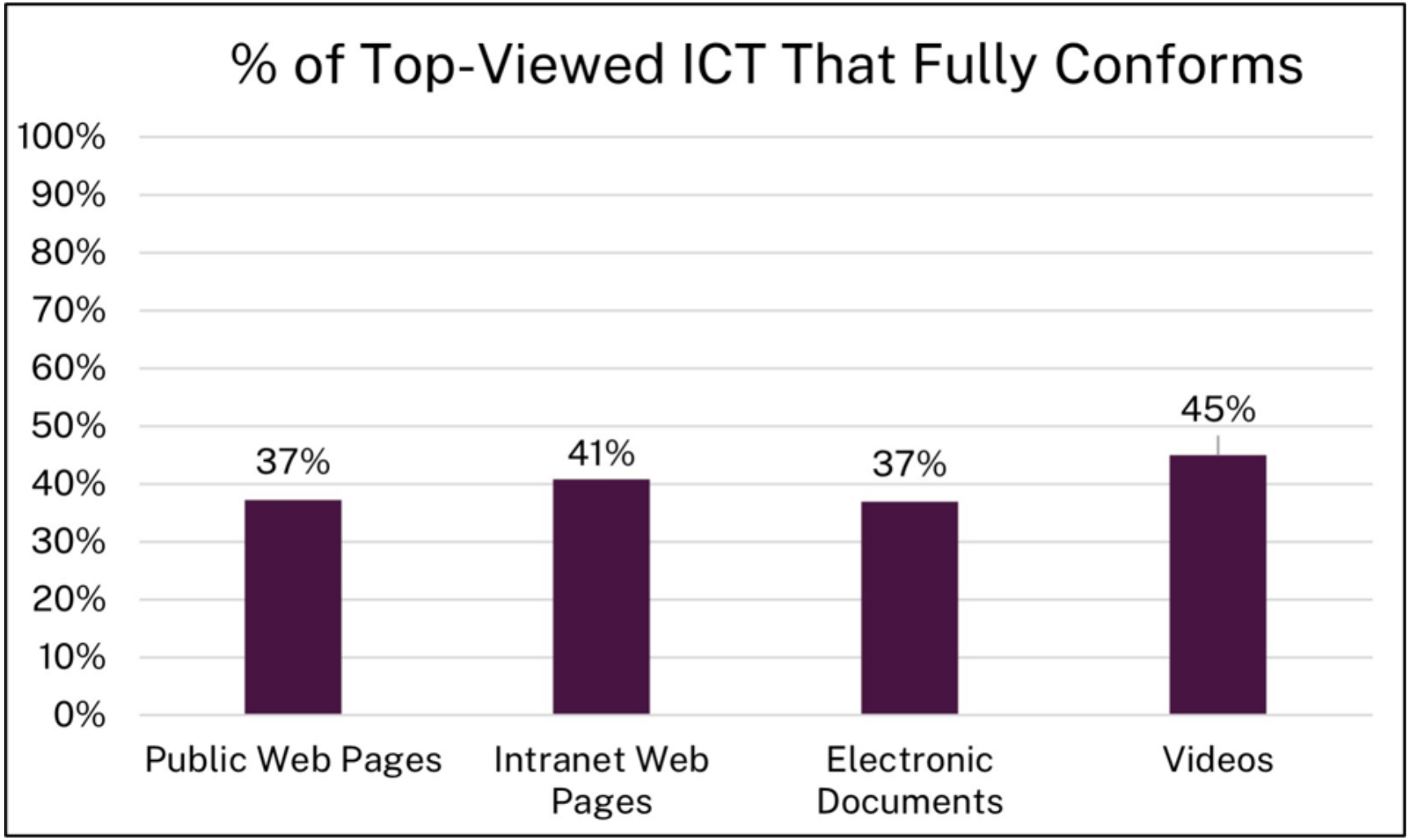
Quadrant	# of Agencies	Recommendation
Higher Implementation, Higher Conformance	16	Continue investment and a focus on continuous process improvement activities to see incremental improvements in both inputs (integration, acquisitions, testing) and outputs (ICT conformance).
Higher Implementation, Lower Conformance	20	Prioritize investment in the execution of testing processes and ways to implement established policy and standard operating procedures to increase conformance.
Lower Implementation, Higher Conformance,	3	Prioritize investment in the developing processes and developing policies that champion and institute ICT accessibility across the enterprise.
Lower Implementation, Lower Conformance	21	Focus on establishing baseline governance by assigning ownership, adopting core policies and procedures, and prioritizing testing and remediation for high-impact ICT, leveraging shared services and existing federal resources.

Findings

Selected Analysis: Top-Viewed Assets

Agencies reported the conformance of top viewed digital content.

Governmentwide conformance is low, with fewer than half reported as fully meeting Section 508 standards.



Findings: Policy Integration

- **Integration** of ICT accessibility into agency policies and business functions **varies widely**, indicating uneven institutionalization of Section 508 requirements across the federal enterprise.
- **Many agencies maintain standalone Section 508 policies** that **are not fully integrated** into operational policies, limiting consistency, enforcement, and scalability.
- **Components** generally **demonstrate stronger accessibility integration than their parent agencies**, suggesting implementation is often occurring closer to mission delivery and operational decision-making.

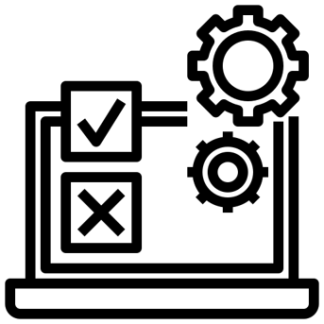
Findings: Acquisition and Procurement

- **Acquisition and Procurement** is one of the **strongest accessibility implementation areas,** with agencies reporting an average outcome of (High).
- **Parent agencies** reported an average **outcome of 4.02** (Very High) compared to their **components reporting a rating of 3.72** (High).
- Most agencies and components report that **ICT accessibility is mostly or fully integrated into acquisition and procurement** policies and practices.
- **Stronger integration of ICT accessibility into acquisition and procurement activities is associated with higher acquisition outcomes**.
- While parent agencies and components show broadly similar outcomes, **post-award practices remain the weakest and most inconsistent steps**.

Additional Acquisition Findings

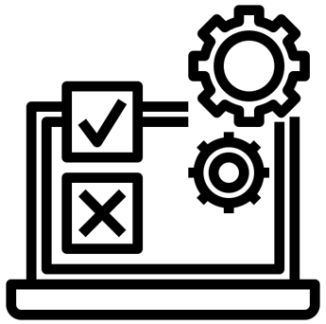
- Overall, **component-level acquisition practices mirror parent agencies**; they more consistently set requirements than verify and enforce them. However, **parent agencies reported stronger escalation practices**.
- **Acquisition outcomes do not correlate meaningfully with conformance results** of tested ICT (c-index) **or Testing and Remediation** outcome, indicating that stronger acquisition alone does not ensure accessible outcomes without validation and follow-through.
- **Agencies that more fully integrate ICT accessibility** into acquisition and procurement policies and functions **report higher acquisition factor outcomes** than agencies with less integration.

Findings: Testing and Remediation (1 of 2)



- **Testing and Remediation is the weakest accessibility implementation area**, with agencies reporting an average outcome of 2.00 (Low), reflecting limited standardization, inconsistent execution, and weak governance controls.
- Parent agencies reported an average outcome of 2.98 (Moderate) while components reported a slightly lower but still Moderate outcome of 2.56, indicating **similar challenges across organizational levels.**
- **Testing and remediation vary significantly by ICT type**, with hardware and internal web pages receiving less consistent testing, documentation, and remediation.

Findings: Testing and Remediation (2 of 2)



- **Usability testing with people with disabilities is rare across all ICT types**, with most agencies and components reporting that they do not conduct such testing prior to deployment or publication.
- **Mature testing practices**, such as standardized testing processes, risk-based prioritization, defined remediation timelines, and systematic evidence tracking, **are limited**.
- Agencies that establish clear remediation timelines and tracking mechanisms generally meet them, demonstrating that **governance, not technical feasibility, is the primary constraint**.

Findings: Section 508 Management

- **Most agencies manage Section 508 as a part-time responsibility**.
- Agencies with **more dedicated Section 508 Program leadership** and clearer management structures **tend to demonstrate stronger accessibility integration** and **better downstream conformance outcomes**.
- **Mandatory Section 508 training remains uncommon**, with only 27% of agencies and 25% of components reporting that they have required ICT accessibility training.
- **Inconsistent use of tracking and reporting practices**, including complaint tracking, limits visibility into accessibility risks and progress over time.
- **Strengthening Section 508 management** as an enterprise-level activity, rather than an ancillary compliance activity, **is critical to improvement.**

Agency Summary Reports

For each agency and component, these pages display:

- Size
- Program type
- Agency outcomes by Accessibility Implementation and Conformance
- Level of performance in four factors
- Level of ICT accessibility integration in key business functions
- Program data
- Exceptions and complaint data
- ICT conformance of tested ICT and top viewed ICT
- Acquisition and procurement responses (if applicable)
- Testing and remediation responses (if applicable)

U.S. Access Board

- **Department or Agency size:** Very Small Agencies (<100 employees)
- **Type of Section 508 program:** Centralized

Table 1: Centralized activities at the Department or Agency

Activity	Centralized at the Department or Agency?
Acquisition and Procurement	Yes
ICT Remediation	Yes
Section 508 Complaint Process	Yes
Testing	Yes
Training	Yes

Accessibility Outcomes

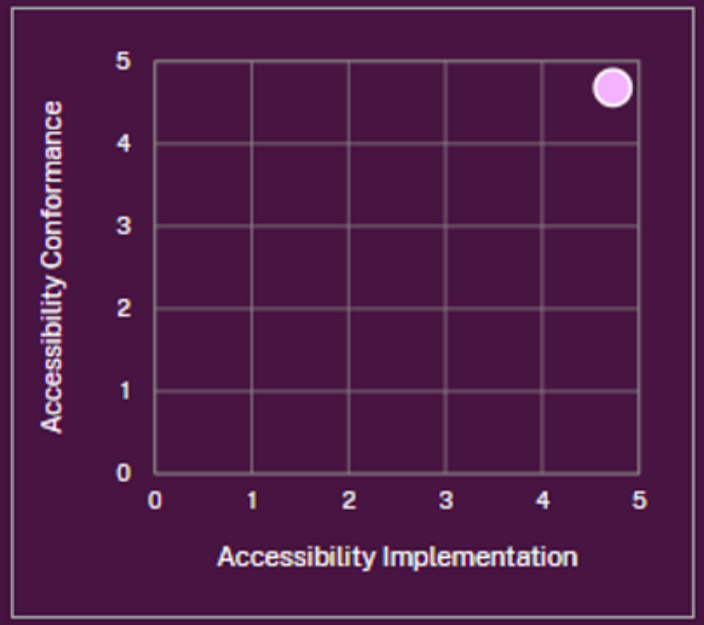


Figure 1. Agency outcomes grid

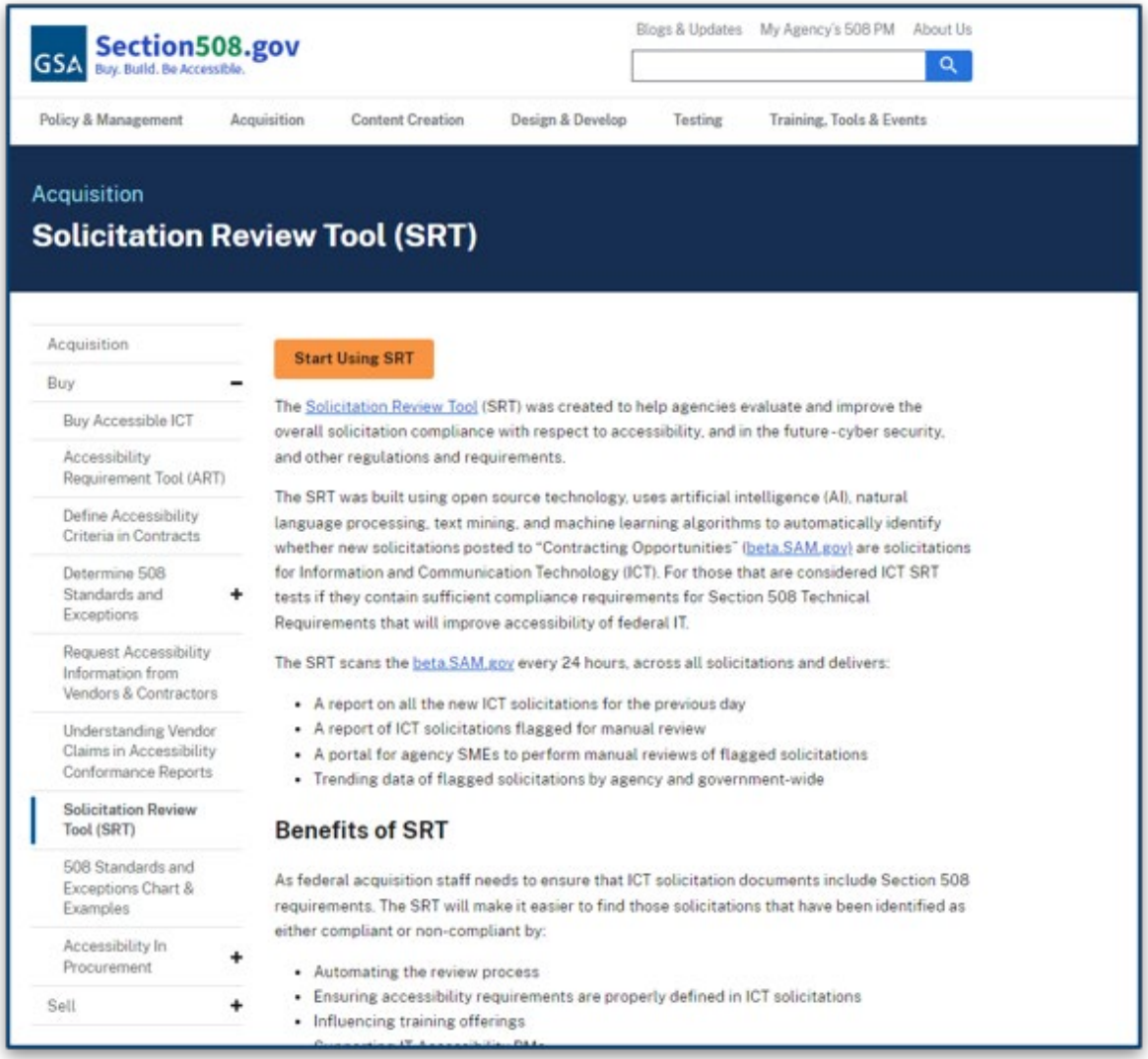
- **Accessibility Implementation:** Very High
- **Accessibility Conformance:** Very High

Agency Report Example

U.S. Access Board

GSA Efforts

Tool Highlight: Solicitation Review Tool



1. Solicitation Review Tool (SRT) uses artificial intelligence (AI), natural language processing, text mining, and machine learning algorithms to automatically identify whether new solicitations are ICT solicitations and, if so, tests if they contain sufficient compliance with Section 508 standards.
2. Selected recent SRT updates:
   a) Upload tool
   b) Retrieval Augmented Generation AI Capabilities
   c) Reconfigured user interface

Questions?

Resources and Contact Us

GSA Governmentwide IT Accessibility Team: section.508@gsa.gov

Andrew Nielson: andrew.nielson@gsa.gov

View the Report: section508.gov/2025-congressional-report/

GSA efforts to improve governmentwide accessibility

How to Make Emerging Technology More Accessible

Practical Strategies for Federal Workers

June 10, 2026

OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Charting the Path Forward

- Federal agencies have meaningful work ahead on ICT accessibility.
- That is not a reason to feel stuck — it is a reason to act strategically.
- The same challenges that make traditional ICT inaccessible will follow us into emerging technology unless we make different choices.
- **Let's explore what accessibility can look like in 2026 and beyond.**

Accessibility Is Everyone's Job

- Accessibility is not owned by one team, one office, or one specialist.
- Everyone who creates a document, leads a training, buys a tool, or manages a team has a role.
- Technology is only as effective as the people who build and use it.
- **The shift we need:** Accessibility as a shared practice — built into how we work, not added at the end.

Reframing Accessibility

- Accessibility is not a compliance checkbox — it is a design principle that makes technology work better for everyone.
- **Universal design:** solutions built for people with disabilities often benefit all users (e.g., captions in noisy rooms, plain language for busy readers, curb cuts for everyone).
- Section 508 applies to ICT, and emerging technology raises new questions that federal agencies need to address.
- Go beyond compliance to understand the real impact that accessibility has on federal employees and the public.

The New Frontier of Accessibility

From Traditional ICT to Emerging Technology

- Federal agencies are still working to make websites and documents accessible.
- Emerging technology — AI, extended reality (XR), wearables, advanced communication tools — is arriving fast.
- **The opportunity:** Emerging technology is newer, more flexible, and in many cases not yet locked in — we still have a chance to get it right from the start.

A Snapshot of Emerging Tech in the Workplace

Technology	Examples
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Writing assistants, hiring tools, captioning, chatbots
Extended Reality (XR)	VR training environments, AR workplace navigation, immersive onboarding
Wearables	Smart glasses, haptic devices, advanced hearing aids
Communication Tools	AI-powered captioning, speech avatars, voice recognition
Intelligent Assistants	AI copilots for memory, task management, and planning support

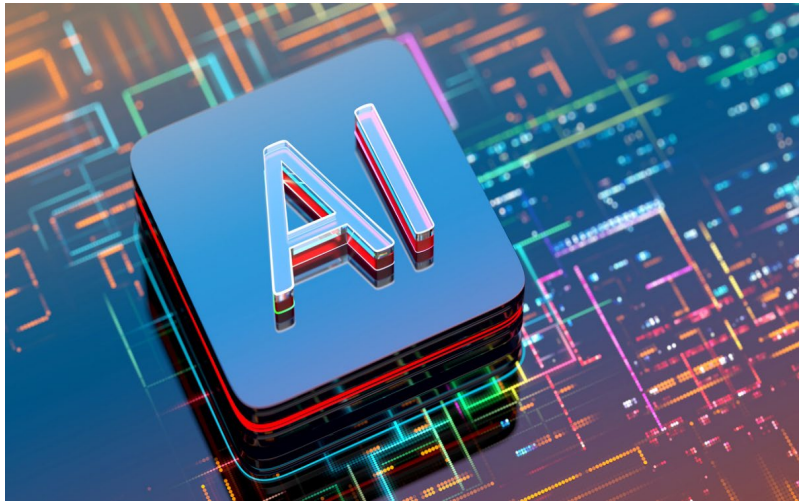
How Emerging Tech Can Support Accessibility

Function	What Technology Can Do
Perception	Describe images, charts, and environments in real time (AI); navigate spaces using AR
Movement	Enable gesture, eye-tracking, or voice control; haptic feedback for guidance
Comprehension	Adapt training content and pacing (AI); immersive skill-building (XR)
Communication	Generate speech, captions, and voice avatars; filter background noise
Executive Functioning	Support memory, planning, and task management through AI copilots

Spotlight on Accessible AI

Accessible AI Workflows

- Support **multiple ways of interacting** (such as speaking, typing, listening, or using assistive technologies) so tasks can move forward without interruption.
- **Reduce reliance on manual coordination** or one-off interventions, helping workflows progress without extra support or delays.
- Provide timely, consistent support **without requiring workers to repeatedly ask for help.**



Accessible AI Across the Employment Journey

The Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT) provides resources and training for employers.

PEAT

- PEAT's four-stage framework tracks the employment journey:
  - **Recruit & Hire** — Skills-based matching and applications.
  - **Onboard** — Adaptive training and immersive learning.
  - **Work & Upskill** — Captioning, wearables, real-time support.
  - **Support & Retain** — Accommodation systems and tools.

Key insight: Accessibility decisions made early shape everything that follows.

Spotlight: Recruit and Hire

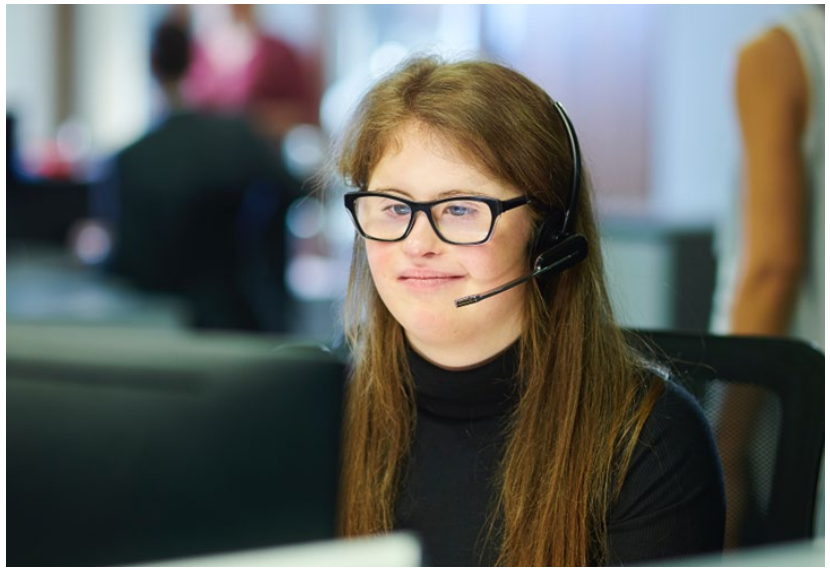
- Support multiple response formats (text, voice, audio)
- Ensure assessments work for disabled users (sensory/mobility)
- Work with screen readers and keyboard navigation
- Prioritize job-relevant skills over format or speed of response

Your role: Anyone involved in procurement or HR can ask vendors for accessibility documentation before you buy.

Spotlight: Work and Upskill

- Live AI captioning and transcription in meetings
- Speech-to-text for drafting and communication
- XR environments for immersive, flexible training
- Smart glasses and wearables for real-time navigation and task support
- AI copilots for memory, reminders, and executive functioning

Example: A small consultancy enabled live captioning for all-staff meetings — improving accuracy of task assignments and creating a more reliable record of decisions.



Getting Started with Accessible AI

- Review where delays, workarounds, or repeated steps commonly occur in hiring, onboarding, training, communication, or HR processes.
- Evaluate whether AI tools that are already in use support accessibility and multiple interaction methods, especially at points where work tends to stall.
- Involve employees with disabilities in testing routine workflows to identify issues that may not appear during other modes of evaluation.

Working with Generative AI

AI can help you work faster and smarter, but you are still the author.

- What AI writing tools do well:
  - Draft, outline, simplify, and edit content
  - Adjust tone and reading level for different audiences
  - Summarize long documents into key takeaways
- What to watch out for:
  - **Hallucinations** — verify facts before you publish
  - **Bland output** — add your voice, expertise, and context
  - **Vague results** — the more context you give, the better the output

Three-step model: Be specific → Give context → Review and refine.

Common Issues to Watch Out For

Well-intentioned tools can still create barriers:

- Monitoring tools that misread assistive technology use as low productivity.
- Hiring tools that penalize non-standard speech patterns.
- XR environments that are inaccessible to users with visual, mobility, or vestibular disabilities
- Training platforms that flag pauses or replays as disengagement
- Enterprise systems incompatible with screen readers or voice input

The common thread: When emerging technology is not tested with disabled users, it reflects the assumptions of whoever built it.

Key principle: Humans must stay in the loop — especially when technology affects employment decisions.

Summary of Practical Steps

Organizational Policies to Adopt

- Accessibility must be a requirement, not a preference — for traditional ICT and for every emerging technology your agency adopts.
- Procurement teams should ask additional questions for tools where 508 standards are still evolving.
- Include disabled users in testing before and after deployment.
- Reassess accessibility with every major update.
- Build internal accountability: who owns this, who monitors it, and how do employees request adjustments?

Tips to Get Started

- Audit the tools and content you already own — documents, training materials, procurement decisions.
- Ask one question of every vendor: "How was this tool tested for accessibility with disabled users?"
- Start with what you create: make your next document, email, or presentation more accessible.

Tips to Dive Deeper

- Pilot emerging technology tools with disabled employees and gather structured feedback.
- Require human review where technology flags or influences employment conditions.
- Advocate for accessibility requirements in your agency's AI and technology governance policies.

Resources

- **PEAT** (peatworks.org) — Quick Start Guide to Accessible AI across the Employment Journey
- **JAN** (askjan.org) — How AI Impacts Workplace Accommodation
- **ODEP** — Accessible Technology resources and technical assistance
- **DOL AI Center** (aicenter.dol.gov) — Approved AI tools for federal staff
- **Section 508** (section508.gov) — Standards and guidance for federal accessible technology

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Wrap-up and Closing

Akinyemi Banjo, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

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Mark Your Calendars

EARN Webinar

- July 1, 2026, 2:00-3:00 p.m. EDT (Construction with AGC)
- July 22, 2026, 2:00-3:00 p.m. EDT (Advanced Manufacturing with NAM)

FEED Meeting

- September 9, 2026, 1:00-3:00 p.m. EDT

EARN Funding Statement

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