

PROCEDURE

TITLE:	Procurement of Accessible Technology
NUMBER:	745
AUTHORIZED BY THE PRESIDENT	May 3, 2016

The following procedures are established to meet the requirement for implementing the Accessible Technology Policy as adopted by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges on March 24, 2016, which was “established to support the community and technical colleges in Washington State in their obligation to provide equal, effective, and meaningful access to the benefits of technology for individuals with disabilities.” Whatcom Community College (WCC) intends to purchase technology and other goods/services accessible and compliant with state policy and federal law.

Examples of technology not accessible include videos without closed captioning, web applications that cannot be read by a screen reader, or computer kiosks that cannot be accessed by those in a wheelchair.

Purchasing Technology: All technology products or services purchased by the College **require** vendors to submit a “Voluntary Product Accessibility Template” (VPAT), documenting the accessibility of a product in accordance with Section 508 standards of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The VPAT review will be coordinated by the WCC Information Technology (IT) Department to verify accessible compliance and accuracy. The IT Director will inform the requestor within two weeks of receiving a VPAT if the product is in compliance with accessibility regulations and standards. When a product is considered accessible with the VPAT, the requestor may continue with the procurement process following Washington State and WCC policies and procedures.

Exemptions: When a VPAT demonstrates a lack of accessibility, an exemption may be requested by the WCC department or employee initiating the technology request by utilizing the following procedure.

PROCEDURES

Requesting a technology accessibility exemption: A written request for exemption may be made to the IT Director following review and endorsement by the appropriate director, division chair, or supervisor. Exemption requests should detail what accessibility requirements cannot be met by the technology product. The request should also detail why attempting to meet accessibility requirements would cause an undue burden to college resources, employees, and/or students. Requests should indicate other options or vendors considered and why they were not selected. The respective vice president, in consultation with the Office of Access and Disability Services and IT Director will evaluate the request based on the following criteria:

- What solutions (technology or otherwise) are currently in place? Will this technology improve or hinder accessibility?
- What constituent groups will this service affect?
- Can accommodations be made to overcome barriers to accessibility?

The final decision on exemptions will be made by the respective vice president. The IT Director will notify the requestor of the final decision within 30 days of receiving the request. The IT Department will maintain documentation of all approved exemptions.

DEFINITIONS

- Voluntary Product Accessibility Template - an "informational tool" that describes exactly how the product or service does or does not meet Section 508 standards.
- Section 508 – an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a federal law mandating that all electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities. Technology is deemed to be "accessible" if it can be used effectively by all persons.

RELEVANT LAWS AND OTHER RESOURCES

- Voluntary Product Accessibility Template: <http://www.itic.org/>
- Section 508 and Federal procurement: <http://www.evengrounds.com/articles/section-508-and-federal-procurement>
- SBCTC Policy Accessible Technology Policy: <http://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/policies-rules>