



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892
<http://www.nih.gov/>

Date: March 22, 2012

To: Acquisition Management Committee
GS-1102-ListServe

From: Head of the Contracting Activity and
Director, Office of Acquisition and Logistics
Management (OALM)

Subject: OAMP Policy Letter 2012-1, Section 508 Compliant Solicitations

Background: Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires Federal agencies to provide people with disabilities access to data and information that is comparable to the access provided to people without disabilities. Section 508 is implemented through the procurement process; therefore, all IT procured (and used, developed and maintained) by the Federal government must be accessible. The purpose of this policy letter is to provide policy and guidance on developing Section 508 compliant solicitations to NIH acquisition staff.

Policy: The Head of the Contracting Activity has determined that NIH needs to issue Section 508 compliant solicitations to the public in accordance with the General Services Administration (GSA) Guide on creating Section 508 Compliant IT Solicitations.

Solicitation Documents: All NIH Solicitation documents and attachments must be Section 508 compliant, regardless of the type of acquisition, before transmission to FedBizOpps. The NIH Document Generation System (DGS) is Section 508 compliant; therefore, use of the DGS for solicitation preparation is recommended. HHS provides tips, checklists and standards for testing documents for Section 508 compliance at: <http://www.hhs.gov/web/508/index.html>. It is recommended that these tools be used to ensure any solicitation attachment generated by the DGS user and attached to the solicitation is Section 508 compliant.

Technical Requirements: Solicitations which will develop, purchase, maintain, or use electronic and information technology (EIT) products and services must:

- State that the required IT must be accessible;
- Indicate which provisions of the Section 508 standard apply to your purchase;
- Request accessibility information from vendors that respond to your solicitation;
- Evaluate received proposals based on responses to your accessibility requirements; and,

- Let vendors know you plan to inspect deliverables based on meeting accessibility requirements.
- Section 508 compliance is addressed in the DGS solicitation workform as an instruction under Section L.2.b.10, Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility, HHSAR 352.239-73(a); as an attachment under Section J – HHS Section 508 Product Assessment Template, and as an evaluation criterion under Section M.10, Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Section 508 Compliance. Further guidance is available in GSA’s Guidance on Creating 508 Compliant IT Solicitations at <http://www.section508.gov/docs/GuidanceonCreating508CompliantITSolicitations.pdf>.

GSA Reviews: The GSA, as part of their statutory requirement to provide technical support for Section 508, assesses the extent to which agency solicitations properly consider Section 508 standards by sampling solicitations for EIT posted on FedBizOpps. Results are shared with the contracting officer, the OP/DIV Section coordinator and OMB. Responses to GSA results are not required. Results should be used to improve future solicitations.

Effective Date: Immediately.

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