# Procuring with everybody in mind: A guide to procuring accessible ICT in the Tertiary Sector Project Report and Recommendations for Next Steps

## Version control

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| Version | Date | Status / Updates |
| 0.1 | 14 September 2022 | First draft for ADCET feedback |
| 1.0 | 29 September 2022 | Final draft for publishing |

This project was commissioned in March 2022. The Background and Introduction document in the guide explains how the project came about and why Intopia was commissioned to undertake the work.

This report outlines how the project was delivered and Intopia’s recommended next steps once the project is completed.

The shape of the guide evolved over the course of the project. As we met with stakeholders and heard the views of the sponsors and the Advisory Panel, the necessary components became clearer.

To determine what was required, Intopia did the following:

* **Held interviews** with a range of stakeholders to learn about their experiences (good and bad) of ICT procurement and the consequences of inaccessible ICT software and equipment. We spoke with end users as well as those involved in procurement, along with a range of subject matter experts across the sector. We learned what they needed from a guide like this and what would have helped them up to now. We heard a number of personal stories which helped us to illustrate the issues in a very real-world manner and which brought the human experience to what is often thought of as a technology issue;
* **Examined procurement-related documents** from a wide range of institutions. These included procurement policies, accessibility guidelines, diversity and inclusion policies and processes and a representative sample of action plans;
* **Looked at comparable organisations** around the world and what they do and drew on their experiences to inform our advice on good practice and pitfalls to avoid;
* **Took part in fortnightly meetings** with the project sponsors, and three monthly meetings with the Advisory Panel so that our thinking and later our drafts could be considered, critiqued and feedback received. We also contributed to a webinar on accessible procurement which was hosted by CAUDIT, which provided us with a further opportunity to request and receive feedback from those directly involved in procurement on a day-to-day basis;
* **Circulated two sets of drafts** for comment before the final guide was presented at the end of the project.

The final outcome was a guide which includes:

* Examples of suitable text which can be used in accessible procurement policies, Requests for Information/Proposal/Quotation, contract clauses and ICT Risk Registers
* Advice on processes to put in place to give purchasers the best chance to achieve accessible ICT procurement
* Questions to ask prospective vendors about their product’s accessibility, and advice on how to assess their claims
* Information to support higher education institutions and vendors to meet AS EN 301 549
* Scenarios and stories of how procurement can affect the outcomes for students and staff
* Example testing procedures to evaluate potential purchases against the standards
* Guidance relating to existing software and hardware about how and why to enable accessibility features
* Guidance about what Universities can do quickly and now, to make fast inroads for current and future students and staff.

Unfortunately, there will be times when responses from vendors and delivered ICT products or services fall short of accessibility standards. The guide provides information on how to identify known defects, work with vendors to resolve issues and provide equivalent access when there are accessibility failures.

## Where to from here?

It is our understanding that the guide will be circulated widely following its official launch in October 2022. It will also be hosted on the CAUDIT website so that it is easily discoverable by procurement teams throughout the sector in the future.

Intopia advises that this project, while complete, should be seen as a developing initiative. There is much more to be done now that this toolkit is available.

Below we have included some recommendations which ADCET, NDCO, CAUDIT and institutions throughout the sector may wish to implement to ensure that this work continues and evolves to meet an ever-changing environment.

| ID | Recommendation | Timeline | Benefit Statement |
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| 1 | **Place a copy of the guide, or preferably a link to the guide, on websites of all member institutions** | Upon launch or as soon as possible after | Making the guide easily discoverable will facilitate its take-up |
| 2 | **Seek feedback from people using the guide** in order to improve it over time | Ongoing | This is a first version and with use some gaps or improvements will be identified that will need to be consider for updates. |
| 3 | **Ensure that a definitive version of the guide is uploaded and maintained on the CAUDIT website** and encourage institutions to link directly to the appropriate pages from their own websites |  | Avoids the risk of several potentially outdated versions being in circulation |
| 4 | **Prepare a video or similar short-form presentation highlighting the value of the guide and the need for accessible ICT procurement** |  | Will be a starting point for procurement teams not familiar with accessibility |
| 5 | **Work with CAUDIT and other bodies to deliver training** and education programs for procurement teams that address knowledge gaps around digital accessibility |  | Will uplift accessibility capability among procurement teams ensuring staff have the necessary skills and/or support required to meet digital accessibility commitments. |
| 6 | **Embed awareness training into induction programs** to ensure new procurement and ICT employees have the necessary understanding, skills and/or support required to meet digital accessibility requirements |  | Will uplift digital accessibility capability as a matter of course as new team members are hired. |
| 7 | **Put in place processes to institutionalise knowledge** which leads to enabling accessibility features in all corporate and widely used ‘off the shelf’ or customized software applications and ICT hardware. |  | Will lead to higher education institutions better utilising digital products across the organization and delivering accessible digital services to staff, students and visitors. |
| 8 | **Encourage procurement teams and product developers to add accessibility to the acceptance criteria** when building or purchasing new digital products and services. Ensure that disability is reflected in personas for storylines. |  | Will ensure that accessibility requirements are considered during procurement leading to more accessible outcomes. |
| 9 | **All policies, processes and guides covering the procurement and deployment of digital assets be reviewed and brought up to** date with reference to WCAG Version 2.1 (and later this year 2.2), or AS EN 301-549 as appropriate. |  | Clear documentation gives clear direction for the future procurement or development of digital products and services for staff, students and visitors. |