



9 Steps to Procuring Accessible ICTs for Inclusive Education

This document was created by G3ict – The Global Initiative for inclusive ICT - to help education system institutions of all levels (e.g. schools and school districts, municipal and regional education authorities, education resource centers, ministries of education and other related ministries) to integrate accessible information and communication technologies (ICT) into their policies and practices. The goal is to ensure that these institutions are well equipped to move toward a stronger commitment to making accessibility a part of their ICT procurement. This roadmap is one of several resources that G3ict and its partners have developed to support inclusive education worldwide.

It is important to notice that the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD) recognizes the accessibility of ICTs both as a human right (Article 9) and as an enabler of other human rights. Article 24 requires states to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. Many national and local laws, regulations, and policies align with these CRPD commitments as well with globally relevant ICT accessibility standards, such as [EN 301 549](#) (EU); [Section 508 of Rehabilitation Act](#) of 1973(United States) technical requirements and [WCAG 2.0/ISO/IEC 40500](#) (2013). In early 2018, the W3C released an updated version of that standard, [WCAG 2.1](#).

- ✚ For ICT, **accessibility** is generally accepted as being the quality of a mainstream technology such as a computer, mobile phone, self-service kiosk, or piece of software, to be used by the widest range of users possible, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Accessibility makes it easier for anyone to see, hear, and use a device and to customize their digital environment according to their own preferences, needs, and abilities. Interoperability between the built-in access features and add-on accessible technologies is needed to ensure accessibility for a full range of individuals with disabilities.
- ✚ Accessible technology supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities and its benefits extend to the population as a whole. For example, speech recognition makes it possible for blind persons and anyone to compose text messages without using a keyboard.
- ✚ **ICT for inclusive education** reflects the same principles. It supports providing equally effective access for learners of all abilities to mainstream technologies through features and enhancements that allow for personalization, and through assistive technologies that compensate for difficulties in accessing and using mainstream technologies. ICT for inclusive education also supports access to digital learning content and instructional delivery systems, library research, teacher/student communications, etc. Addressing the ICT accessibility needs of learners with disabilities and other learners who require different forms of learning support can be achieved more cost effectively by considering them in the earliest stage of the procurement and development process.



- ✦ **Public procurement policies** set the expectations, criteria, and limits for how goods, services, and infrastructure development will be purchased. Public procurement processes have gained increased attention as an effective policy tool to promote the accessibility of ICT equipment, software, applications, and services purchased by governments or government-funded programs, including by education system institutions of all levels. It is common practice today for governments to promote ICT privacy and security by including them as part of their procurements. ICT accessibility can be added as a priority in a similar way.
- ✦ **Globally relevant accessibility standards** such as EN 301 549 (EU), WCAG 2.0/ISO/IEC 40500 and the technical requirements of Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act are commonly referenced as criteria in Request for Proposals (RFPs). Many ICT providers design and develop their products and services to meet these criteria. It is a common practice for governments to request that vendors provide accessibility conformance reports that demonstrate how they meet these standards.

Roadmap Checklist

The objective of this document is to support a move by education system institutions towards a stronger commitment to accessibility in their ICT procurements through nine steps. Procurement is one of the most important and effective policy tools both for national education authorities and local school districts. Procurement requirements have a large influence on many areas, including the behaviors of markets, individual companies, and the lives of learners and their families, which is particularly true for persons with disabilities.

It is expected that in any education system institution the people playing a role related to the procurement of technologies will vary. Therefore, the following steps may be led by people in different roles and used by regional and national education authorities, school district administrators, school principals, etc. to make sure that ICT procurement process fully embraces principles of accessibility and inclusion and helps every learner to get the most out of learning and reach his or her maximum potential.

Following the nine steps below in addition to adopting and fully implementing a formal and comprehensive ICT accessibility procurement policy that references an existing globally relevant ICT accessibility standards will help an education system institution create and implement accessible ICT procurement processes and ensure a broad-based and ongoing commitment to ICT accessibility in inclusive education. In this work, [G3ict Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report](#) can be helpful.

| Actions | Description |
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| 1. Organization and awareness-raising | At the first stage, it is useful to create a working group of stakeholders to ensure that common understanding is formed across the organization, all needs are noted, and awareness is raised: |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the stakeholders of the ICT procurement process <input type="checkbox"/> Create a working group comprised of the stakeholders: procurement officers, CIO/IT personnel, accessibility specialists, academic excellence specialists, administrators, teachers/professors, therapists, other education support professionals, etc. as well as users of the technology. Parents of students with disabilities could also be considered. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a shared understanding and common language by organizing training on ICT accessibility in an education environment <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the group receives the resources necessary to participate in the process <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the group participates as appropriate and feasible in all stages of the procurement process, including drafting of Call for Tender/ Request for Proposals, evaluation of tender proposals, meetings with vendors, etc. At a minimum, it is important to keep all stakeholders informed of progress. |
| 2. Audit and research | <p>To improve the general understanding of the accessible ICT for education landscape assess the needs and evaluate what the market can offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make yourself familiar with the existing national and regional ICT and procurement policies, international and national accessibility standards, including universal design approaches, interoperability guidelines, and procurement guidelines <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to the national resource database of inclusive ICT procurement possibilities, if one exists <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate if there are resource centers for assistive technologies who might also advise on accessibility <input type="checkbox"/> Research the experience of other education system institutions with different ICT solutions and ICT companies <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange an audit of students to assess the education environment and needs across the country or in the single education system institution <input type="checkbox"/> Assess the current state of the ICT ecosystem of the education system institution to check what ICTs have already been purchased and whether they are accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Come up with the list of the education system institution's ICT accessibility needs, which will benefit all the learners <input type="checkbox"/> Engage with vendors and suppliers and learn what is available on the market |



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| <p>3. Engagement of vendors in a discussion</p> | <p>Discuss with vendors ICT accessibility strategies, approaches, and commitment. Refer to the G3ict document, <i>Procurement of ICTs for Inclusive Education: Guide for Engaging ICT Vendors</i>, for tips on having a more meaningful dialogue about accessibility with vendors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Organize a series of meetings with vendors that have been selected as meeting accessibility criteria in a Call for Tender/RFP <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify how vendors' products can be used to meet specific accessibility needs and requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions regarding the vendor's experience in accessibility and what business processes ensure the accessibility of the products <input type="checkbox"/> Request demonstrations of a vendor's product within the planned setting with the focus on its accessibility and application for different use cases including individual use and collaboration |
| <p>4. Call for Tender/Request for Proposals</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send out to potential vendors the precise details of the product or service required, including accessibility requirements, and terms of the procurement exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure that accessibility criteria are clear, add references to guiding documents to educate and raise awareness among vendors <input type="checkbox"/> Request evidence, such as conformance report, to show there is a conformity with the accessibility criteria <input type="checkbox"/> Request testimonials of successful implementation of accessible products <input type="checkbox"/> Make it clear that adherence to accessibility standards is a condition for successful requests and will be included in the final contract. |
| <p>5. Evaluation of tenders</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use this stage as an additional opportunity to engage vendors in productive discussions regarding ICT accessibility <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate each vendor response against the criteria set out in the call for tender <input type="checkbox"/> Request that vendors self-declare how they meet accessibility criteria in a conformance report and make it optional for them to include supplemental information such as supporting evidence or third-party assessments, etc. |
| <p>6. Evaluation of deliverables</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the deliverables meet the criteria set out in the tender <input type="checkbox"/> If you have concerns about usability, consider asking the vendor to let some users with disabilities within your organization pilot or trial the product or service |



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| 7. Contracts management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define the process for handling exceptions to standards and requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Agree on deployment and support procedures making sure that accessibility is covered by the vendor's dedicated support team <input type="checkbox"/> Include all relevant information on accessibility guarantees, testing and delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Include provision for soliciting feedback from both vendors and users <input type="checkbox"/> Consider a non-payment clause if the contractually agreed accessibility criteria are not delivered. |
| 8. Deployment | <p>To ensure equal access to education for all learners and maximize return on investment it is important to ensure timely and full deployment of purchased accessible ICT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss with vendors access to their training materials, opportunities for online and offline training <input type="checkbox"/> Give feedback to vendors on the deployment and use of their products for them to be able to improve it <input type="checkbox"/> Join knowledge-sharing communities <input type="checkbox"/> Build partnerships with vendors, other education, and academic institutions, and civil society, initiate discussions, participate in dialogues |
| 9. Education and training | <p>To ensure that an education organization takes full advantage of its investments into accessible ICT, consider providing training and guidance to all stakeholders, including staff, teachers, learners, and parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assess the training needs of all groups of stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Create accessibility training plan <input type="checkbox"/> Engage vendors as well as persons with disabilities in the development and delivery of the training materials <input type="checkbox"/> Consider "train the trainer" option to scale up the plan and reach a wider audience <input type="checkbox"/> Solicit feedback and incorporate it into the training plan <input type="checkbox"/> Update and deliver training on the regular basis |

Important budgetary considerations

Often, a major concern for education system institutions regarding the accessible ICT procurement is financial planning and budget management. Predictable funding leads to better planning in the education sector and the implementation of programs that can reach learners with disabilities. The overall costs of providing inclusive ICTs for use in the education situations might be shared across a number of



responsible authorities and so effective, long-term coordination and collaboration is necessary to ensure coherent funding streams.

The following steps can be made on the national/regional level to improve budget management:

- Secure and effectively coordinate inclusive ICT-related funding from different authorities' budgets (information society, social affairs, healthcare, education, etc.);
- Define the roles and responsibilities of all main stakeholders at the national, regional and organizational levels in relation to the budget implementation strategy;
- Develop a procurement framework agreement at a national/regional level that specifies accessibility as a requirement in the tendering process;
- Identify a responsible lead body for procurement that has the necessary technical and knowledge capacity to effectively implement national level procurement agreements at regional and local levels;
- Decentralize the use of funds within the education system and related entities that allows flexibility in supporting the use of inclusive ICTs in education.

To improve financing mechanisms on the local level, education system institutions also can:

- Identify which mainstream ICT products already have integrated accessibility features;
- Facilitate "bring your own device" programs;
- Introduce cloud-based solutions that offer regular or agile updates, so accessibility features are always the most up to date available.

Additional Resources

This document was developed to align well with other inclusive education and accessible ICTs procurement tools developed by G3ict, its partners, and global experts. Please refer to the following:

- [Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report](#)
- [Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Smart Cities for All Guide to Adopting an ICT Accessibility Procurement Policy](#)
- [e-Accessibility Policy Toolkit for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Buy ICT for All portal](#)
- [Procurement of ICTs for Inclusive Education: Guide for Engaging ICT Vendors](#)

For more information about accessibility and technology please go to the [G3ict](#) and the [International Association of Accessibility Professionals](#) (IAAP) websites. Many technology vendors also have dedicated accessibility pages on their websites where you can find a range of related and helpful information.