ePolicyWorks
Partners in Disability & Employment

2017 Interagency Accessibility Forum
Online Dialogue
October 24 through December 1, 2017
Final Report

ODEP
Office of Disability
Employment Policy

GSA
U.S. General Services Administration

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Introduction

Hosted by the General Services Administration (GSA), this year's 2017 Annual Interagency Accessibility Forum focused on the theme, "*Transition to a New Standard*" and featured sessions around three main topics: Development, Policy and Technical. As a follow-up to the forum, GSA partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy ODEP) to offer participants and others an ePolicyWorks online dialogue to continue the productive conversations that took place during the in-person event. The following report outlines the results of the dialogue.

The "2017 Annual Interagency Accessibility Forum Online Dialogue," launched during the Interagency Accessibility Forum, and ran from October 24 through December 1, 2017. The online dialogue invited presenters, facilitators, and participants of the forum to discuss important issues around transitioning to the new Section 508 standards, such as how to apply the revised regulations during the development life cycle, and shared resources and best practices on such topics as user testing and working with vendors. With the conclusion of the online dialogue, GSA, with support from ODEP, is conducting an analysis of the submitted ideas and comments to help inform planning for the 2018 forum. We anticipate a second dialogue to further refine the analysis results in determining session topics and potential speakers for the 2018 forum.

This dialogue was divided into three main dialogue topics based on the forum sessions:

1. **Development**
2. **Policy**
3. **Technical**

Participants were asked to keep the following questions in mind when commenting on these topics and voting on submitted ideas:

- **Based on your experience, what would you like to discuss further, what do you think would be helpful for other federal partners, and what should be covered in next year's forum?**

- **Based on your experience, what policy issues would you like to discuss further and what policy topics should be covered in next year's forum?**

- **Based on your experience, what technical aspects of Section 508 should be discussed further, what would be helpful for other federal partners, and what topics should be covered in next year's forum?**

Included in this report is information about dialogue participation, outreach conducted during the dialogue, and top ideas contributed and voted on by participants. An archive of the complete dialogue is available for viewing at Feds.ePolicyWorks.org.

Note: The following section outlines the key metrics from the online dialogue and provides a snapshot of the participation results.

Dialogue Participation Summary

- Dialogue opened on Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2017 at 8:00 am ET
- Dialogue closed on Friday, December 1, 2017 at 11:59 pm ET
- Total Forum Registrants Invited to Participate in the Dialogue: 381
  - *All forum registrants were sent invitations to participate, including individual login details with password set up instructions.*
- Total Dialogue Participants (visited the dialogue and completed the registration process): 128
- Active Dialogue Participants (submitted ideas, voted or commented on either topic): 18

Topic: Development

- Total Ideas: 5
- Total Comments: 6
- Total Votes: 10

Topic: Policy

- Total Ideas: 12
- Total Comments: 15
- Total Votes: 27

Topic: Technical

- Total Ideas: 6
- Total Comments: 17
- Total Votes: 18

Top 6 Ideas based on Votes Submitted by Dialogue Participants

The following ideas were the most popular overall ideas by votes (For a full listing of ideas, visit Feds.ePolicyWorks.org):

1. **AT Devices in Forums** (Technical)
   4 votes, 8 comments and 3 followers

   Is it possible to include an AT-device lab/ presentation in the inter-agency forum meetings? It will be helpful for instructional designers, training developers and programmers to experience themselves how the devices read/ react with their training. Thank you.

2. **When do I have to remediate my website for the new standards?** (Policy)
   4 votes, 0 comment and 1 follower

   My website is formatted to conform with the current Section 508 Standards. I understand that "Safe Harbor" protects from having to remediate it to the new Standards, until I update the site. How little or how much can I change my website before it's considered substantially changed and I have to remediate it for the new Section 508 Standards?

3. **DEVELOPERS SHOULD BE EDUCATED ON DIFFERENT DISABILITIES** (Development)
   4 votes, 1 comment and 1 follower

   In my experience Project achieved success with accessibility when you make the developers understand the difficulties encountered by Assistive Technology users every day. With the WCAG 2.0 including provisions for cognitive users, it is imperative developers understand the different disabilities how coding to the standards can help alleviate accessibility problems. In a project I worked on we provided the developers' basic training in JAWS, ZOOM TEXT and DRAGON and it helped them understand the difficulties of AT users and they created access keys which were keyboard accessible as the application was built on a COTS platform with numerous 508 defects out of the box

4. **Using Dragon Naturally Speaking for recording and documentation** (Technical)
   3 votes, 2 comments and 1 follower

   Using Dragon Naturally Speaking software to record and transcribe discussions and conversations would amplify the community's ability to communicate with deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and visually impaired individuals. As voice recognition software matures and becomes more widely used the recordings and transcriptions will need to be stored and archived for government searches through the official archives. Once the discussions are recorded and transcribed using a standard software tool, the documents can be easily searched on key words or subject topics. Ease of use is top priority for more users to adopt the technology and will save time and repetitious work tasks.

5. **ACCESS BOARD SHOULD PROVIDE DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE 508 REFR** (Technical)
    3 votes, O comments and 1 follower

    The Access Board should provide detailed explanation of the new 508 refresh like it has done with the current standards which will enable non 508 experts to understand- so folks like project managers who are tasked with the implementation but have no knowledge will have a better understanding of what is at play and help them succeed.
    Even the 508 community would appreciate a knowledge repository of breaking down the standards in simple terms. I always sent Vendors with bad VPATS to the current access board which is very well written in simple language for everyone to understand. Hope you guys come up with a similar one for the 508 refresh.

6. **How to ensure Section508TestPlan is part of the acceptance criteria** (Policy)
    3 votes, 2 comments and 1 follower

    In the world of federal contracting we should educate procurement officers to ensure that Section 508 test plan is part of the acceptance criteria and should be included in the deliverables for contractor services for software/ web development. This will ensure you can hold the vendor to compliance.

Outreach and Registration Metrics

In order to engage the forum participants in the ePolicyWorks online dialogues, our team developed an email outreach campaign that included a number of targeted outreach efforts. All forum participants received an introductory email that included instructions on how to access the dialogue and create a user name and password. Presenters received separate emails inviting them to share their expertise and feedback. Several follow up emails were sent to both presenters and participants to remind them about the dialogue and inform them of important dates and deadlines related to the dialogue. This outreach strategy is critical to informing and shaping the conversation in every online dialogue, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and be part of the discussion.

Total Dialogue Outreach Emails

- Email Blasts – 8

- Emails Delivered – 2,535

- Emails Opened – 721 (28.44% open rate)

- Total number of clicks on links in emails (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 119 (16.5% of those who opened the emails)

Registration Information

When setting up their password members were asked to indicate their area of interest. One hundred and twenty-eight forum participants shared their area of interest. Below is a summary of their responses.

Please share your area of interest:		
Choice	Count	Percentage
Development	75	32%
Policy	78	33%
Technical	85	36%
Total	238	

Conclusion

Through the ePolicyWorks dialogue, "2017 Interagency Accessibility Forum Online Dialogue," GSA and ODEP successfully utilized leading-edge crowdsourcing tools to engage the forum presenters and participants to continue the conversation and discuss potential session topics and speakers for next year's event. In summary, the online event invited 381 forum registrants and presenters to participate. More than 33% of those individuals visited the dialogue and completed the registration process. Of those registrants, 14% were active participants that posted 23 ideas, 38 comments and 55 votes. This input to the dialogue, along with the analysis of the ideas and comments, will play an integral role in the development of the 2018 Interagency Accessibility Forum.