Questions and answers for use of solicitation requirements for *Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility* prepared by the Big Ten Academic Alliance.

These requirements were created by representatives from the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) who have experience in purchasing or information technology accessibility. The collaboration is primarily between the BTAA's Purchasing Consortium and the Information Technology Accessibility Group (ITAG).

Q: Why were these requirements created?
A: These requirements were created to mitigate risk to the University for non-compliance with IT accessibility standards when purchasing EIT, to promote successful use of technology for all students, faculty, and staff, and to provide BTAA member institutions with an agreed upon standard for what EIT is considered accessible.

Q: What risk is there to my University for providing non-accessible EIT?
A: Institutions of higher education are required to provide all students with equal access to instructional materials, and all faculty and staff with equal access to materials required to perform their jobs. As more material is presented in electronic format, it is important to address accessibility requirements for this material. Failure to provide equal access is grounds for complaints to the US Department of Justice's Office of Civil Rights, litigation and penalties. Regulations created by the State, the municipality, and the University itself may also have consequences for non-compliance.

Q: How do you use this these requirements?
A: These requirements are intended to be a guideline for purchasing offices to utilize in a competitive solicitation process (request for proposal or invitation for bid). There are sections of the requirements which may be utilized to personalize the requirements to your University and to include local requirements. The document is designed to be copied/pasted into your University's solicitation document or attached as an attachment.

Q: When do you use these requirements?
A: Use of these requirements is at your University's discretion. It is recommended that a review of the proposed EIT is conducted to determine the number of users, estimated dollar value of the purchase, and the intended use of the EIT. These factors should be utilized to determine the potential risk to your University if the EIT proposed is not accessible. Technically, all EIT should be accessible to individuals with disabilities; however, requiring complete responses to these requirements and/or review/evaluation of these responses may not be practical for a specific purchase. In certain instances, the requirements may be redacted to meet your needs, provided that effective work-arounds can be furnished where necessary.

Q: Should I used these requirements for all purposes?
A: Best case scenario would be that these requirements are utilized for all EIT purchases to verify compliance with Technical Standards. In certain instances use of these requirements may not be feasible. In these instances, it is recommended that a redacted version of the requirements be utilized to address minimal accessibility requirements. Ultimately, it is at the discretion of your University to establish use standards.

Q: Should I list these requirements as "mandatory" in my solicitation?
A: It is up to your University to set the threshold for these accessibility requirements. We recommend discussing thresholds, and setting guidelines, standards, and practices at your institution in partnership with procurement, IT, and general counsel.

Q: Do we score these requirements?
A: Whether or not to score vendors' responses to these requirements is at the discretion of the University. Sections IV and V of the document asks questions which would allow for scoring; however, it is not required if your University would rather review these requirements as pass/fail.

Q: How will these requirements be evaluated?
A: The BTAA has a team working on providing guidelines for evaluating these requirements. This team will be identifying tools to use for verification. These guidelines will provide information on how to score responses if a University so chooses.

Q: Why can't a vendor just provide a VPAT?
A: A Voluntary Product Accessibility Template or VPAT is not a defined standard so these requirements were designed to allow for submission of a VPAT which addresses the requirements in lieu of a response. If the VPAT does not provide responses for the requirements, then responses can be provided as requested in these requirements to verify all appropriate information is collected.

Q: This seems burdensome to Respondents, do we really need to use to use this?
A: Your University should determine when and in what format these requirements should be utilized in to mitigate risk to your University. The BTAA jointly developed these requirements in hopes of providing a unified voice in providing accessibility requirements to EIT providers.

Q: Where do I go if a Respondent has questions about these requirements?
A: Your University should have a Purchasing Consortia representative (typically a Purchasing Director) and an Information Technology Accessibility Group representative. Either of these individuals should be able to address your questions or put you in contact with a knowledgeable individual who could assist.

Q: What are the long-term implications of accessibility?
A: Accessibility implementation is almost never a one-step process. Contracts and discussions should make it clear that vendors are responsible for addressing issues found during the competitive solicitation process, and for ensuring that accessibility remains constant or improves during subsequent product releases.