



ONTARIO TECH ACCESSIBLE PROCUREMENT TOOLKIT



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Acknowledgement

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URL (leads to automated Word Document download)

<https://www.georgebrown.ca/sites/default/files/aoda/procurement-toolkit.docx>

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Understanding the need for this toolkit

1. Legislative background

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) was enacted to support the development of five accessibility standards that would identify, prevent and remove barriers for Ontarians with disabilities. The accessibility standards developed under the AODA contain specific requirements and compliance deadlines.

Under section 5 of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* the university is required to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so. Section 6 applies the same requirements to designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

2. Who this toolkit is for?

All university staff and faculty should be aware that accessibility features need to be considered when preparing to procure or acquire goods, services or facilities.

This toolkit will support the staff and faculty that is responsible for carrying out and managing the procurement of goods, services and facilities on behalf of the institution. It provides general considerations around incorporating accessibility into the procurement process, along with **sample checklists** and a list of **resources**.

Before you begin sourcing, you may need additional information about or access to specific accessibility standards, guidelines or best practices. Contact aoda@ontariotechu.ca to be directed to the appropriate resource.

B. INCORPORATING ACCESSIBILITY INTO DEPARTMENT/FACULTY PROCUREMENT PROCESSES

1. Recommendations about what to consider

When procuring University staff and faculty should be reminded:

- The University is required and committed to include accessibility criteria or features in the procurement process, except where it is not practicable to do so.
- The university is committed to accessibility considerations from the outset of the procurement process.
- The University is committed to the accessibility over the entire lifecycle of the good, service or facility, so that the end result is robust and adaptable enough to be accessible in the future.
- Set out basic requirements around Proponent assessments to confirm their knowledge of accessibility as it relates to their goods, services or facilities when tendering.
- Identify when to seek advice about accessible procurement by contacting aoda@ontariotechu.ca

- Keep in mind that Proponents need to have a good understanding of accessibility as it relates to the institution.
- Review the checklists in Appendix A around how to establish the accessibility requirements for a proposed good, service or facility.
- Consult with persons with disabilities and stakeholders who can assist with determining the accessibility criteria or features.

C. UNDERSTANDING ACCESSIBILITY: EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Procurement staff are not the only employees who need to consider the accessibility criteria, features, guidelines or other technical requirements for all purchases on behalf of the University.

Anyone responsible for or involved in procuring goods, services or facilities on behalf of your department or faculty needs to understand which accessibility features or criteria to ask for and whether the proposed solutions will meet the accessibility requirements. Procurement staff can help facilitate this process for all public tendering opportunities over \$100,000. Building accessibility into the early stages of the procurement process, provides you with the opportunity to:

- Contribute to an equitable, diverse and inclusive university community by intentionally considering people of all abilities when buying goods and services;
- Define an accessibility criteria for the institution's goods, services and facilities;
- Provide university staff with some guidance when evaluating if 3rd party Proponents are meeting the university's accessibility requirements; and
- Provide evidence of the university's compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

The best approach is to consider flexible solutions that can meet multiple needs by:

- Considering accessibility from the start. Think about accessibility before the design phase. Waiting until later in the design process may make it impossible to address fundamental barriers cost-effectively. The retrofitted solution may be expensive and may not be the best approach to providing accessibility for all users.
- Consider accessibility over the entire lifecycle of the goods, services or facilities.
- Consult with people with disabilities and stakeholders. Involve the people who will use a product, service or facility in the design process. Their input is necessary and indispensable, and their suggestions may be cost-effective.

D. BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY INTO THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

1. What to consider in preparing the scope-of-work

Consult with internal expertise to determine the general features or criteria to include in an RFP.

- For example, to secure a Proponent to create or refresh a university website, procurement staff may ask members of the university web team about specific standards that should be highlighted in the tender, specific questions to ask Proponents and how to best evaluate the proposal responses.

Involve or consult with colleagues to determine the aspects of the goods, services or facilities that are most likely to pose a barrier for people with disabilities.

Involve or consult with the individual(s) at your university responsible for AODA compliance to determine the specific accessibility standards, guidelines, features or criteria to be considered.

Identify who will carry out an accessibility audit to validate the accessibility claims in a Proponent's proposal.

2. What to include in the Request for Proposal (RFP)

First, contact, or include in the process, the person at the university who can help you determine or refer you to the appropriate accessibility features, criteria or guidelines.

It is not enough in the RFP to simply refer to the Procurement policy or procedure, a technical standard or the AODA legislation.

- Standards and legislative guidelines are not always clear, and may be open to different interpretations.
- A general reference may make it difficult to determine whether a proposed product, service or facility meets the standard.
- There may be no products, services or facilities available that fully meet the diverse accessibility needs of our community. You may miss opportunities to consider how what's available could be adapted.

Always state specific accessibility requirements as they relate to the goods, services or facilities you are putting out for tender.

a. When writing the RFP:

- Include a link to the university's accessibility policy;
- Include the appropriate accessibility specifications, features or criteria, and
- Consider allocating weighting that the accessibility aspects of the proposal will receive as part of the evaluation criteria.

b. Including criteria in the RFP

State the specific accessibility standards, guidelines, features or criteria instead of using vague terms, such as "accessible" or "AODA-compliant."

- For example, when creating an RFP for a Proponent to refresh or re-do the university's website, you could include a statement such as: "Provide evidence as to how the new website will conform to the Level AA guidelines."

Specify that the tenderer include accessibility in the development process if you are procuring an item, service or facility that will be designed and developed.

c. Asking for evidence from Proponents:

- Ask the Proponent to describe the accessibility criteria or features of their goods or services.
- Ask the Proponent to provide evidence in their tender that the proposed goods, services or facilities will satisfy the accessibility criteria or features set out in the RFP.
- Ask Proponents to provide references from previous clients that demonstrate their knowledge and ability to fulfil accessibility criteria or features.

d. Reviewing tenders

- Review the client references and evidence of the accessible goods, services or facilities that each tender has provided.
- Consult with internal accessibility experts to review prototypes provided by the Proponent to see if they meet the accessibility requirements.

Ask people with disabilities to test any prototypes or samples, where possible, to determine if it can meet diverse accessibility needs. For example, people with disabilities could be asked to visit a sample website, or software product submitted by a Proponent.

e. Evaluating tenders

Ensure the evaluation team includes someone with sufficient knowledge to properly assess the accessibility dimensions of the Proponent's proposed solution. If sufficient expertise is not available, consider seeking input from the Accessibility Working Group at aoda@ontariotechu.ca or by consulting with external accessibility experts.

To assess the Proponent's accessibility-related experience and credentials, you should:

- Assess the Proponent's skills, the plans, criteria or features of their proposed solution, and the processes they propose to undertake to meet the accessibility criteria or features stated in the RFP.
- Validate the Proponent's accessibility claims. Consult with users, including people with disabilities, or gather evidence from the Proponent's clients or colleagues at other institutions.

E. PROCURING GOODS, SERVICES OR FACILITIES

1. Goods

Accessibility criteria or features must be considered when procuring goods, except where it is not practicable to do so.

As part of the selection criteria, consider asking the Proponent's, for example, to:

- Provide evidence that the products are simple, intuitive and easy to understand for all people to use with low physical effort, various language skills, or knowledge and concentration levels;
- Demonstrate that the product is flexible in its design to accommodate a wide range of individual abilities (i.e. limited fine motor skills, vision loss or low vision, hearing loss);
- Provide clear and easy to follow instructions for using the product;
- Confirms that the product meets ergonomic standards;
- Demonstrate the product can be customized to meet diverse needs;
- Provides supporting materials (i.e., manuals, guidance, or training materials) that are available to meet WCAG Level AA compliance and/or access to alternate formats is available upon request;
- Provide options for you to evaluate with colleagues and users before committing to a final selection;
- List any specific accessibility standards or guidelines that the product must adhere to, and identifies how the product complies with them;
- Identify how the product fulfills the specific accessibility features or criteria contained in the RFP.

The AODA does not preclude you from purchasing goods that do not meet the accessibility needs of all users. In this situation, recommended best practices include:

- Communicate to the university community that there are no goods available with the accessibility criteria or features that would meet the needs of all users. This ensures that you have conducted the procurement process with due diligence.
- Provide evidence that the decision to not comply with the AODA requirements was given management approval.

Kiosks

[Accessible Self Service Kiosks](#)

2. Services

Services may be provided directly to students, employees or community members by university employees or by third-party service providers.

In accordance with the IASR Customer Service Standard, services must be provided in a manner consistent with the key principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Best practices include ensuring that the service provider can accommodate the diverse needs of our community through accessible customer service. Request information that the 3rd party service provider considers people of all abilities by using accessible signage, audio and/or print materials.

Consider if you will provide the IASR-required customer service training to third-party service providers, such as providers of service staff, janitorial or security services, or you may want to include criteria asking potential service providers to provide evidence or a sign-off that their staff have been trained in accordance with all AODA requirements.

IT Procurement

Digital services have become the primary way for higher education institutions to deliver educational courses and programs. Individuals should define, design and assess the accessibility criteria for IT systems at the beginning of the procurement process to effectively manage the accessibility needs of the university community. As part of the assessment phase, considerations around “user-friendliness” and “ease of use” of the product can be established by:

- ensuring that the product, application plug-ins, websites and web content meet [WCAG Level AA](#) guidelines;
- requesting accessibility conformance reports (if available) detailing how the product complies with the [WCAG Level AA](#) criterion;
- considering accessibility when IT systems are being chosen and designed;
- conducting user testing with persons with disabilities (when possible). User testing is the most effective way to identify barriers that users may face;
- consulting with persons with disabilities;
- ensuring users can configure functions to meet their specific needs and preferences;
- confirming compatibility with assistive technologies;
- considering accessibility via standard keyboard access methods;
- reviewing the available options for user-selected system settings for input and output;
- confirming the ability to use the software without a mouse or pointing device;
- providing accessible documentation for training and support materials;

- confirming the availability of a forum or feedback channel;
- ensuring that the product is equally usable, in that it is not prohibitively difficult or time consuming for users with disabilities to carry out necessary tasks.

For detailed information, please refer to the National Disability Authority's [IT Procurement Toolkit](#).

Websites

[Introduction to Web Accessibility](#)

Web Content Development

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) Overview](#)

3. Facilities

Universities must consider accessibility criteria or features when they are renting, renovating, acquiring or building facilities. Everyone benefits when all users can easily navigate the internal and external university environment.

Design of Public Spaces

[The Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces](#)

F. BEST PRACTICES

1. When accessibility isn't practicable

In some instances, there may be no suitable good or service that is fully accessible for all people with disabilities, or you may find a fully accessible solution that is not practicable, too expensive or will cause unreasonable delay for others.

Suggested best practices in situations like these include:

- consulting people with disabilities to identify the features that are most important to them, and the aspects that are most likely to be a barrier.
- selecting the most accessible goods or services based on that feedback.
- asking Proponents to contact you if fully accessible goods or services become available in the future.
- informing users about the accessibility issues and about the most accessible alternative.
- determining whether an alternative solution might allow you to provide accessible service in a different way.

2. Checklists

Useful sample checklists are included in Appendix A:

A1. Sample Accessibility Checklist for Procuring Goods and Services

A2. Sample Accessibility Checklist for Preparing the Scope of Work

A3. Sample Accessibility Checklist for RFP Document

A4. Sample Accessibility Checklist for the Design of Public Spaces

Need more information?

To seek additional information regarding identifying accessibility standards, guidelines, features and criteria, please contact aoda@ontariotechu.ca

Appendix A1: Sample Accessibility Checklist for Procuring Goods and Services

Table 1 - Appendix A1: Sample Accessibility Checklist for Procuring Goods and Services

Consideration	N/A	Yes	No	Follow-up
Will the proposed goods or services reflect the university's commitment to accessibility?				
Have relevant stakeholders been consulted to address accessibility concerns?				
Have accessible features and criteria been included in the procurement process?				
Does the cost estimate reflect the need to integrate accessibility features and criteria?				
Have the possible impacts on people with disabilities been considered?				
Can people with disabilities use or benefit from the proposed goods or services on an equitable basis?				
Did people with disabilities participate in the decision-making process?				
Are there accessible feedback mechanisms so accessibility issues can be reported, monitored and evaluated?				
Are any relevant documents and communication materials written in plain language and available in an accessible format?				
Will online communication materials include accessible electronic formats of HTML, accessible PDF or Word?				
Universities must notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports. Is relevant information in an accessible format posted on the premises or on the university website?				
Do departmental materials such as posters and brochures follow the <u>Clear Print Guidelines</u> ?				
<i>*Note Clear Print Guidelines is a hyperlink</i>				

Consideration	N/A	Yes	No	Follow-up
Do signage and information systems use the <u>Universal Symbols of Accessibility</u> where applicable? <i>*Note Universal Symbols of Accessibility is a hyperlink</i>				

Appendix A2: Accessibility Checklist for Identifying Scope of Work

Table can be read left to right, with four columns. Items in rows are numbered.

Table 2 - Appendix A2: Accessibility Checklist for Identifying Scope of Work

Consideration	N/A	Yes	No	Follow-up
1. Have you consulted internal experts about specifications for the product, service or facility?				
2. Have you consulted the person responsible for AODA compliance about specific accessibility standards, guidelines, features or criteria at aoda@ontariotechu.ca?				
3. Are there existing accessibility standards or guidelines for this product, service or facility?				
4. Are you including accessibility features or criteria in the weighting for evaluating tenders?				

5. Is the Proponent asked to:				
• include accessibility in the design and development process?				
• describe the accessibility features of the proposed goods or services?				
• provide evidence that the proposed solution will satisfy the accessibility requirements in the RFP?				
• provide references that demonstrate their ability to satisfy accessibility requirements?				

Appendix A3: Sample Accessibility Checklist for RFP Document

Table 3 - Appendix A3: Sample Accessibility Checklist for RFP Document

Consideration	N/A	Yes	No	Follow-up
1. Is the university accessibility policy or commitment to accessibility clearly stated?				
2. Have specific accessibility standards, guidelines, features or criteria been included?				
3. Are the accessibility features or criteria stated as a minimum requirement?				
4. Are the accessibility features or criteria included in the weighting for evaluating tenders?				

Appendix A4: Sample Accessibility Checklist for the Design of Public Spaces

Table 4 - Appendix A4: Sample Accessibility Checklist for the Design of Public Spaces

Consideration	N/A	Yes	No	Follow-up
1. Is the proposed facility or infrastructure barrier-free?				
2. Will the changes to the proposed facility or infrastructure make it barrier-free?				
3. Have accessibility features been integrated into the planning process?				
4. Have agreements been reached to ensure accessibility features will be included during construction?				
5. Do ramps comply with the Ontario Building Code (Barrier Free Design section 3.8)?				
6. Are entrances accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters?				
7. Are accessible entrances clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility?				
8. Are mats securely positioned and level with the floor?				
9. Is there an accessible route of travel to all floors?				
10. Are elevator doorways wide enough to allow people using wheelchairs to pass through easily?				
11. Do elevator doors stay open long enough to permit people with disabilities to enter and exit safely?				
12. Are door thresholds beveled so they do not create a tripping hazard?				
13. Can user stations be accessed by persons using a mobility device?				

Consideration	N/A	Yes	No	Follow-up
14. Are there public information systems, auditory signals or way-finding so people with visual impairments can move safely and independently?				
15. Are building and route signage provided in large, high contrast lettering?				
16. Have accessibility features been incorporated when designing or procuring items under s. 6 of the AODA?				
17. Are accessible routes marked to provide directional cues for people with vision disabilities?				
18. Are washroom features placed at an appropriate height and location for people with a wide range of disabilities?				
19. Has consideration been given to service/guide dogs (comfort stations, water)?				

Note: The sample checklist is provided as guidance only. Additional requirements may be required under the [Oshawa Accessibility Design Standards](#).

Appendix B: Sample RFP criteria

This can aid our diligence efforts by helping you answer questions such as:

- What are the appropriate accessibility criteria and features to include?
- How can accessibility criteria and features be incorporated into the procurement process?

Sample criteria to consider when procuring *goods*

- Can the item be used by someone who is seated? Standing? Using a mobility aid?
- Can it be used with low physical effort?
- Does the product meet ergonomic standards?
- Can the item be adapted or customized to meet a variety of needs?
- Is it flexible in its design to accommodate a wide range of individual abilities (i.e. limited fine motor skills, vision loss or low vision, hearing loss)?
- Is use of the product simple, intuitive and easy to understand for all user experiences, language skills, or knowledge and concentration levels?
- Are instructions for using the product clear and easy to follow?
- Do the supporting materials (i.e., manuals, guidance or training materials) that are available meet [WCAG Level AA](#) compliance and/or is access to alternate formats available upon request?

Sample criteria to consider when procuring *services*

- Has the service provider confirmed compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with the Disabilities Act (AODA)*?
- Can the service provider accommodate the diverse needs of our community through accessible customer service?
- Have the service provider's staff members completed the accessible customer service training required under the IASR Customer Service Standard?
- Can the service provider accommodate the needs of people with disabilities?
- Does the service provider use accessible signage, audio or print materials?
- Is the service provider's website accessible?

*Sample criteria to consider when procuring **facilities***

- Will the physical size and space of the facility accommodate diverse community needs related to body size, posture, or the safe usage of a mobility aid?
- Are signs placed at an accessible height so that people of all abilities can read them?
- Can the facility provide emergency plans, procedures and public safety information that are in place to help people with disabilities?
- Understand what to do when accessibility isn't practicable.

You may not be able to incorporate accessibility features or criteria in all cases. However, if asked, you must be able to provide an explanation why accessibility features have not been included.

If you can't find goods, services or facilities that are accessible, you need to look at ways to accommodate people with disabilities. For more information regarding the accommodation process contact:

Employees

If you are an employee and have accessibility or accommodation-related questions or concerns, please contact:

Human Resources

Julie Day, Health and Disability Management Specialist

Phone: 905.721.8668 extension 3649

Email: julie.day@ontariotechu.ca

Students

If you are a student and have questions related to accessibility/supports or if you are a faculty member and have a question or concern regarding accessibility for a student in your course, please contact:

Student Accessibility Services

Phone: 905.721.3266

Email: studentaccessibility@ontariotechu.ca

Faculty

If you are a faculty member and have questions related to the procurement of accessible educational technology in your course, please contact:

Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC)

Email: teachingandlearning@ontariotechu.ca

General Information

If you have a policy or legislative inquiry, please contact:

Office of the University Secretariat and General Counsel

Phone: 905.721.3173

Email: aoda@ontariotechu.ca

Appendix C: Legislation, Policies and Standards

One of the motivations for making your procurement accessible is to be in compliance with relevant legislations and public policy. Below is a list of websites where you can find additional information on AODA relevant legislations as well as standards for various goods and services.

Legislation

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)
- [Integrated Accessibility Standards](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

University Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

- Accessibility
[Accessibility Policy](#)

[Accessible Customer Service](#)

- Procurement of Goods and Services
[Procurement of Goods and Services Policy](#)
[Procurement of Goods and Services Procedure](#)
[Procurement Policy: Supply Chain Code of Ethics](#)
- Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive
[Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive](#)

Technical Standards

- [A Guide to the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation](#)
- [Ontario Accessibility Standards Overview](#)
- [WCAG Level AA](#)
- [The Illustrated Technical Guide to the Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces](#)

Appendix D: Resources

Council of Universities

[Accessible Procurement Guide](#)

Universal Design Network of Canada

[7 Guiding Principles](#)

AODA.ca Inc.

[Accessible self-service kiosks](#)

National Disability Authority

[IT Procurement Toolkit](#)