Accessibility, Technology and Public Procurement - How do they mix?

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Microsoft mission:
to enable people throughout the world to realize their full potential with technology...
...that is accessible to anyone—regardless of age or ability...

...that makes it easier for people to see, hear, and use devices...

...and that personalizes experiences to meet unique needs and preferences.
15% of the world’s population is disabled*

57% of adults can benefit from accessible technologies**

85% of people are “situationally disabled” during some part of their day*

* Gartner, September 2013
** Forrester Research
The magnifier helps people with vision impairment
Elderly with hearing impairment use Skype Chat to communicate
People in physical recovery programs use Xbox to exercise
Kids with learning disability use the narrator to read textbooks
Patients with spinal cord injury use speech recognition to communicate regularly
The promise of people-centric design

Benefits everyone

Looks beautiful

Good business
Technology has the potential to become our sixth sense.

Personalized experiences...

...That adapt to the world around us...

...And enable more natural interaction.
People-centric design changes how you work, play, and live, but....

...What’s the role of public procurement legislation in promoting ICT accessibility?
More than 150 countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Governments around the world are demonstrating that using accessibility criteria in public procurement is an effective strategy for promoting digital inclusion.

The U.S. Access Board and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) have developed accessibility procurement standards for ICT that can be referenced in tenders by government entities.
What is a Good Policy? (1/2)

Benefits government, consumers and industry. Everyone benefits when government agencies and public institutions integrate accessible ICT into their organizations. A mutually beneficial policy makes accessibility a criterion for public procurement, focuses on performance-based outcomes rather than prescriptive technical requirements, is technology neutral (does not favor or mandate one technology solution over another), and allows adequate time to bring programs, products, and services into alignment with the new criteria.

Reference international standards. To promote innovation and interoperability, accessibility standards should be consistent from country to country. This harmonization reduces costs to consumers and helps local economies by allowing technology companies to build once and sell worldwide. In Europe, the EN 301549 standard is the basis and the U.S. Section 508 standard is being updated and expected to align with the European standard.
What is a Good Policy? (2/2)

Adopt voluntary self-declarations of conformance. Allows companies to maintain up-to-date, detailed conformance reports, more accurate and informative for purchasers than one-time, third-party pass/fail assessments. Governments should request a SDoC* such as the U.S. VPAT* during the procurement process.

Provide training. Many procurement officials are unfamiliar with accessibility and need training in how to evaluate technology against accessibility criteria and award contracts based on performance, how to review agency processes, assess performance, and ensure conformance with new requirements.

Centralize oversight. It’s more affective if there’s a specific government agency responsible for monitoring implementation of procurement policy.

* SDoC Supplier Declaration of Conformance  
** VPAT Voluntary Product Accessibility Template
Our Approach

Working with important advisory committees (US, ETSI, ISO) developing Globally harmonized accessibility standards that help technology providers to build once and sell everywhere.

Transparency, sharing information on how we meet common accessibility criteria. Helped to develop VPATs which we publish on our public website to allow governments easy access to information as they make their procurement decisions.

Supporting G3ict, the international NGO created by the United Nations to help governments implement the ICT aspects of the CRPD. G3ict provides a complete policy toolkit. Microsoft offers an accessibility guide for government organizations that helps public entities choose accessible technology solutions.

People-centric design, as shown before.