August 2021 IT Accessibility Community Meeting Captioned Text

The August 4, 2021 IT Accessibility Community Meeting was hosted as a virtual meeting by the General Services Administration, Office of Government-wide Policy.

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# --- BEGIN CAPTIONED TEXT ---

Good morning, good morning, everyone, and welcome to our accessibility community meeting. We are glad you are here hanging out with us. Much appreciated. We are actually going to go right into the meeting, and I am going to turn it over to Brandon. Please, I just want to let you all know, this will be recorded. If you have any additional questions, throw those in the chat. Sorry, I did not introduce myself. My name is Yvette Gibson. Brandon, over to you

Can you hear me all right?

Yes, sir.

Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for letting me join you once again to talk about things me and my team have been up to the U.S. Department of Labor. If you were with those back in June some of the tactics we are using to drive positive change in the way I will go into detail in other areas I hope you will find a few things you can take back in use in your organization

the presentation is

into four segments and I have tried to plan a bit better this time. We ran out of time for questions so I will try to be a little less verbose, this time around. Have a fairly well-planned presentation, so I will ask you hold your questions until the end of each segment. There will be four segments. Make sure I get through all of my talking points. Also, the last two segments of the presentation should be a bit shorter than the first two. So if I get are the 1st half, we should have some time, or slack, later on, guys. Let me reintroduce myself to those of you weren't here last time I represented. My name is Brandon Jubar on them the branch chief of quality management in the office of CIO, chief information officer, a DOL. The Department of Labor has about 18,000 employees nationwide, actually made of 27 federal agencies of various sizes. A number of those are enforcement agencies. The OCIO actually supports 450 offices across the U.S. and territories. I actually spent the first 17 years of my career in the private sector, working in the automotive industry. About half that time on the manufacturing floor, the other half in IT acquisitions and indirect materials management. Ended up joining deal will in December of 09, handling enterprise level IT contracts as a see or. I work my way up to Director of acquisitions and switched to customer advocacy why was the Deputy Director. Because of my background in manufacturing and processes, I was asked to stand of the new branch of IT quality management in 2019. As mentioned before, the last time I was just laying out the roadmap, working on building a team win our CIO came to me and said slight change in plans, stop the quality management planning for now because they want us to finally stand up a true Section 508 program. It wasn't what I had planned and frankly I did not know anything about Section 508 and accessibility, but I have knowledge and skills and experience I could leverage, so that is what I did. I dove into the deep end, and started swimming. 18 months later, I was selected. This year, was selected as one of FC W's fed 100 for the impact we have had on accessibility at DOL.

Today, I would like to show you what I did, and why did it. Just to be clear, this is all program level stuff. I am not an expert on Section 508 or accessibility, at least not yet. I would like to get there Sunday, but the program, frankly, couldn't wait for me too develop a whole new skill set. I had to get things moving quickly, using what I already knew. So, let's start at the beginning of my 508 journey. When our CIO first told me too stand up enterprise level 508, my first question is, can you tell me what stand up means? What is the vision of success? I remember clearly because the CIO laughed and said, I have no clue what success looks like, I'm not sure they do either. You get to come up with it and get back to me and tell me what success is going to look like. I started talking the folks who knew something about 508, and was quickly pointed to GSA's Section 508 playbook. I will admit, only spent about an hour went to the playbook. Okay, maybe 30 minutes, but I read and quickly determined it wasn't what I needed in my particular situation. It was clear that a lot of thought went into it, and really, really well-suited for an organization that hasn't done much of anything with 508. But, that wasn't DOL. And yes, they had just selected me as the first Section 508 program manager, which was plan one, but they had also done several systems assessment, full-blown systems assessments, plan two. And, they had a draft accessibility roadmap, plan 3. And Section 508 had been part of deal will policy for several years, plan 4 and Section 508 language was required in multiple contracts, some development teams think accessibility into the design, develop testing phases, nine and ten, and D.O.C. IOC offering basic rivalry training which is plan 12. Ran all sorts of uncoordinated efforts going on, and I did not think filling in the blanks of the 508 playbook was the best way to approach the situation. Filling in those blanks, I didn't think it was something we could get done in the time frame I figured they were looking for. So, I kept looking for more appropriate definitions of success when it came to standing up a Section 508 program office at DOL.

Remember, this mandate came from our deputy secretary of the time. Although I appreciated the top level support, which is one of the things I talked about last time, back in June, I was willing to bet that the DEP SEC was not an visibility expert. Even though CIO had been one of the hats he had worn in the previous administration, I knew for a fact that he was more familiar with the business side of IT and not the tech side of things. So, I started reviewing the OMB Section 508 maturity model, I really like the idea of using that as a measure of success. If you're not familiar with the concept of maturity models, think of it this way, nothing more than a tool to help you assess your current, general effectiveness, in an area or category. And then, supports determining what capabilities you need, in order to improve your performance, and increase and move on to the next level of maturity. You can spend hours online learning about capability maturity models and implementation maturity models, but most maturity models are structured as a series of levels of effectiveness that identify the expectations for each ability's levels. Generally speaking, there are five levels of maturity in most models. It should at least roughly line conceptually to the following. The initial first level initial or ad hoc. That is when the organization is beginning to do work in the area. But in a very uncoordinated manner. Level two is the repeatable level. That is when the organization is developing some skill that can achieve acceptable outcome somewhat regularly, but the first two levels, in most maturity models, really focused on people. Think about it, the repeatable level, in particular, generally means you have some skilled practitioners who can do the work well, using their own, individual practices. But, you don't have many, clear document of processes. Level three in this model is the defined level, that is where the organization is implement in standard processes, and a much more structured approach towards the completion of the work. Level 4, is the managed level. That is where the organization is measuring the work, and using the results to detect and correct errors. In other words, by standardizing the work, you can get better at measuring network, and that allows you to manage the work more effectively. The fifth level of most maturity models is optimizing level. That is where the organization has standardized its processes, define service levels and metrics, and using all of that data them all the data it is gathering, to drive continuous process improvements. With a focus on the elimination of waste throughout the entire value stream. So, optimizing, that is an awesome place for your organization to be. Oddly enough the OMB section maturity model doesn't follow the typical maturity model blueprint. You are probably familiar with this, we won't spend a ton of time for the 508 maturity model only has four levels. Ad hoc, nor formal policies, processes or procedures are defined, and planned. You got policies, processes and procedures defined in communicated. Then resourced. Resources committed and/or staff are trained to implement the policies, processes, and procedures developed in levels 1 and 2, and measured. More validation is performed, results are measured and tracked. And, that is where the OMB model stops. I will admit that I don't completely agree with how this is structured, and I really don't like this hybrid model they came up with, but let me try to explain why, because it might help you understand how I think we, as Section 508 program managers, need to approach the maturity of our organizations. First of all, they have created a maturity model that combines high-level strategy and execution in, I think, a rather confusing manner. Instead of policy in determining resource levels, that is all strategic. Sure, it impacts our work, it definitely does, but the political shenanigans that typically happen with policies, resources, and budgets, those don't have to determine our level of maturity in executing the work. I can create a very mature program with highly efficient standardized processes that track metrics and measures to help us manage the data they work while informing continuous improvement efforts, all with a fairly modest budget. Give me more money and I will put more work through my efficient processes. Give me more resources and I will get through my backlog more quickly. Okay, give me stronger policies to enforce and the people that do the enforcement and I will do that too. But I don't necessarily need all of that to mature the work we are doing. Anyway, back to the OMB Section 508 maturity model, the first two levels, ad hoc and planned, don't really aligned to the typical maturity model. If you recall the typical model has ad hoc, repeatable, then defined. So the first to cut levels of the 508 model sort of encompass first three, or most of the first three levels of the typical maturity model. At least in regards to the process and policy side. But then they throw in the resource level before jumping straight to measured. And, if you remember, the second level of a typical maturity model focuses on people. Skilled practitioners who can do the work, but are using the defined, measurable processes. So the OMB model seems to leave out the skilled practitioner element until the hit Level three, resourced. Which, honestly, isn't how organizations, most organizations ever evolve in the real world. And then of course the model completely drops the possibility of optimizing, which should actually be our goal. Sorry come all that being said, I try to think of it as being a bit of an academic exercise and I tried to understand the differences a bit. But ultimately, I went ahead and used the OMB model. Because, well, we have to report on it, and frankly having OMB's name on it gave it immediate credibility with my leadership at the time. They understood maturity models. They didn't understand accessibility, but they understood maturity models. Most business operations books do. I was speaking their language. The fact that there was a maturity model specifically designed for Section 508, and OMB had created it, and measuring against it, that was all they had to hear. When our Assistant Secretary for administration and management said where is the final level of maturity, I told them apparently OMB doesn't think bi-week programs lower get to optimizing, but that is actually my ultimate goal. He loved it. He loved it.

Maturity model. Let's look at the power of maturity models. Even a maturity model like the OMB Section 508 maturity model, which, as I said, have reservations about, and still be a powerful tool. It can help us frame what we are doing in a way that is this people and non-IT people in general will better understand. It can also help us as program managers get out of the weeds and focus on ensuring we are setting aggressive goals that move us closer to our vision. There is nothing inherently wrong in trudging along one step at a time. As long as you are trudging in the right direction, a maturity model can actually help you measure progress, and plan your strategy. To ensure you are trudging in the right direction. One thing I really like about the OMB maturity model is the five domains they have defined. Hopefully, you are familiar with those. Acquisitions, tech lifecycle, testing and validation, complete management, and training. This give me five distinct areas. Well, by testing and validation and acquisition and tech lifecycle basically and five areas where we could make targeted improvement. And what with those improvements look like? How do you succeed? Always room for further improvement. Simple, you get to measure it. The top of the OMB maturity model. Two weeks after the CIO told me too define success for standing up the section program office, I went back with my idea. I presented the OMB maturity model, explained our current self-reported status in the five domains, it was a mix of ad hoc and planned, and then a proposed we get to measured, in all five domains, within nine months. It would mean we would be 508 Compliant? Of course not. That we would have the processes, measurements, training, and resources in place, to understand how well or poorly, we are doing in accessibility. We would be able to assess our risk in those areas, and have a methodical way to focus ongoing efforts most efficiently and most effectively. Our leadership got it. I was able to help them see the Section 508 isn't so one and done thing. It requires ongoing work. And maturing what you are doing and how you are doing it is incredibly important. We don't just want a standardized process. We want to be able to measure. And not just the results, the output, but the process itself. When we measure the right staff, we will have information we need to take, to make continuous improvements. To get better and better at what we do. The better we get, the more accessible our ICT becomes, and the better off all employees and the public will be. So, they agreed with my proposal and gave me a part-time project manager, and subject matter FTEs, and we started our nine month journey. It was an easy, we also ran into DOL cultural issues related to metrics, which we are still dealing with, but we did it. We went through discovery phase, gathering all the info we could about the current state of accessibility in Section 508 in all 27 of our do you will agencies. At the current state through the lens of the five maturity domains and a detailed assessment of where we stood in each one and finally we created a desired end state in each of the five ways. We define what needs to be in place and consider ourselves measured. That ended up being the trickiest part, determining when we could confidently say we are measured. In my mind that simply meant we had built a solid foundation we needed in order to really, really get to work.

So, that is what I will be discussing in the next segment is how we define, how we get to the measured project. In the meantime, are there any questions, comments, or snide remarks?

I see one question. Did we leverage work previously done by HHS or USDA 508 programs? That is from Shelley.

with the tiny team that I had, we tried to do some looking around to see what best practices were out there, but frankly what we found, we could have either spent our time doing that, or, we could simply try to figure out what we needed to lay the foundation. What we ended up doing was focusing internally. I think you will see when we get more into it, but we did it that way. It made sense for us. Right now, we are starting to do more Outreach, working with other agencies, working with GSA to help us identify more best practices to leverage some of that work. Frankly, we were too fragment vented and did not have the basic measurements in place to be able to understand what we were doing and how will we were doing it. If that answers the question.

Brandon, this is Shannon from office of the Director of national intelligence. You indicated that there was some level of maturity already of the Department of Labor. How much do you think that maturity contributed to your ability to meet the nine months?

I think the level of maturity really came down to the fact that we did have, we have some pockets of excellence, we had good things already in place that allowed us to skip past them. Things like getting policy approved. Things like getting boilerplate's, provisions for acquisitions in place, that had already been done. We weren't necessarily doing anything about enforcing those are teaching people those, but they were there. I think that is one of the things that helped us a lot, and come DOL at the time, was going through a shared services consolidation. They were pulling all of the IT people out of the agencies employing them into the OCIO. In doing that, a lot of the expertise, pockets of expertise that are out there and scattered amongst the agencies in regards to accessibility all came together in the OCIO. We have sort have been able to divide our focus between how do we become accessible on the truly technical signs, systems and applications versus how do we get people to create their own accessible documents were refocus with the agency. I think the maturity was more along the lines of individual practitioners being scattered around knew what they were doing, and helping bring them together, give them a focus, and coordinate their efforts. Where we really being able to find our leverage. 'S the thanks, Brandon. And thanks, Shannon, for your question. John is asking could Section 508 program management be considered its own maturity domain? How did you fit that in?

That is actually a very good point. We probably could. Section 508 program management very well could be its own domain and the OMB 508 maturity model. In fact, we could probably look at putting that together based upon our experience working with GSE and some of you folks. That would probably be very helpful. That is one of the things to look ahead to figure out on my own, was how to tackle the program management side.

Okay. Great. Thank you. There was a brief discussion between Gary and Shelley, and I don't see any more questions in the chat.

I do see one comment, Shelley said HHS and UST have mature 508 programs generally reference from the 508 teams. If they do that is fantastic. If you are able to share those, that's even better. As I said, in my situation we didn't have much going on. We knew kind of what we were still going through internally, and at the time, I had no knowledge of five away or what GSA was doing or anything else, and I had to get to figure out what to do. If I had to do it all over again in an knew what I know now, I would probably tackle it the same way, but I would also look to get some help from other outside sources as well. I don't see anything else. We can go ahead. Jump to the next topic which is all about getting the measure. I have explained why am an advocate for using trading models, even ones I don't fully agree with. Now, I'm going to talk about what we did and how it created the foundation we needed so we could make even more rapid improvements going forward. Basically, we laid out the three-part framework for our get to measure project, which included discovery phase, development phase, and execution. We didn't actually start with much of a project plan, because we hadn't even clearly defined the destination. How the heck do we lay out a detailed roadmap of what happened on that? One good thing about getting thrown into a situation where I had no specific domain knowledge is that I was able to get some space, and leadership was willing to cut me some slack while I started sorting things out. The first thing we had to do was get the lay of the land. We allocated the first three months of our project to the discovery phase. That was almost all internal. In other words, a full third of our project timeline was spent simply interviewing people, asking questions, and collecting as much data and information as we could get, about the current accessibility landscape a DOL. We sent out surveys to dozens of people, followed up with at least a score of in-person interviews, diving into lots of detail with folks from most of our 27 agencies. We tried to look at the situation a couple of different lenses. The idea was to organize what we found in a way that would both make sense for deal leadership, while providing us with a framework to strategize and create a project plan. So the first lens is when you are already familiar with, the five domains from the 508 maturity model. Acquisitions, took lots of, testing and validation, complaint management, and training. But the second lens is the way we found most leadership that DOL to the world of accessibility. What we found is most think of ICT in terms of software and applications, websites, and documents. Now, it is certainly not a perfect lens, and 508 SMEs and really started asking things like what about hardware, what our mission applications, web based interface do you consider them applications or websites. If your goal was to greet the perfect lens to view the accessibility world, then I suppose those were good questions, but that is not what I was trying to do. Perfectionism is usually the enemy of progress. Quite often good enough is good enough in this lens was good enough for framing things in a way we could communicate better leadership. Both software and applications and websites are all moving over to the UCIO. By the category of documents belong to every single person who ever needed a document this year published. So all the IT experts were consolidating into the OCIO, this way of working at the world clearly showed that all agencies still had a huge stake in accessibility, because DOL generates thousands of documents every week. During discovery, we identified dozens of internal and external websites. Doesn't of mission applications and systems and around 4 million documents in various document repositories scattered across the agencies. And even the work was being done in the applications and websites, our handling of document accessibility was the wild West. Information, we gathered through discovery indicated that most of those 4 million documents were likely and accessible. As I mentioned, answering a couple questions, we did find pockets of excellence. We also found huge areas of apathy. Most people didn't know about Section 508 of that did they equated accessibility with having someone remediate my document. Hopefully as a brief aside, documentation is something we are still battling. In fact, this afternoon, have a meeting to talk about document remediation with some of our leaders. Many of the SES folks in our agencies still liquidate document remediation with accessibility. So as we are trying to raise awareness and get people to create their own accessible documents, these leaders tell the incoming political appointees that the OCIO took all my 508 people and they expect us to do all her own 508 work. What they are talking about is the fact that in the past, if someone insisted a document be accessible, they would send it to one of their IT folks and have been remediate the document. Now, first of all, as you heard me rant about last time, that's wasteful. Accessibility is a requirement, which means the document creator needs to make it accessible. If they don't, then they need to have an IT person remediate it, then the document creator did poor quality work. In the generally higher paid IT person had to fix it for them. The Section 508 program office a DOL has taken the position that remediation is rework and rework its waste. So everyone needs to get out of the remediation business. Unfortunately, what agency leadership folks have learned is that they just shouldn't say the word remediation anymore, so they switch the more general comment, you took my 508 people but expect me too keep doing 508 work. Anyway, we gathered up all of our Intel, internal stuff from the discovery phase, looked at it through two lends his, the 508 domains, and the three ICT categories leadership tends to look at. That helped us document our current state and away that made it a lot easier to identify potential improvements. So you have to determine real estate. From the project side of things our main lens was 508 domains. If you recall the definition of success isn't reaching a measured level of maturity in all five domains within nine months. The other lens didn't inform the project plan. What it did was help us frame our indications to the agencies in a way that made more sense to them. Anyway, by the time we had completed the discovery phase, we were already working on defining our instinct. OMB defines measured is validation performed, results are measured and tracked. That is just about as vague as you can possibly get. We went through and defined measured would look like for us in each of the five domains. It may sound pretty straightforward, but it had a lot of healthy debate around what should and could be measured. Actually, I will talk a lot more about in the next segment, but for now, it is important to understand that we had an extensive discovery phase. And we defined our instinct, giving consideration to the current state, the timeframe we were working in and we made sure we stayed within OMB's fairly general definition of measure. And the final step before we were ready to actually flesh out the project itself, was to conduct a gap analysis. We needed to understand what was missing in each domain. Here is where we are, and that is where we want to be. Current state defined future state, the problem is how do we get there from here? Within a maturity model, you have to build on what came before. For example in the acquisitions domain, to be measured, we needed to make sure policies, processes, and procedures were defined and communicated.

We had to make sure staff were trained to implement these policies, processes, and procedures, and we had to perform validation, then measure and track the results. So, our gap analysis did exactly what it sounds like. It defined all the gaps we needed within the levels of maturity for the domains. Identifying those gaps allowed us to figure out exactly what work needed to be done. Within acquisitions, we had to train a few more people, then start measuring in a way that was to help us identify areas for improvement, and track our progress. With the gap analysis in hand, we were able to start running it like an actual project. We created our WBS, work breakdown structure. We broke that down and actual tasks and identified who would do them, set our schedule, and got to work. Having an experienced project manager made all the difference in the world. There is a difference between leading the project at work and truly being a project manager. I really believe that if we hadn't had an experienced driving this thing with me, would not have come close to staying on schedule. Our kept everyone focused. Truck all the deadlines, paid attention to the dependencies, and she was almost ferocious when it came to protecting our scope. Not surprisingly, as people became more aware of what we were doing, we started getting pressure from different agencies to address their priorities, whether they fit in our project plan or not. Even when I was leaning towards giving in an expanding scope, the project manager held her ground, pushing back hard like a great should come and we finished the project on time, on budget, and within scope. One thing we figured out right away was the end of the project was actually one stop along a much longer journey than the next segment of the presentation. I will talk a lot about this and how we approached it. But, basically, we decided not to focus on the metrics and measures we hoped to have in place once we achieved our longer-term vision. Instead, we focused on what we need to measure first in order to build a foundation create a baseline that would inform our improvement efforts going forward. One thing we need to start addressing as soon as possible is your organization's view of metrics. Deal will leadership tends to use metrics for two things, punishment, or approval. When metrics are poor, the use them to punish people. When metrics are good the use them as proof they are doing great work. But, when use metrics like that, the most important reason for measuring work has been lost. The most important reason for measuring is to inform and drive progress. That is we have to change the entire narrative around metrics and measures, and that is what we will talk about actually in the next segment, because right now I am making great time where the end of the second segment. Are there any questions, comments or snide remarks? I will take those, too. I'm looking in the chat

I am looking I don't see any. I guess that was a mouthful. They didn't have any questions

In my going too fast?

Interesting. Is their job series 4508?

I don't believe there is, but I will tell you at DOL, we are discussing things with our HR folks, and they've asked the question within deal well, should we do things where we can focus on training, internal certification? Something internally, as people move around within deal well, they would be able to show this is the experience I have validated skills, not just I did the job, whoever was in the job has the same job description, doesn't mean they did it well. We have actually talked about whether we can do that, offer potentially some sort of a career path for people who want to continue to work within the area of accessibility at DOL.

I will add a bit more, this is Yvette Gibson, we are, and GSA, looking at a certification program. In addition, if you caught one either our February or April meeting, we had OPM actually here discussing that very question. I think I saw Bethany on here, we don't have one yet, but I think if we all push them work together, hopefully we can get one. I think we are looking, trying to create one with OPM. Let's see, another question. Thank you, Joan. What documentation do you have, what planned budgets and staff? That is a question for Gary to you

Yes. One of the things we have done is each of the five domains we have created a we call it guidance document. We are in the process of reviewing all those and updating them and we did those in the beginning and said this is the domain, here is how we define it, here is our first milestone basically, how we are getting to measured. This is why anyone who is interested in our agency, some leadership checked it out to figure out why we were doing what we were doing, so we put that on our intranet site and we've gone through, like I said, we are up for renewing those now, so we go through, review them and say here's what we've done, we can update these, we've got new goals, working right now and FY 22 roadmap, trying to lay out goals. I tried to align them to the five domains because that is where we are being measured against as far as OMB is concerned. Actually worked out very well. I'm also in the process right now, we had a program office charter in draft and neck actually approved, try to get that approved so we have a better defined scope of what our office is supposed to do. I think I talk about coming up, here, we still have folks that one is to be the remediation office. They don't want to have to think about accessibility, they just want to do things the way they've always done it and throw it over the wall to us. Continued to say, no, we are in the business of providing guidance, expertise, and training. If we get stopped properly, we will actually start doing auditing as well. But, we are not going to be in the business of doing everyone's work for them.

Thank you, Brendan. Just to go back to Paula's question, if anybody else has any questions in reference to the job series, you can feel free to contact me and

event talk Gibson@GSA .gov. I will put that in the chat, as we are working on a certification program. We've got more questions.

[ Multiple Speakers ] 50800 DOE program

I was looking for that. Interesting, when I was at the office of disability employment policy, actually an agency within DOL, that was one of the places that they originally suggested putting the 508 program office because that, what they do, advocate for folks with disabilities, all throughout the public. They didn't have the staff and didn't give it will there and CRC, civil rights center that handles a lot of the EEO stuff, actually handles all the 508 Compliance, they didn't want the office either, basically a got thrown to the OCIO because everyone said it's a 19 thing, right? So, that is why we ended up, could have it somewhere else? Yes. Could have fit under HR? I would think so, if you want to focus on skill development to change your organizational culture, HR might be a good place.

Thanks, Brendan. I was just trying to follow the conversation, in reference to certifications. I see the trusted tester information

Here's a snide remark

This is Shannon. While you are looking through that can I ask a question?

Yes, you can

Thank you. So, we talked about culture, you talk about people thinking your office is still the remediation office, what I didn't see in the model is, is that cultural piece. I don't know, is that something you will address or incorporate formally into the model later?

I talked a lot about that back in June. I walked through our change management model using the awareness, desire to change, knowledge, turn knowledge into abilities, and reinforcing those abilities. That is, we sort of created a pipeline on both the tech side and the everybody else side which focuses on documents. We've got ongoing awareness efforts, targeted communications to end-users, middle management, and senior leadership. Trying to teach people, to raise awareness, build in the desire to change. We sort of build the pipeline. We have people who have bought them, gone to documented axis will be eight week intensive program come out there trying to teach others how to do it right. We've got some IT folks fully on board truck looking for best practices, trying to implement. Other folks going, what is less 508 stuff? , so we brought them all over the spectrum. We are trying to move them through an actual formal change model, and we built comms and training to support all phases of that model.

Thanks, Shannon. Brendan, did you see your snide remark?

Wise DOL so late to the table and accessibility? You would think we would be at the forefront

Absolutely. It is interesting, because right now, at least up to our CIO level, and I think even a little beyond that, they are saying, DOL we represent the workers in the U.S.. We should be on the cutting edge of accessibility. We should be trying to set the gold standard . Some of our leadership is actually starting to ask that question. Of course, my position is, I'm building efficient processes, give me the right resources and tools and we can do amazing things here. I know there is a lot of you out here excellent best practices to share, lots of things that are out there, we bring them together in an organized manner and we can do something fantastic.

Thank you, Brandon. Shelley, I hope that answers your question. Are there anymore? Gary shared, yeah, I'm familiar with that. We've been talking to them as well. Accessibility Association. I think they offer five different certification programs. I think it is five, the Gary put in the chat.

There is a common here somebody said looks like Samantha said she'd be afraid to get a certificate or certification for the reason we mentioned. People think you should be fixing everything after the fact for them, instead of guiding them. Yes. In fact, as we are looking at some sort of internal kind of certification process for folks, it is really on the document side, because that is where, like I said, it's kind of the wild West, but that is where we can help end users improve. We are looking at how do you set up a program that would, for example, so we are talking with Sean over at SBA. He started to automate some of the document accessibility checklists using power apps. We want to do that because we can start capturing data you get certified as a document specialist within DOL you would open up the check list, you would use the checklist to try to walk them through. If you ended up doing the remediation for them, there would be a place for you to indicate come on the checklist, that she did the remediation. Now, we would have all that information. We would see where the remediation is happening, what agencies were doing at the most, and who was being told they had to do remediation. They wouldn't have to tattle, all they would have to do in order to maintain their certification with us, is actually use our automated checklist. So we start to reinforce, measure and reinforce, in a way that takes those people, the subject matter experts come out of the middle, and allows us to go back to agency leadership and say, hey, your people need to stop doing poor quality work. Let's focus on first time quality and we will do training, whatever it takes. Those are some of the things we are doing, because yeah, we do not want to create people who have worked hard and have subject matter expertise, and they get thrown into the fix it for everyone else role. Holy cow, I can't keep up with the chat here

This is a comment from Jimmer part Jereem Richards. So Jim says when people asked me about making something accessible, I will try to meet with, let me know when you have time and I will teach you how to make it 508 Compliant. Good answer, Jim Richards, for that response when they asked me, can you do it for me. And he says, I tell them, if I am out on vacation, like I'm going to be next week, then you will need to do it to finish the product on your own. That is great. That is so great. Can give us your automated checklist?

Yes. I actually have a couple members of my team working with Sean over at the SBA. One of the goals is to fine-tune how we are doing that in power apps, and roll that process out and make it available to anyone. We will probably take us a couple of months to work the bugs out, but we absolutely want to. If we come up with something that works well that we can package and share with you, that is absolutely what we want to do. Gary had a comment about, yeah, employees learning to use products such as Word, PowerPoint. I will -- here is my comment on them. I don't think I have a single agency within the Department of Labor, that is actually training people on how to use word, PowerPoint, and those tools. If you read every single job description out there, you need to know that coming in. Everyone in colleges learning, supposedly learning how to use them. I haven't had a single employee come across my team who didn't quote know how to use it. So I think these bad habits they are picking up, they are picking up outside of DOL. We are just assuming, hey, if you can open up a PowerPoint document and create something that looks find is somebody who sees well, then that is good enough. But, I understand your point. In fact, that is one of the things we are finding right now, when people show up to document accessibility training programs, they don't actually know how to use some of the basic built-in tools in Microsoft Word. They don't know how to use styles, even. And, that is one of the hardest things we have to do is break them of that have a. Now, we are trying to find ways of how do we do so sorry, hold on, losing my VPN connection. Let me know if I drop off. I will, I think I will be okay. Anyways, we are trying to figure out, I want to teach them how to use accessibility tools and they don't even know how to use the basic tools built into the software the use you for every single day. Very good point.

I think it is almost time for break

Yes, it is

I want to remind everyone that is in here, please, before I have to remove you to the waiting room to change your phone number, or change your name to your first and last name. I tried to reach out to people via chat, so this is a reminder, change your name to your first and last name. Thank you, and we will be back at 2:05. So this is your break

All right. Talk to you in a few.

[ The meeting is on a break. The session will reconvene at 2:05 PM Eastern Daylight Time. Captioner on Stand by ]]

[ Captioners Transitioning ]

Hello, this is Evette Gibson. Welcome back, everyone. Brandon?

I'm here.

Back to you, my friend.

All right. In queue for sticking with me this long. We have a lot of healthy conversation going on in the chat. My third topic is called, change the narrative. It's a phased approach to metrics and measures. The best way for me to explain my position on the use of metrics is to tell you about a production superintendent I had when I was working on the factory floor in Michigan. Let me tell you a little story. I was the second shift foreman for a department. I was a machine and graining operator. We measured tolerance in the microns. It was very precise work. The factory had implemented concepts with systems, just-in-time three. We tracked and posted lots of performance metrics, every shift. One night, the superintendent stopped by our break area and he was looking at our metrics board. I had a few questions. He had a few questions for me. We were having some equality issues on a couple of operations. I was a young foreman so I confidently assured him that I was on top of it and we would fix our numbers by the end of the week. He said, what? What did you say? I was off guard. I repeated what I said but in a confused voice. Definitely not confident. He leaned in and he pointed his finger right my face and said, we don't fix our numbers. We fix our problems. The numbers take care of themselves. I fire people who fix their numbers. I assured him that we would work on fixing our problems, just like he said. And the numbers would simply show whether we were successful or not. It's what I meant, actually. It did get me thinking. I started to pay more attention to another foreman were doing. Especially my first shift counterpart. It turns out there was some fixing of the numbers going on. I refused to even massage my numbers after that, much less fix them. When our metrics look bad, I knew where to start digging. We fixed a lot of problems. A couple of months after that threat, the superintendent was back out in my area and I was explaining to him what we had done and the improvements we had made. I proudly showed him our metrics and everything had been in the green for over a month. When I was done giving my little spiel, he stood there looking at our metrics board for a minute. It felt like an hour. It was like in the movies. Without taking his eyes from the board, he asked me, are you perfect? And I'm thinking, here we go again. I stammered out a confused, no. He turned and looked me in the eye and said, that's right. You are not perfect. Nobody is. He pointed at the board and said, so how does this help you improve? It doesn't. You want to know how to keep improving? Show me the red. I remember that. Show me the red. He had a great point. One of the absolutes of quality is that the quality performance standard is zero defect's. In other words, the quality goal is perfection. But since no process is ever perfect, if what you are measuring looks perfect, then it's time to measure something else. Measure so you can uncover your imperfections and start improving on them. Back in June, we talked about metrics. I think I explained at DOL, we are great at measuring outcomes. We measure thousand different outcomes. It's what's called a lagging metric. It let you see you know you have a problem after the problem has already negatively impacted your customer. Think about this. If you are a supervisor and you only have lagging metrics, you are stuck in firefighting mode. From an accessibility perspective, you are stuck with remediation. If remediation is rework and rework his waist, your metrics are, by design, allowing waste. So what you need are leading metrics. You need to start measuring something that can give you actionable information before it's a full-blown problem. You need to measure something that allows you to catch defects as they occur and correct them. And correct the process immediately. To do that, you need a standard process to measure. That's where people struggle when it comes to the question of getting measured. Which is definitely where we want to be as an organization. But you can't get there from here. Not directly, anyway. There are lots of stops along the way. Yes, the long-term vision is for us to help supervisors and managers build leading metrics into their standardize processes. Warning flags that will let them know they had a problem before that problem impacts the customer. Enter yet, warns them before the situation even becomes a problem. But that's not the starting point and it's not the only definition that's measured. It's okay big -- To begin with lagging. The maturity model provides five categories. Acquisitions, lifecycle, testing and validation, training and management. Which gives us five different areas where we can start measuring. But we need to make it clear to people that we will not use what we measure as a stick to beat people over the head with. And we should not use our metrics simply as a way to toot our own horn and claim victory. We should use our metrics in three simple ways. To identify problems. To measure the impact of improvements that we implement and to track our overall progress. Eventually, when the standardize processes mature, we can focus on perfection. I will tell you that most of those situations arm in the manufacturing world. Not in the world of I.T. services and I.T. accessibility. In most cases, for us, perfectionism is the enemy of progress. From my experience, the fastest way to absolutely destroy support for accessibility is to demand immediate, across-the-board perfection. We need to reframe the way most people think about metrics and measures so we can use them to actually inform and derive our continuous improvement efforts. That's all very philosophical. I'm guessing you would like to hear some slightly more concrete suggestions about how we can actually do this wonderful stuff that I am so eloquently pontificating about. Let me explain the phased approach we are trying to take at DOL. First, we definitely needed to do something different. The department had some initial progress but accessibility improvements seem to have stalled. It certainly didn't make sense to just keep doing more of the same. We decided that what got us here will get us there. We needed some changes. Like I said, we can jump directly to the final state of our grand vision. We decided to get to measure in a way that set us up for a phased approach to improving our metrics. The idea is to start measuring something that would help us uncover problem areas. If what we were measuring would then help us to measure the impact of corrective actions that we implement and allow us to track progress, we keep measuring that way. If not, we start measuring something else. Before I go on, I will tell you one stupid sports analogy that I kept running into when I started explaining this phased approach. We had a number of SCS folks tell me, people don't like it when you move the goal post on them. If you try this phased approach at your agency, I will be shocked to hear someone say. I would be really surprised if at least some of you weren't already thinking. Here was my reply. This isn't moving the goal post. The goalpost is accessibility. We are not moving that. We are just changing up the playcalling because we are not even close to being within scoring range right now. Most of them didn't know how to respond because they don't actually care about accessibility all that much. They just want their metrics to be green. They want to fix their numbers. But it's hard to do that when I'm always looking for the red. All right. Let's look at our approach to acquisitions domains. That was the first of the domains. To get to measured, we look at all active contracts to see if they did or did not have the appropriate section 508 revisions. What we found is that there is actually three categories. Yes, no, and unknown. Our contracting officers have the option of doing what's called, externally editing their contracts. Basically, instead of using the system to select the appropriate contract clauses, including the 508 clauses, they can upload a separate Microsoft Word document with the clauses they want in it. Fortunately, the acquisition management system can't read those documents. The system doesn't know what's in there, whether the 508 clauses are in there or not. All of those contracts are listed as, unknown. When we try to get the CEOs to manually report on their contracts, they basically refused, claiming they didn't have time. We've just implemented a picklist in our acquisition management system. So when we go to make the next contracting action, they are forced to validate whether or not the contract has the appropriate clause in it. Phase one is all about measuring whether or not our contracts have the right 508 clauses. Phase two is focusing on additional contract provisions that are aligned to specific requirements and deliverables. These provisions include the boilerplate provisions that are clearly linked to all necessary deliverables. The metrics will still be quantitated. Does the contract have the right stuff? Yes or no? Phase three and beyond is where we will start refining our metrics and focusing on more qualitative things. Such as the quality of the actual performance in regards to accessible outcomes. Measuring whether or not the contract officers are enforcing the contracts or not. We are ramping up what we are measuring. Going for the more broad and general, and the more and more specific and focused. In the tech lifecycle domain, we currently have three phases roughly mapped out as well. Phase one is focused on measuring the extent to which Section 508 requirements are incorporated into tech lifecycle activities. Like enterprise architecture. Design, development, testing, deployment and ongoing maintenance. This was a quantitative measure of whether or not accessibility was addressed at each phase. It did not try to determine if what was done was actually adequate. That's more qualitative. We just wanted to know, are you even asking the right questions? Yes or no? Phase two will focus on standardizing processes and instituting best practices in accessibility throughout the tech lifecycle. And reporting on the results of those efforts. We are underway with those right now. We are beginning to roll out guidance on best practices. We are working with different teams. We are trying to standardize the processes. This will start honing in on parts of the process and how successfully we address accessibility. The final phase, phase three, will focus on continuous process improvement activities. We want to ensure the quality of the accessibility efforts and better track remediation of existing issues. Continue looking at the success of large parts of the process, but we might also drill down to things like when deficiencies were detected. Types of deficiencies. All of those sorts of things. Tech lifecycle and testing and validation domains are the areas where I am not the expert. I can't provide a ton of detail just yet. But I have team members were working on that. Again, the idea is to start with a more broad approach of measuring that allows you to help identify problem areas and then start to refine your metrics and drill down in. Don't think of as moving the goalpost. The goalpost is still accessibility. All we are doing is trying some different place. The phased approach to testing and validation, we've also planned out three rough phases here. The last two are pretty much the same as the tech lifecycle. Phase one, we established a baseline by determining what is being measured and how. Including the testing methodologies used. Some teams were using some hybrid of trusted tester and something else. Others were doing their own thing. Some were doing none at all. What they were doing and how they were doing it, including what software tools. This is used to identify best practices that we can start to share throughout the organization. Phase two, that is where we are focusing on standardizing the processes and instituting the best practices, testing and validation. Again, reporting those results. The results of those efforts. Our metrics really focus on the rollouts of these standardized testing and validation processes. Phase three, we start moving into the longer-term view. Looking at measuring our continuous process improvement activities. Finding problems. Trying solutions. Measuring the results of those solutions. Continuing to iterate. The general idea is with the other domain, is about starting broad. Using that info to determine where to focus your efforts and then drilling down with a more granular measurement in specific areas. This can be different for different organizations. Depends upon how your teams are structured your cow your folks are working. What processes they have in place. Our goal is to become involved and include ourselves in the existing processes as opposed to setting up totally separate stuff. We want them to understand that accessibility needs to be incorporated into everything that you do. It's not something separate that you both on the outside. All right. Let's talk about training next. I will save complaint management for the end. Phase one, we are focusing on creating the foundational training courses on basic skills. All DOL staff. That's one area. Try to teach them how to create accessible digital content in several standard document formats. Word, PowerPoint, Excel and PDF. All managers. Trying to train them on importance of accessibility. Trying to teach them what questions to ask and where to send employees for resources and support. Not for remediation, but to learn how to do it themselves. All I.T. project managers. We are starting there. Were not necessarily trying to teach the developers what to do at this point. We are focusing on the higher up. Project managers. Teaching them about accessibility and how to incorporate data throughout their lifecycle. Phase two, we started to look at that. Will be focused on creating some DOL certification programs to train subject matter experts. Frame them in how to create accessible documents and then reporting DOL agency participation in training and their continued use of remediation, instead of achieving first time quality. Right now, we are measuring in the aggregate. We will be drilling down and providing specific details to agencies. This phase also introduces annual 508 training for all DOL employees. With a focus on incorporating accessibility into employing performance standards. We are already in discussions with human resources folks to do just that. Phase three will be focused on taking a data-driven approach to identifying new specialized training needs while closely measuring support of all of these training efforts. The final 50 a domain is complaint management. It's a bit of a different beast for us. I obviously don't know what it's like where you guys are. We have attorneys in the civil rights section that handle the five away complaints. At least all of the formal complaints, as they call them. I haven't gotten really clear definition of a formal complaint. Not every complaint that comes to them is formal. I know for a fact, they have a whole bunch of complaints. When they reported to us, they said a few of them rise to the level of a formal complaint. Also, they don't have a defining standard process for addressing and tracking. They just don't want to tell us what it is. As much as I would love to track the different phases of their complaint process, intake, assessment, discovery and whatever they do, I can do that. We ask them to report the basics. Complaints, time open and average time to close. That's really where we had to start with phase one. Phase two is getting interesting because we are starting to track everything that might qualify as a complaint. Even to what CRC would call a informal complaint. I can't access that file or my training will work with that, we are starting to track those. We are categorizing them and will be using that data to understand trouble spots. Then we look at what I.T. teams will be responsible in most formal complaints. At some point we will present our detailed findings for leadership. Nothing but vague information on formal complaints and a change on that front. Again, the idea is to start with the broader approach that can help you identify problem areas. That's what metrics and measures are supposed to do. Then, drill down in. Get more focused. Measure something that can help you understand the problem better that can help you identify and test possible solutions for it. And measure how well those solutions work. All right. That is the end of the third segment. Questions, comments, snide remarks?

Okay. Let's see what we have. Hello, everyone. This is event again. Rosemary is asking, what is a place to train CEOs? What is in place at Defense acquisition University? I offered a comment on DAU, but you can offer your own. Brandon?

We've talked to leadership in procure services. I believe DAU, or FAI, somebody offers training. What we are trying to do is, because we have approved boilerplate that lots of groups have reviewed and it's a good place for us to start, we are focusing on making sure that the contracting officers and contract specialists understand where they should be including those boilerplate provisions. Then we are working with the contract owners. The federal project managers, we call them. The ones who own and write the requirements. We are helping them include provisions in the requirements that tightly link their deliverables to those boilerplate provisions. In doing that, we are trying to avoid having to do a ton of training for the procurement folks. If it's a service contract, go ahead and put the boilerplate provisions in there. The first question I got was, our physical security folks. The people that guard our buildings. I said, do they ever write up official reports they have to submit? Yes, they do. And because they are official reports, they need to be compliant. So put the boilerplate provision in. Worst-case scenario, if it's never applicable, then it's never applicable. There's not a problem putting it in. We asked the boilerplate be an all-time I.T. hardware, and all services contracts. That's what we are trying to get our procurement folks to do. And then we are working with the requirements owners to build on that foundation.

John is asking, do you categorize help desks to determine which ones are accessible, later? Accessibility related, sorry.

We have started to talk with our helpdesk folks at the enterprise service desk trying to figure out what we can do there. We run into issues with a civil rights Center who, for example, they won't let the ESD flag in the system. Someone who uses assisted technology and has a disability. They say it's a privacy violation. It's kind of frustrating because, the ESD, they try to provide better support. If they know someone is a VIP, they know to treat them a little differently. If they know someone is using assistive technology and has a disability, they can quickly get that call handled by someone who is trained to do that or they have a better idea of how to intervene and help them out. We are being told we can't do that. Tickets related to the assistive technology, that's about as far as we can go. If someone else is doing something with that, I would love to hear how you have been tackling the privacy issues.

Okay. We have a question from Shelley. She says, if DOL management only provided minimal funding and staff, what makes us believe they are fully committed?

That's what we continue to push back and challenge. Everyone is starting to say the right thing. They are starting to talk about the right things. Let's talk about whether or not we are properly resourced. We are starting to have those difficult discussions. It's difficult with the culture and it's difficult amongst the agencies that have to have the budget. We have no -- Ourselves, in the agency. Anyway they give me comes away from their mission. In their minds, accessibility was a I.T. thing. They've already given me all of their I.T. folks. They have a problem agreeing with the fact they still have a huge responsibility in regards to accessibility because of all of the thousands of documents they are generating every week. It is a question. It's easy to be an advocate and say, yes, this is fantastic, we need to do this. It's another thing to put your money where your mouth is.

Gary is asking, what are the solutions or are they just blocking the flag?

I haven't gotten a solution from them. Basically, they just said you can't do it. You can to do it so figure out a different way. The other thing is, if we can root out the problems and do a better job of root cause analysis and fixing problems at the source, as opposed to -- The service desk. When you call the help desk, that's not a value stream. That's a failure stream. We failed to provide the value that you paid for, initially. Something went wrong and now you have a quality issue and you have to go to ESD. Of trying to solve things and trying to get better at your failure stream, I struggle with that. I would rather refocus on root cause analysis, fix the problems so that they never happened in the first place. I know that's pie-in-the-sky kind of taking. That's the way we are going after right now. Speak

Reporter: I like pie in the sky. Jim Richards says, we ran into the same thing. How we thought about asking our staff to self reassign, if they want to, to ensure -- Oh. He said he's talking about having the staff self assign, if they want to come at to ensure they get the service they need.

That's a good idea. That is actually one that I think we had -- At least one person on my team had mentioned that. It's been on the back burner for now. We have a lot of other stuff. We can certainly offer people.

He came back and said, doesn't the agency have a right and responsibility to monitor all software on its employees laptops from a security standpoint? It's a run around the disability labeling. But it is legitimate. Your flagging VAT, not the person.

The problem we are up against is, like I said, we had just gone through a consolidation of all of the I.T. folks. With 27 different agencies, nine infrastructure agencies. Lots of people were managing their own software. We haven't actually consolidated the management of all of the software yet. They are working on that. So yes, at some point, once we are doing our software management, centrally, and we have a clear visibility into all of that, then yes. We can look at saying, Jaws users, maybe some of you are using it for testing. Which we don't recommend. Let's assume that they have a disability and need specialized support when they call the ESD. We are kind of classifying people based upon the tools they are using. If we get our software management in order, we would look at doing something like that. It's a good idea.

Bethany said, the more we build a culture that values DIA, the more comfortable people will fill, self identifying. That's good in itself. That was a comment.

I agree. What we don't want to do is create a scenario where managers look at someone with a disability as a liability. Someone who is more expensive, someone who is driving lots of problems for me. I've been asked whether I can put together a chargeback model to pay for our office. Why would they do that without potentially penalizing groups of managers that have hired people with disabilities? It's tough. We deftly want to build that culture where people are more comfortable with self identifying. Until we find a way to get away from that, linking everything back to the bottom line, it's going to be difficult.

Shelley had a comment. I just saw her. I think it was Shelley that made the comment. Remember that not all that struggle need software. We have more than 20 years to address accessibility in government as a whole and have dragged our feet.

Yep. 20 years late and we still haven't gotten there yet.

Exactly. I think that's it, in the comments.

All right.

There was one final one. Angela said, it would be interesting to charge back to the system/product that created the barrier. Not the user. Switch where the accountability lies.

Absolutely. That would be a fun exercise to do. All right. This final topic. Enforcement is not the answer. I know there are plenty of people who disagree with me and I'm sure there are some of you that would disagree with me as well. Hear me out before you start lambasting me. I believe that training, skill building and empowerment is the way we need to go from here. I was talking to one of our senior leaders a while back and he was advocating for immediate enforcement of Section 508 across the board. I strongly disagreed with him. I explained the change management can remain that we've been executing. I said, we don't want to be the 508 police. If I've been driving the same route to the grocery store for years and I always drive 20 miles over the speed limit because no cops ever enforce it, I'm probably not going to drive the speed limit until one of them does. You need to start enforcing the laws. Okay. Maybe that sounds reasonable at first. It's a bad analogy. In fact, it's not even close to being analogous to what's going on with Section 508. First of all, if you tell me your driving 20 miles over the speed limit, that means you know exactly what you are doing wrong. You know you are breaking the law. Besides, you've been trained, tested, and licensed to drive. Most of the people making accessibility mistakes, frankly they have no idea what they are doing wrong and they have no clue how to fix it. They certainly haven't been licensed. The way they've been doing it has only received kudos from leadership for years. If you are going to jump straight to enforcement, you better have lots of qualified people ready to show them exactly what they are doing wrong and train them immediately on how to do it right. Simply saying, it's not accessible, fix it. Sorry, that's not going to fly. We are focusing a lot on ensuring we are training and tracking metrics that help us on our journey. As I said, what you're measuring has to be actionable. It has to drive better decision-making. But your organization can't effectively act on all of this great new information if people don't have the necessary skills to actually make the improvements. Immediate, across-the-board enforcement is definitely not the answer. Although I understand the sentiment, you can't enforce your way to compliance. Another reason the 20 miles over the speed limit analogy is ridiculous is because it's fundamental assumption is flawed. Most people drive right around the speed limit because they know the laws and they are generally law-abiding citizens. Laws don't work because cops are there to enforce them. If everyone decided to only abide by the law when the cop was around to enforce it, you would need at least one cop for every citizen. It's ridiculous. Everyone agrees to abide by it. Whether there is a cop around or not. Section 508 and accessibility needs to be the same way. In order to get people to that point, we need to understand the law and they need to choose to be a law-abiding citizen. There's no practical or efficient way to do it. Not only is it wasteful, as I harp on all the time. It often results in cobbled together work products that everyone should be ashamed of. At DOL, we are trying to empower everyone to do most of the accessibility work themselves. A lot of times, we are finding, as we talked about and was mentioned in the chat, the problem is years of bad habits and not having the understanding of how to properly use the software they use on their jobs, every single day. Getting people to take a couple of training classes, that's not enough. We are trying to figure out how to help them take that knowledge and turn into actual skills and abilities. So we provide regular trading and refresher training and customized training. Our traders have coaching sessions. And open office hours. They show people how to use their knowledge, in real time, on things they are currently working on. We are looking at developing subject matter experts in each of the DOLs component agencies. 27 agencies I keep mentioning. Provide additional coaching. Not remediation. We are talking about how to set up a peer review network with formal feedback so we can support those and they can continue reinforcing skill building within their agencies. We have people who take the same training, several times. And still ask us for help remediating the document. We have people who refuse to take training and insist they don't have the time to learn an entirely new skill set because it's not part of their job. We have supervisors and managers who are advocates for accessibility, until something urgent comes up and then they want to waver just this once. As if I can decide to waive the law for them. We have people who are learning and getting better. People who are showing up to virtual office hours and improving their understanding even more. We have supervisors and managers who are asking for help to implement internal review processes. They can ensure their work products are accessible without having to ask us for any help. In other words, we have people who get it. They understand the importance of accessibility and they believe it's an integral part of producing high-quality work. They are starting to get more and more vocal. Some of those folks are starting to say, I didn't know how to do it either. But I do now. If I figure it out, you can too. I will tell you, there's something to be said for the power of positive peer pressure. We are focusing on empowering people. Don't get me wrong. It is not all unicorns and rainbows. There are so many of you out there who have areas of excellence that make us look like the neophytes we are. I commend you for that. We have built a solid foundation. We are executing it a ambitious change management plan and we are making steady progress in all five domains. Because of the way we measure things. Like I said earlier, there's nothing wrong with trudging along. As long as you are trudging in the right direction. I'm pretty sure that's exactly what we are doing right now. That final segment was pretty short. It looks like we are pretty much on time. Are there any other questions, comments or snide remarks?

I see one. This is event again. I didn't check to see who it was from. I think it's from Bethany. How many times do you tell people the same thing? Offer training, no one can fix that by your deadline conversation. Sounds familiar, et cetera. That sounds so familiar.

The way we are approaching it is, we want to build a cadre of subject matter experts. So that there are more folks that can step in to bail people out. But the idea is that when someone needs remediation, they don't just come in and hold their hand a little bit. They actually need you to do most of the work or all of the work. Then we will start instituting some metrics and measures and start reporting around that. We will very clearly see who is getting with the program and who is not. It will eventually become a sort of shaming them into doing what everyone else is doing, probably. At some point you do have to enforce. How you draw that line, that's going to be up to you and your organization. I will tell you, in our organization, our conversation earlier about the difference between saying the right things and actually putting your money where your mouth is. It's very easy for some of our top leadership to get upset and pound the table and say, start enforcing five away. But when you refuse to publish something because it's not compliant and you don't have anyone can actually step up and make a complaint without hurting someone else, or something else that's going on, all of a sudden he gets really difficult. They don't want to deal with it. They want us to just figure it out. That's where I'm kind of slow rolling the whole enforcement. I want to build the knowledge, skills and abilities. Start putting in place some reinforcement mechanisms. Whether it's to find a way to commend people who are doing the right things and start to bring some focus on -- Or put the spotlight on some folks who aren't. After that, start getting to actual enforcement.

Angela says, she agrees enforcement doesn't always move the needle. We focus on empathy. We want them to care. Some people are generally oblivious.

Yep. I see another, from Shelley. I understand that we don't want enforcement at this stage but we need accountability now. I apologize. I probably should have mentioned that. One of the things we are doing as we are implementing our basic metrics and measures is we are looking at how to establish accountability. Where agencies are pushing to do things that were not compliant or pushing to not remediate things that should be remediated. We are clearly establishing lines of accountability. The idea is, put accountability in place and get people used to having that happen without jumping immediately to enforcement. And then when you are in a position to start doing reinforcement and enforcement, you clearly identify the accountability. That's part of the foundation building that can be done quietly without stirring too many people up.

Great. Thank you, Brandon. John says, how are you handling micro purchases? Have you found a way to minimize complexity so they can do much for themselves rather than ask for assistance?

We are not, at this point. My team is not looking at micro purchases. One of the things that I know is going on is because we are working with lots of different groups. Folks who are working on micro purchases, some folks in the acquisitions shop. There actually starting to ask questions about whether or not they can start addressing accessibility issues without our involvement. So we don't have the bandwidth to tackle that yet. There's a lot of movement going on that we are actually not driving. Just sort of a catalyst to get people to think about how to improve their processes.

Thanks, Brandon. I need to address this one thing.

It's not actually on my slide. I don't know if somebody accidentally annotated. Let me see if I can erase this.

No big deal. You did. There you go.

I did erase it.

I wanted to share a comment. It was shared with me. But because it was sent to me, I'm not going to say this person's name, but I am going to read it. I think people in general don't understand the negative impact that noncompliance can have on people, which I 100% agree. I tried to highlight a walk in their shoes and demonstrate the problems. Once people understand they are more willing to try harder. I agree with that. Your thoughts?

I agree completely. It goes back to the idea of empathy. For example, when I did training for all employees, a few people went through as sort of an awareness training. I built the trading around a story that we cobbled together from some stuff that had happened. And some of my own experiences. But in the story, I talk about this person who is on a team and upset that she's being forced to make all of these changes to her communications in order to accommodate these accessibility things. She goes to have dinner with her cousin who uses a wheelchair. After having to miss the Metro stop because the elevator was out, they finally get to the restaurant and the handicap entrances down the alley, pass the dumpster. They had to go through the side door on the kitchen. She realizes that when she makes something that's not compliant, it's like what my cousin had to go through. She didn't get to go through the front door like everybody else. She had to go down the alley, pass the dumpster, through this side door. To get to where everybody else is able to go to. A story like that, people understand the physical disabilities more. They see more of that in their own lives. It's really hard to get them to understand what someone with a disability goes through when what we create is not accessible. We have done some of our training. We look more at providing demos of the assisted technology just to show them. Here's how it works. Here's what happens when you don't create stuff that's accessible. That's starting to get through to people. If you jump, I had a conversation with one of my team members who is completely blind. He is adamant that we can't expect 100% compliance from the get-go because people push back too hard and he's very adamant about -- He will even say that members of the disabled community that he knows get upset with him because he takes that position and isn't willing to just pound the table and demand 100% compliance. You make changes far faster when you get people to go along and make them understand. That was a lot of talking just to say that, yes, I agree. We need to somehow figure out how to make people understand why this is important and how it impacts real people.

I agree. I so agree. I have a comment from Marian and a follow-up from Angela. Marian says, you have to resolve purchases because you resolve ICT on the output end. Procurement is inputting with non-accessible ICT. Angela said, that her small agency, we had a technical review board to look at a technical reference model. Expected only to buy what's been approved on that list.

That's fantastic. We are talking about, how do we make sure anything is purchased new, is reviewed properly? It's a scanned image and it's not accessible. It's from 2011. It doesn't address anything that needs to be properly addressed. Just the fact that they sent you that is not good enough. That's actually something that we will probably be reaching out to GSA and other folks who have some good practices in place. In fiscal year 2022, we will focus more after we review procurements to stop bringing in all of this horrible, noncompliance stuff. We will try to figure out how to fix it afterwards.

Okay. Kelly says, ask them how they would use the software if they have a broken arm? Great. Great, Kelly. Great point. Great, great, great. I like that. Let's see what else. We've got kudos to you, Brandon. Gary says, we no longer tolerate racism and micro aggressions but we have a double standard when it comes to disability. I agree, Gary. Short version. I'm trying to get this on my screen. Oblivious awareness complainants efforts. Oblivious awareness compliance efforts habits.

That's the path to accessibility. You have to be oblivious at first.

Yes. Let's see. Jim said, there is a question before this. Are we updating contracts to ensure they address 504 and 508 compliance? That was from Shelley.

Yes. Our baseline measurements were looking at which contract did or did not have the provisions. Actually, we had two approved provisions. One in 2014 and one that was approved in 2019. The one in 2019 was supposed to be a required provision. What we are doing is, okay, looking at what contracts have the provisions and which ones don't. And if they don't, we will start to work with the agencies to say, all right, do they need provisions? Should they be modified? In some cases we have identified contracts that are up for re-competition. The decision was made that we will not fight to modify a contract that has been done in four or five months. That is definitely what we are trying to do. That comes down to a risk assessment. Can we identify contracts that don't have the 508 provision in them and we think they should? We need to talk with the contract owner, the contracting officers and talk about what it would take to open those contracts back up and renegotiate the proper provisions into them. Chances are, the cost will change. The costs are likely to go up when we do that.

Thanks, Brandon. We are at the end. I want to thank everyone for coming and attending. Please take the survey. The link is in the chat. If you want to ask some more questions you can come off of mute and we will stay on a little longer and you can ask Brandon's let me see if I can unmute everyone. If not, just take yourself off the. And I wanted to mention, October 12, 13th and 14th. It will be virtual. It's from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. We have great presenters and breakout sessions. Brandon is one of them. Please make sure you come out and hang with us. Interpreters, you are free to go. Thank you. Thank you everyone for attending. Take yourself off of mute. I will keep it open just a little bit longer and you can ask what you will. As long as it's not personal.

If it's a personal question, I will just make up an answer.

Hi, this is Shelley.

Hi, Shelley.

First of all, Brandon, excellent job as usual. I learned so much. As you can tell, I'm with DOL because I always ask questions. My biggest concern is, when we are creating documentation, and I am the writer, the technical writer for all of the software applications on the FTE site. We have a contractor on the CVP side. One of the biggest issues I find, I can't tell them what to do. Five of four and 508 says, when we are documenting applications, we must document everything on the screen. The contracting side says, no, I don't have to do that. I'm putting everything into text. Of course I come back and say, but if you delete the image, there is no alt text. How are we planning on addressing those kind of issues within DOL?

A lot of those things are things where, as things come up, we are trying to get involved and figure out what's going on. If it's something that is worthy of rising to the level of needing official guidance from the program office, we are keeping those things up to do so. I will tell you right now, we are short staffed. We have a backlog of those kind of things. Our goal would be, as those things come up and are identified, we work with folks like you to understand what's going on. We would come up with what DOL believes should be the approach and we would start trying to enforce it. If we find we have contracting issues, we will deal with those. My own experience with the contracting issues is generally what happens is, the vendor is interpreting the contract the way they want to interpret it. No one is stepping up. No one in the contracting shop is stepping up and challenging them. We will hopefully bring some pressure to bear to start challenging some of those things.

Perfect. I love that answer. Thank you so much.

You are welcome. Just so everybody knows, I did put my email in the chat. If you want to get a hold of me, I'm happy to collaborate. As I said, we've got some really good things going on. I know that we are not perfect. I continue to find amazing things that folks are doing out there. Just know that if you collaborate with us, my goal with any collaboration going forward is to ensure that whatever we work on together, it's something that we can then come back and share with the entire community. I want to keep an eye on not just doing stuff that works for us internally, but figure out how we can create some best practices that we can share across the board with folks.

We have a comment. She says, I hope whatever guidance is developed it will embrace plain language. That is so important for those of us with cognitive issues to have. Clear prose. Great point, Hillary.

Yes. I had some conversations with some of the plain language group within DOL. Especially as we put up more and more guidance. We will definitely be working on that.

That has been one of my biggest frustrations dealing with a trusted tester. It is not clear.

To be honest, one of my frustrations being new to 508 is, a lot of the stuff I have pointed to where people said, this is a great resource, I read through it. I say, okay, I'm not sure if I've got it. I don't have any cognitive issues that I know of.

I've been working on this for several years. I'm about to retire. I would like to pursue this because it's an issue that's near and dear to me. We will see what happens.

Excellent. Trying to scan through the chat and see if there's anything we missed.

There's a question for you, Brandon. From Kathy. Hillary, you can send me an email. There's someone on my team who is vested in plain language and she's doing a lot of work with us.

That would be sensational. I have your email. I will send you a note of it.

Great. I can talk to her about that.

Okay. I'm also hoping I can continue a correspondence with Brandon. I was so thrilled. Today's presentation was really a shot in the arm.

Thank you.

I'm telling you, he was the best 508 evangelist.

Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you both.

Thank you. You are correct, Marianne. It's important for all of us. Kathy's asking, have you seen the I.T. playbook materials that were created by DHS?

No, I have not. I have not. Since we are all friends here, I will tell you it can get interesting with sin DOL. One of our members within his absolutely not a fan of DHS trusted tester. In a prior position he spent a long time and lots of money to try to implement it and did not believe the results were anywhere near as effective as he wanted. He supports accessibility and is trying to work with us to really develop good processes. It kind of makes it difficult for us when we talk about DHS. These political things come up. We have to find a way to speak to some of these processes and practices in a way that, sometimes, I slap the OMB label on it so everybody knows that it worked well. Some of the stuff that we are looking at from DHS. Because of our particular leadership, we have to kind of quietly take the DHS name off of it.

Brandon, this is Kathy. I can appreciate that perspective. The materials that I'm asking about, the I.T. playbook, should not have DHS on them.

Okay. Okay.

To give you some background, the original DHS I.T. playbook material is being used, within DHS. But we asked Robert to share it outside of DHS. He had to go in and strip out the DHS specific content. It was intended for agencies to be able to use and customize for their own agency. It's not intended as, DHS doesn't this way and so should you. It's the opposite. It's intended so you can take the materials, analyze how it can be successful at your agency or even your office within your agency and provide a way to document a procedure that would be successful for you.

Excellent.

It's on Mac's.gov. I will enter in the chat. For everyone.

Thank you.

Thank you for a great presentation.

Thanks.

Thanks, Kathy.

Thank you.

You're welcome.

I don't have anything else. Brandon?

All right. I appreciate everybody listening to what I had to say. I'm late for a senior staff meeting.

We appreciate you. Thank you, everyone. Hopefully you all were able to take the survey.

You can I send you the link to the I.T. playbook for you to share?

You sure can. If you get a chance, I will leave this open for a few seconds, Kathy. You can also put it

Okay.

Okay.

Thank you.

Thanks, everyone.

Things, Brandon.

I will drop off right now. My email is in the chat if anyone wants to get in touch with me, I'm happy to collaborate.

Great. Thank you, Brandon. Much appreciated.

Yes. Bye-bye.

Thank you, Yvette.

You are welcome, Hillary. We will stay in touch.

We will. Absolutely. Take care.

All right. Thank you.

Bye-bye.

Bye-bye. Everyone else, I'm leaving is open for a few minutes so that Kathy can put the link into the chat. If you missed it, I will add it and send it out to everyone.

I'm actually having trouble getting into Mac's.gov right now. I don't want to keep everybody waiting.

Okay. I will send it to everyone.

Great, thank you.

[Event concluded]