

Accessibility engagement scoping template

A two-page template for scoping an accessibility / compliance engagement between a buyer and a vendor. The phased structure mirrors how serious public-sector compliance work is typically procured: stabilization first, hardening second, ongoing care third.

Adapt the phases, deliverables, and acceptance criteria to your situation. Drop the sections you don't need. The goal isn't completeness — it's a shared written reference that prevents the six-month dispute nobody saw coming.

Section 1 — Background

Write 3-5 sentences describing the current state and the trigger for the engagement.

System(s) in scope: [URL or product name, technology stack]

Current accessibility posture: [audit results, known issues, complaints received, regulatory exposure]

Trigger: [agency directive, complaint, RFP requirement, internal policy, lawsuit risk]

Standard required: [WCAG 2.0 AA / WCAG 2.1 AA / WCAG 2.2 AA / Section 508 per 36 CFR 1194]

Stakeholders: [executive sponsor, internal accessibility lead, comms, legal]

Section 2 — Scope

In scope

The vendor will:

[Audit and document the current accessibility state of the system in scope]

[Remediate findings against the named standard up to the agreed conformance level]

[Produce or update the VPAT / Accessibility Conformance Report]

[Provide a written report at the end of each phase]

Out of scope

The vendor will not:

[Modify content authored after the audit baseline]

[Remediate third-party components without separate scope (named: [list])]

[Train end users on assistive technology (the buyer's accommodation obligation)]

[Provide legal or regulatory interpretation]

Assumptions

The buyer will provide:

[Read access to the staging environment]

[Read access to a representative sample of production content]

[A named point of contact for content questions]

[Existing audit reports or VPATs from previous engagements]

Section 3 — Phased structure

Phase 1 — Stabilization

Goal: Establish the baseline. Audit the system, document findings, fix the highest-impact items.

Duration: [3–6 weeks typical]

Deliverables:

Audit report covering [pages / templates / components in scope] against [named standard]

Prioritized findings list (severity: critical / serious / moderate / minor)

Remediation of all critical and serious findings

Brief technical handoff document

Acceptance criteria:

Automated scan against [pages in scope] returns zero critical issues

Manual review confirms all critical and serious findings are remediated

Audit report and handoff document accepted in writing

Phase 2 — Hardening

Goal: Move from stabilized to conformant. Remediate moderate findings, implement preventive patterns, prepare the VPAT.

Duration: [4–8 weeks typical]

Deliverables:

Remediation of all moderate findings

Component-level accessibility patterns documented in the design system or component library

Updated VPAT (version 2.5 unless otherwise specified)

Pre-launch accessibility checklist for content editors

Acceptance criteria:

Manual review confirms moderate findings are remediated

VPAT accurately reflects current state, with remarks on Partially Supports items

Content editor checklist accepted in writing

Optional: external audit confirms conformance with [named standard]

Phase 3 — Ongoing care

Goal: Maintain conformance as content and code evolve. Triage and remediate issues as they appear.

Duration: [Quarterly retainer, renewable]

Deliverables (per quarter):

Spot-check audit of new pages and components

Triage and remediation of accessibility issues reported by users or internal QA

VPAT update if material changes occurred

Quarterly report summarizing work performed

Acceptance criteria:

Reported issues are triaged within [X business days]

Critical issues are remediated within [X business days]; serious within [X business days]

Quarterly report accepted in writing

Section 4 — Decision rights and change control

Decision rights

Scope changes: [Named buyer role] approves. Requires written change order.

Severity classification: Vendor proposes; [named buyer role] approves.

Accessibility standard interpretation: Vendor proposes; [named buyer role] and (where relevant) buyer's accessibility specialist approve.

Acceptance of deliverables: [Named buyer role].

Change control

A change is anything that modifies the in-scope list, the standard cited, the conformance level, or the acceptance criteria.

Changes are documented in a written change order signed by both parties before work begins.

Changes that increase scope are billed at the rates specified in Section 7. Changes that reduce scope adjust the engagement fee proportionally.

Section 5 — Roles and cadences

Roles

Vendor lead: [Name, role] — owns delivery, primary point of contact.

Vendor accessibility specialist: [Name, role] — owns audit methodology and conformance interpretation.

Buyer sponsor: [Name, role] — owns scope, budget, and acceptance.

Buyer technical contact: [Name, role] — owns environment access and content questions.

Cadences

Weekly status: 30 minutes, vendor lead + buyer technical contact. Written status sent by close of business the prior day.

Phase-end review: 60–90 minutes, all parties. Deliverables presented; acceptance signed.

Ad-hoc: Either party may call a working session with 48 hours' notice.

Section 6 — Reporting

End-of-phase reports include:

Summary — what was done, in what order, against which standard

Findings — by severity, with screen captures or code references

Remediation — what was fixed, what was deferred and why

Open items — known issues carried into the next phase, with rationale

Recommendations — patterns to adopt, plugins to remove, training to schedule

Section 7 — Commercial terms

Phase 1 fee: [\$X], fixed

Phase 2 fee: [\$X], fixed

Phase 3 fee: [\$X per quarter], recurring

Change-order rates: [\$X per hour], invoiced monthly

Out-of-scope work: [\$X per hour], pre-approved in writing

Travel: [reimbursed at federal per diem / not applicable]

Payment terms: [Net 30 / Net 45]

Section 8 — Risk and limitation

The vendor warrants that deliverables conform to the named standard as interpreted in good faith at the time of delivery. The vendor does not warrant against changes in the standard, changes in user agents, or changes in buyer-authored content after acceptance.

The vendor's total liability under this engagement is limited to the fees paid for the phase in which the dispute arises.

Neither party is liable for indirect, consequential, or punitive damages.

This template is provided as a starting point. Adapt to your specific procurement requirements, internal contracting templates, and risk tolerance. Not legal advice. Prepared by Nessim Works.
