

Here to Stay, Here to Grow for Vendors: 5 Things Vendors Should Know *(and Do!)*

The national landscape of state digital accessibility officers (AOs) is still emerging but growing quickly: NASCIO identified 40 AOs (or equivalent) across all member states and territories. Of those, 36 officers participated in NASCIO's inaugural state AO survey capturing their responsibilities, challenges, and the facets of statewide accessibility programs across maturity levels. "[Here to Stay, Here to Grow: A National Portrait of State Digital Accessibility Officers](#)" marks the first national portrait of the AO role, offering premier insights collected at scale. Here are **5 Things Vendors Should Know *(and do!)*** from the report that can be used to understand digital accessibility across the enterprises vendors collaborate with:

1. **71% of states have agency-level accessibility leads, meaning stronger vendor/AO relationships are a strategic necessity.** Many states operate distributed accessibility programs where agency leads and state AOs shape procurement expectations, testing workflows and remediation oversight. Vendors may work with more than one accessibility lead across the lifecycle rather than one central authority. AOs at all levels help manage coordination, governance and accountability across state and local networks and often create documents based on the intended audience. Vendors should welcome collaboration with distributed AO networks to meet statewide accessibility expectations while supporting enterprise-level maturity.
2. **69% of states say they do not have resources to remediate all websites and applications statewide, making most states' ability to fix vendor-created barriers limited, if possible.** Currently, states are navigating constrained remediation capacity fueled by limited staffing, long timelines, lack of funding and competing priorities across high-traffic systems. Inaccessible vendor products add to state backlog, ultimately slowing compliance progress. AOs rely heavily on vendors to reduce the volume and complexity of accessibility issues entering the system. Vendors should build accessibility into products from the start and provide clear and transparent evidence that minimizes state burden. Ultimately, vendors that deliver accessible-by-default solutions and detailed, vendor-responsible remediation plans become critical partners in strengthening state accessibility capacity.
3. **89% of states include accessibility clauses in contracts while 66% of states have achieved near or full compliance with the [2024 DOJ Final Rule](#) in the procurement process; vendors must prepare for deeper accountability measures.** States are moving beyond baseline contract language toward more enforceable oversight, reflecting a shift from pocket-compliance to operational, scalable models. More states are implementing structured accountability mechanisms like required remediation plans,



post-award testing and breach-of-contract penalties to signal accessibility monitoring throughout the lifecycle. AOs also report that [Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates \(VPATs\)](#) plus narrative evidence (e.g., [the Policy Driven Adoption for Accessibility \(PDAA\)](#)) is quickly becoming the new standard for vendors to demonstrate true accessibility maturity. Ultimately, vendors who proactively offer remediation pathways and transparent testing results will be better positioned as critical state partners.

4. **Only 20% of states are using artificial intelligence (AI) for Final Rule compliance, which they described as “moderately effective,” while over 50% of states express concerns about AI overreliance; vendors should remain realistic and transparent about the capabilities of their AI tools.** States report AI is helpful mainly for reducing labor-heavy tasks (i.e., automated testing, document remediation, etc.) but stress that even these gains require human review for accuracy and compliance. Many states raised concerns about AI-generated inequities like inaccessible content generation, algorithmic bias and unreliable automated outputs. AOs do not view AI integration as a compliance engine, only a limited accelerator. Vendors that overstate AI capabilities risk eroding trust, especially as states continue to warn against unsubstantiated vendor claims; therefore, vendors should position their AI solutions realistically by providing evidence of AI limitations and human-verified outputs.
5. **58% of states updated their digital accessibility policy within the last two years, and most programs fall under medium or somewhat mature levels; vendors should provide structured, scalable support instead of assuming states have robust internal systems.** States are actively modernizing policy while developing the operational depth needed to sustain enterprise-wide accessibility, meaning vendors can play a critical role in reinforcing maturity. With many states using dashboards to track key performance indicators (KPIs), vendors should strengthen compliance by supplying measurable, evidence-based data that fits cleanly into state-specific monitoring frameworks. Since most AOs have the authority to conduct training at some level, vendors should use this direct channel to support statewide education on product guidance, demonstrations and documentation practices. Vendors that deliver scalable accessibility workflows, structured evidence packages and training-aligned materials support states’ journey to operationalizing accessibility across decentralized environments.