Evaluating Vendor Claims

When seeking vendors of accessible digital products or services, it's essential to carefully assess the claims made by potential suppliers. Use this checklist to ensure that the chosen vendors are committed to delivering products that meet accessibility requirements.

1. **Accessibility Standards Compliance:**

   - Confirm that the vendor claims compliance with recognized accessibility standards such as WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.1.

2. **Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT):**

   - Request and thoroughly review the VPAT provided by the vendor, ensuring it aligns with the product or service being offered, is current, uses proper language (Passes and Fails rather than Supports, Partially Supports, or Does not support), includes comments in the "Remarks" column, states the evaluation methods, includes testing methods that are not automated, and explains any cases of "Not Applicable".

3. **Third-Party Certifications:**

   - Check for third-party certifications or audits that validate the vendor's commitment to accessibility. Look for well-known certifications or reputable auditing firms.

4. **References and Case Studies:**

   - Ask for references from other educational institutions or organizations that have similar accessibility requirements. Review case studies showcasing successful implementations of accessible solutions.

5. **User Testing and Feedback:**

   - Inquire about the vendor's user testing processes, including involvement of users with diverse abilities. Ask for feedback mechanisms and how they address reported accessibility issues.

6. **Assistive Technology Compatibility:**

   - Ensure the vendor's products or services are compatible with a range of assistive technologies commonly used by students and staff (e.g., screen readers, voice recognition software).

7. **Design and User Experience:**

- Evaluate the user interface and experience to ensure they are designed with accessibility in mind. Check for features like clear navigation, resizable text, and proper color contrast.

8. **Documentation and Training Resources:**

   - Confirm that the vendor provides comprehensive documentation and training resources for end-users, supporting them in using accessibility features effectively.

9. **Ongoing Support and Updates:**

   - Inquire about the vendor's commitment to ongoing accessibility improvements and updates, especially as standards evolve or new technologies emerge.

10. **Legal Compliance:**

    - Ensure the vendor is aware of and compliant with relevant accessibility laws and standards, both nationally and locally.

11. **Contractual Commitments:**

    - Integrate accessibility requirements into contractual agreements, outlining expectations for ongoing accessibility support and potential consequences for non-compliance.