Hypothesis response to 2026 VPAT Report (September, 2026)

At Hypothesis, we are committed to making our annotation tools accessible to all users, regardless of their abilities or the technology they use to access the web.

Every year, in alignment with our dedication to continuous improvement and open dialogue, we engage in a review of our Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) report. At present, these have been conducted by the Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC) at OCAD University who has been excellent to work with. As with past reports, there are areas within the VPAT that benefit from clarification, or where our internal assessments differ slightly from how specific criteria were interpreted. Below is our response to the 2026 VPAT.

VPAT Findings we will address by April 2027:

At this time there is only a single category that applies to Hypothesis where we are rated less than “Supports” (see below).

1. **WCAG 3.3.2 (Placeholder Text in Text Boxes)**: Our annotation and reply text fields use accessible labels, together with the text-editing tools and a card layout that surrounds the field, and placeholder text directing the user to enter text in the field, which disappears when the user begins writing into the field. This follows the established pattern across mainstream applications and major educational technology providers, including learning management systems, whose student-facing text entry fields sometimes carry no adjacent label at all — neither temporary nor persistent. We continue to believe this approach meets the necessary accessibility standards while keeping our interface simple and user-friendly.

   However, we also recognize that some users benefit from a visual cue that remains present after typing begins, and that this is the reason why 3.3.2 was rated as “Partially Supports” — the standard does not allow a full “Supports” rating when the interface lacks these persistent labels. We are therefore exploring the addition of a persistent icon beside the annotation editor, linked to a Help Center article explaining what the text field is for, which we believe will bring this criterion to “Supports”. This work is tracked publicly at https://github.com/hypothesis/product-backlog/issues/1753.

VPAT Findings we will not address at this time:

None at this time.

Looking Forward:

Accessibility is ingrained in our practices at Hypothesis. We have a roadmap that includes regular reviews of our software by independent entities, iterative updates to our VPAT, and ongoing revisions to our website to reflect the latest in accessibility guidance.

We emphasize that it is real-world testing and engagement with users, especially those who rely on assistive technologies which provides the most value ultimately. We prioritize actionable insights from our community over mere compliance.

Conclusion

Incorporating feedback from both our user community and independent assessments such as the VPAT facilitates a critical understanding of our tools' accessibility. This ongoing dialogue enables Hypothesis to not only meet compliance standards but to exceed them.

Your feedback is welcome.