



# Building an Inclusive Workforce

A Four-Step Reference Guide to  
Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining  
Employees with Disabilities

Introduction

STEP 1 - Embrace Inclusive Strategies

STEP 2 - Create an Inclusive Culture

STEP 3 - Recruit and Hire

STEP 4 - Retain and Advance Employees

Resources and Links for Federal Agencies

# Competence and Flexibility...

...they are vital skills that employers seek. Today more than ever, businesses need people with the ability to adapt to different situations and circumstances. And perhaps more than any other group, people with disabilities possess precisely these attributes. On a daily basis, people with disabilities must think creatively about how to solve problems and accomplish tasks. In the workplace, this translates into innovative thinking, fresh ideas, and varied approaches to confronting challenges and achieving success.

While research shows that people with disabilities make excellent employees, not all employers know how to effectively recruit, retain, and advance individuals with disabilities. That's where this booklet can help. It provides a quick outline of four simple steps to increasing workforce inclusion, complete with web links to resources available to help businesses benefit from the talents of qualified individuals with disabilities.

*(Continued on next page)*

*Helen Chang,  
Web Developer*



Introduction

# Competence and Flexibility...

*(Continued from previous page)*

This tool was developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). To learn more about DOL's efforts to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities, visit ODEP's website at [dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep).

*The people featured in this guide are people with disabilities—not models—photographed in their workplaces. Some of their disabilities are apparent, some are not. They reflect just a few of the millions of people with disabilities who add value to America's workplaces and economy every day.*

*Elaine Robnett Moore,  
Jewelry Designer and Educator*



Introduction

# Embrace Inclusive Strategies

When it comes to doing business, including workers with disabilities offers a competitive edge. By incorporating people with disabilities into their human capital strategies, employers expand their pool of talent, skills, and creative business solutions. The resources below illustrate how workplace practices that include people with disabilities benefit everyone and make good business sense.

- **Inclusion@Work Framework**

A multimedia policy tool that outlines seven core components of a disability-inclusive workplace, along with a menu of strategies for achieving them

[AskEARN.org/inclusion-work](http://AskEARN.org/inclusion-work)

- **Employer Engagement Strategy Final Report**

Discusses workplace diversity and inclusion and commitment to hire workers with disabilities

[dol.gov/odep/pdf/20150201EESFinalReport.pdf](http://dol.gov/odep/pdf/20150201EESFinalReport.pdf)

- **Tax Incentives**

Description of various tax incentives for which employers who hire people with disabilities may qualify

[AskJAN.org/topics/taxinc.cfm](http://AskJAN.org/topics/taxinc.cfm)

*(Continued on next page)*

*Patty Rivas,  
Store Owner and  
Social Worker*



STEP 1 - Embrace Inclusive Strategies

# Embrace Inclusive Strategies

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **Business Sense**

Monthly newsletter featuring disability-related topics of interest to employers  
[dol.gov/odep/businesssense](http://dol.gov/odep/businesssense)

- **Disability Employment Policies in Practice**

Photographic profiles of individuals with disabilities working in a variety of occupations and industries  
[dol.gov/odep/profiles](http://dol.gov/odep/profiles)

*Carson Bartlet,  
Restaurant Employee*



STEP 1 - Embrace Inclusive Strategies

# Create an Inclusive Culture

Organizations that value and appreciate each person for their individual differences and experiences benefit from diverse perspectives. Creating such an inclusive culture isn't difficult, but does require some forethought. The resources below can foster a welcoming work environment that is flexible and open to the talents of all qualified individuals, including those with disabilities.

- **What can YOU do? Campaign for Disability Employment**

Nationwide campaign that offers a range of resources to assist organizations to implement internal disability employment awareness programs  
[whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org)

- **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

*Jeffery Krauthamer,  
Receptionist*

Annual outreach effort that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/topics/NDEAM.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/NDEAM.htm)

- **Small Business & Disability Employment: Steps to Success**

Outlines effective strategies for small businesses for recruiting and retaining qualified people with disabilities  
[AskEARN.org/StepsToSuccess](http://AskEARN.org/StepsToSuccess)

*(Continued on next page)*



STEP 2 - Create an Inclusive Culture

# Create an Inclusive Culture

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **Fostering Disability-Inclusive Workplaces Through Employee Resource Groups**

Explores how Employee Resource Groups can benefit employee and employer alike  
[AskeARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/askearn\\_employeeresourcegroup\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/askearn_employeeresourcegroup_factsheet.pdf)

- **A Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups**

Guidance for employers interested in developing or enhancing an Employee Resource Group (ERG) focused on disability  
[AskeARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/erg\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/erg_toolkit.pdf)

- **Mental Health Toolkit: Resources for Fostering a Mentally Healthy Workplace**

Helps employers learn about mental health and cultivate a welcoming and supportive work environment for employees who have mental health conditions  
[AskeARN.org/mentalhealth](https://www.askearn.org/mentalhealth)

- **Emergency Preparedness Resources**

Effective emergency plans and resources for employees with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/topics/EmergencyPreparedness.htm](https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/EmergencyPreparedness.htm)

*R.J. Martin,  
Circulation  
Clerk at a  
County  
Library*



*(Continued on next page)*

STEP 2 - Create an Inclusive Culture

# Create an Inclusive Culture

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **Disability Etiquette Resources**

Information about disability etiquette in various workplace settings, including speaking engagements and customer service environments

[AskJAN.org/topics/disetiqa.htm](http://AskJAN.org/topics/disetiqa.htm)

- **Disability Nondiscrimination Law Advisor**

Guidance for employers on determining which federal disability nondiscrimination laws apply to their business or organization and how to ensure compliance with them

[dol.gov/elaws/odep.htm](http://dol.gov/elaws/odep.htm)

- **Do Ask, Do Tell: Encouraging Employees with Disabilities to Self-Identify**

Explores research related to disability disclosure in the workplace and identifies strategies for encouraging it in the context of the updates to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act

[AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/do\\_ask\\_do\\_tell.pdf](http://AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/do_ask_do_tell.pdf)

For additional resources related to creating an inclusive culture, visit ODEP's Diversity and Inclusion webpage at: [dol.gov/odep/topics/diversityandinclusion.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/diversityandinclusion.htm) and Changing Attitudes webpage: [dol.gov/odep/topics/changingattitudes.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/changingattitudes.htm).

STEP 2 - Create an Inclusive Culture



# Recruit and Hire

The goal of the recruitment and hiring process is to attract and identify individuals who have the best mix of skills and attributes for the job available. Ensuring that all qualified individuals—including those with disabilities—can participate in the process is critical to achieving this goal. The resources below can assist in understanding how to be disability inclusive in recruiting and hiring.

- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)**

Free consultation and technical assistance for employers seeking to recruit and hire qualified individuals with disabilities

[AskEARN.org](http://AskEARN.org)

- **Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)**

Program that connects employers with pre-screened, highly motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities seeking internships or permanent employment

[dol.gov/odep/wrp](http://dol.gov/odep/wrp)

*John Winfrey,  
Senior Technical  
Account Manager*

*(Continued on next page)*



STEP 3 - Recruit and Hire

# Recruit and Hire

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **American Job Centers**

Nationwide network of centers that can help businesses find qualified workers, including workers with disabilities  
[servicelocator.org](http://servicelocator.org); 1-877-USA-JOBS

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies**

State agencies that link employers to job candidates with disabilities in their local areas

[soar.AskJAN.org/IssueConcern/214](http://soar.AskJAN.org/IssueConcern/214)

- **Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT)**

Multi-faceted initiative promoting the employment, retention, and career advancement of people with disabilities through the development, adoption and promotion of accessible technology  
[PEATworks.org](http://PEATworks.org)

- **TalentWorks**

A service of PEAT that helps employers and human resource (HR) professionals make their eRecruiting technologies accessible to all job seekers—including those with disabilities

[PEATworks.org/talentworks](http://PEATworks.org/talentworks)

*(Continued on next page)*



*Meg Krause,  
Public Relations  
Professional  
and Veteran*

# Recruit and Hire

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **Inclusive Internship Programs: A How-to Guide for Employers**

Provides background and guidance on establishing inclusive internship programs  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/InclusiveInternshipPrograms.pdf](https://dol.gov/odep/pdf/InclusiveInternshipPrograms.pdf)

For additional resources related to the recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities, visit ODEP's Recruitment and Retention webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm) and Accommodations webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm).

*Meghan Jones,  
Office Clerk*



STEP 3 - Recruit and Hire

# Retain and Advance Valued Employees

Employers and employees both benefit from a work environment that facilitates the retention of all skilled, qualified workers through effective job accommodations for employees with disabilities. The resources below can assist in understanding how to effectively retain the talents of qualified employees with disabilities and help them advance and achieve workplace success.

- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**

Free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities

[AskJAN.org](http://AskJAN.org); 1-800-526-7234 (Voice); 1-877-781-9403 (TTY)

- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)**

Free consultation and technical assistance for employers seeking to retain and advance employees with disabilities

[AskEARN.org/topics/retention-advancement/](http://AskEARN.org/topics/retention-advancement/)

- **Return-to-Work Toolkit**

Information about the return-to-work process and resources to help get employees back on the job quickly and smoothly after illness or injury

[dol.gov/odep/return-to-work](http://dol.gov/odep/return-to-work)

*(Continued on next page)*

*Eric Wright,  
Lead Technologist*



STEP 4 - Retain and Advance Employees

# Retain and Advance Valued Employees

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **Workplace Accommodation Toolkit**  
Resources and guidance on inclusive practices related to the reasonable accommodation process  
[AskJAN.org/toolkit](http://AskJAN.org/toolkit)
- **Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact**  
Summary of research revealing the low cost of accommodations for employees with disabilities relative to their positive impact  
[AskJAN.org/topics/costs.cfm](http://AskJAN.org/topics/costs.cfm)
- **Customized Employment/Flexible Work Arrangements**  
Information about customized employment, a flexible work arrangement that can help employers retain valued employees, including those with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/topics/customizedemployment.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/customizedemployment.htm)
- **Soft Skills**  
Introduction to workplace interpersonal and professional skills for employees  
[dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills)

*(Continued on next page)*

*Kathy Peery,  
Legislative Affairs  
Specialist for a  
Federal Agency*



# Retain and Advance Valued Employees

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **Supporting Employees Who Experience Unexpected Illness or Disability**  
Factsheet on Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work strategies  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/20140917StayAtWork.pdf](https://dol.gov/odep/pdf/20140917StayAtWork.pdf)
- **Job Accommodation Network Multimedia Training Microsite**  
Provides resources for employers to conduct training on disability employment topics for individuals or groups of employees  
[AskJAN.org/events/Multimedia-Training-Microsite.cfm](https://AskJAN.org/events/Multimedia-Training-Microsite.cfm)

For additional resources related to retaining and advancing people with disabilities, visit ODEP's Recruitment and Retention webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm) and Accommodations webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm).

# Resources and Links for Federal Agencies

As the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government must model effective policies and practices that advance America's ideal of equal opportunity for all. Regulations implementing Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 501) specify that federal agencies must become model employers of individuals with disabilities. Federal agencies are required to develop and maintain "an affirmative action program plan" for the hiring, placement, and advancement of individuals with disabilities.

The resources on the next two pages can assist in fulfilling this directive.

- **Toolkit for Federal Agencies on Hiring People with Disabilities**  
Outline of five-step process and related resources to assist federal agencies to increase the employment of people with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/federal-hire](https://dol.gov/odep/federal-hire)
- **Federal Exchange on Employment & Disability (FEED)**  
An interagency working group focused on information sharing, best practices, and collaborative partnerships designed to make the Federal Government a model employer of people with disabilities  
[AskEARN.org/topics/federal-state-government-employment/federal-government-employment/section-501/federal-exchange-employment-disability-feed/](https://AskEARN.org/topics/federal-state-government-employment/federal-government-employment/section-501/federal-exchange-employment-disability-feed/)
- **Federal Agency Employment Strategies: A Framework for Disability Inclusion**  
Outline of proactive disability employment strategies to attract and retain qualified jobseekers with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/FAEStrategies.pdf](https://dol.gov/odep/pdf/FAEStrategies.pdf)
- **Workforce Recruitment Program**  
Program that connects federal employers with pre-screened, highly motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities seeking internships or permanent employment  
[dol.gov/odep/wrp](https://dol.gov/odep/wrp)

*(Continued on next page)*

# Resources and Links for Federal Agencies

*(Continued from previous page)*

- **Schedule A Hiring Authority: Your Fast Track to Disability Inclusion!**  
Explains the use of the Schedule A hiring authority for a variety of audiences  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/20160129-ScheduleA.pdf](http://dol.gov/odep/pdf/20160129-ScheduleA.pdf)
- **Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP)**  
Centrally funded accommodation program that provides assistive technology and services free of charge to federal agencies  
[cap.mil](http://cap.mil)
- **Federal Workplace Mentoring Primer**  
Overview of basic practices, strategies, and available tools and resources for establishing formal mentoring relationships and programs within federal workplaces  
[AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/fed-wmp.pdf](http://AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/fed-wmp.pdf)
- **Veterans Preference Advisor**  
Guidance on preferences that veterans, including wounded warriors, may be entitled to with regard to federal employment  
[dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm](http://dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm)
- **Federal Disability Hiring Programs**  
An overview of initiatives and flexibilities in hiring processes intended to increase the employment of people with disabilities in the Federal Government  
[opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/disability-employment/](http://opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/disability-employment/)
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**  
A resource for laws, regulations, policy guidance, fact sheets, Q & A's, best practices, and other information on disability discrimination  
[eoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm](http://eoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm)

For additional resources for federal employers, visit ODEP's Federal Employers' webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/federalemloyment.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/federalemloyment.htm).

## Resources and Links for Federal Agencies



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Disability Employment Policy  
[dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep)





# DRIVING CHANGE CREATING OPPORTUNITY

Inclusion drives innovation, and disability is part of the equation. This resource guide provides a great starting point for employers seeking to tap into the talent pool of qualified individuals with disabilities.



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Disability Employment Policy  
[dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep)

---

*To order additional copies of [Building an Inclusive Workforce](#), go to:  
[orders.gpo.gov/odep.aspx](http://orders.gpo.gov/odep.aspx)*

*To download a digital copy of [Building an Inclusive Workforce](#), go to:  
[dol.gov/odep/pubs/20100727.pdf](http://dol.gov/odep/pubs/20100727.pdf)*

---