

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

FISCAL YEAR 2024 CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION



An independent Federal Agency responsible for administering the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (41 U.S.C. §§8501-8506) and the AbilityOne Program

Operating as the U.S. AbilityOne Commission





OFFICE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

March 8, 2023

Dear Member of Congress,

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission is pleased to submit the Commission's fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget justification for \$15,400,000 including not less than \$3,600,000 for the Office of Inspector General.

Over the last two years, the agency has made substantial progress in ensuring opportunity for over 36,000 persons who are blind or have significant disabilities, modernizing the AbilityOne Program, delivering against key commitments, and helping Federal agencies meet mission requirements.

Continued investments will cement the progress made as the Commission executes its new Strategic Plan. The new plan lays out the framework for a transformed and modernized Program while directly supporting efforts to rebuild the American industrial base through the Commission's role as a trusted source of supply and services for Federal customers.

With its final rule ending the payment of subminimum wages by Program employers on AbilityOne contracts, the Commission recently demonstrated its resolve to move beyond AbilityOne's legacy culture and parameters to a future grounded in today's understanding of the potential of those who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The execution of the Strategic Plan will continue this trajectory toward increasing "good jobs" and "optimal jobs" within the Program, as well as fostering collaborative efforts with Federal agencies with mission responsibilities to increase employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The new direction of the Program will not only enhance the quality of jobs, but also enable employees who are blind or have significant disabilities to continue their career advancement, both within and outside the Program.

At the same time, this budget justification reflects the agency's unwavering drive to improve stewardship and expand transparency and engagement with stakeholders.

In so doing, the Commission will continue to support an effective and accountable Government that delivers results for all Americans.

In 2017, Congress established a [panel](#) on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability, and Integrity through section 898 of the National Defense Authorization Act. The panel recommended 24 actions. The Commission is well on track to implement these recommendations. One of the most important recommendations was introducing competition amongst the nonprofit agencies (NPAs) in the Program, thus improving contract performance and providing savings for the Department of Defense (DoD). The Commission plans to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking in early March 2023 to implement this recommendation. Ensuring an effective competition program to support DoD will require additional resources. The budget request reflects these resources. The small increase here is dwarfed by the increased value this change will provide for DoD.

Insufficient resources would seriously undercut the Commission's forward momentum to modernize its employment program, as well as diminish the Commission's ability to deliver on Administration priorities including introducing competition into the Program. Inadequate resources would also increase the risk that public trust and confidence will erode as the result of shortfalls in AbilityOne Program oversight. Such erosion of public trust could result in job losses for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The funding proposed in this budget justification will enable the agency to maintain and advance the pace of its significant progress in FY 2022 and FY 2023, outlined below.

Ending Payment of Subminimum Wages on AbilityOne Contracts

On July 21, 2022, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission issued a [final rule](#) that prohibits payment of subminimum wages on contracts within the AbilityOne Program. The rule took effect on Oct. 19, 2022.

In issuing the rule, the Commission ended decades of treating some employees with disabilities as second-class citizens and ensured they receive a fair wage reflecting the value of their work.

FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan

On June 30, 2022, the Commission issued its [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#), the roadmap for accomplishing the Commission's priorities over five years.

The Strategic Plan contains updated mission and vision statements that reinforce the purpose of the AbilityOne Program. It also includes [outcome goals, strategies and performance measures](#) that clearly communicate the Commission's new direction and resource prioritization.

Four overarching Strategic Objectives anchor the plan:

- 1) Transform the AbilityOne Program to expand competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

- 2) Identify, publicize, and support the increase of good jobs and optimal jobs in the AbilityOne Program.
- 3) Ensure effective governance and results across the AbilityOne Program.
- 4) Engage in partnerships to increase employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities within and beyond the AbilityOne Program.

The plan builds on the recommendations of the 898 Panel (see above), as well as recommendations that have been made by disability rights advocates over the years.

Modernizing Compliance in the AbilityOne Program

The FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan sets forth expectations for NPAs in the Program that will support the employment and advancement of employees who are blind or have significant disabilities and that will ensure quality contract performance. The Commission has begun to operationalize those expectations by updating its compliance guidance. This guidance will result in greater oversight by the Commission of the compliance activities of the Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs), a streamlined system for determining eligibility of employees for the Program, and the provision of job individualizations, person-centered employment plans, and career advancement programs for employees who are blind or have significant disabilities, consistent with the resources available to the NPAs.

The agency-level budget sets forth the minimum resources necessary to maintain a compliance program consistent with the Strategic Plan. However, to fully realize the goals of the Strategic Plan, a more significant infusion of resources will be necessary as the Commission assists the NPAs with achieving the new direction of the Program.

The Commission's focus on compliance is also in direct alignment with the President's Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government (EO 14058) and should lead to more NPAs providing services to people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The Strategic Plan emphasizes improving the use of data to measure performance and drive decision-making. The Commission is taking a fresh look at the programmatic data both it and the CNAs collect, analyze, and use in determining how to advance the AbilityOne mission.

For these reasons, the Commission needs continued investments in personnel, information technology, and contract support (such as technical expertise to establish standards for job individualization and person-centered employment plans) to improve its administration of the compliance program. Moreover, the most realistic way to achieve the ambitious goals of the new Strategic Plan is to ensure that the Commission has the necessary resources to implement its objectives.

Further details about Commission steps to modernize compliance in the Program are included in this Budget Justification.

Responsibly Managing Growth of Good and Optimal Jobs

The Commission is committed to ensuring that all jobs within the Program are good jobs, and where possible, are performed in integrated settings (“optimal jobs”). As the Commission advances these goals, it needs to prepare for a multiyear increase in contract actions with, and purchases through, the AbilityOne Program.

The current government-wide focus on equity and inclusiveness is likely to lead to AbilityOne Program growth, as a number of Federal agencies have highlighted AbilityOne contracting in their Equity Action Plans and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) efforts.

Additionally, the establishment of AbilityOne Representatives (ABORs) across the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act agencies and the major Department of Defense (DoD) components will better support Federal customers and likewise better support the appropriate utilization of AbilityOne products and services. The Commission believes that many of the associated jobs will directly support the return of good jobs to the U.S., particularly in critical areas such as supporting the health care supply chain.

To responsibly manage the growth likely to stem from these initiatives, the Commission will require annual modest budget increases to invest in Program compliance and oversight, in IT, and in outreach and communication.

Ensuring Effective Governance and Results Across the AbilityOne Program

The requested funding will support the Commission as it works to implement a Strategic Plan objective to ensure effective governance and results across the AbilityOne Program.

Achievements in this area have included the agency’s establishment and maturation of an enterprise risk management plan, as well as enhanced financial management and internal controls. The Commission also cast a much wider net for broad stakeholder engagement during FY 2022 with the use of www.regulations.gov for its rulemaking and Strategic Plan comments, and with several town hall and listening sessions to incorporate feedback into the agency’s decisions.

Maintaining the Pace of Progress

The agency continues to work closely with the Commission’s Office of Inspector General. Through reports, audits, alerts and other actions, the OIG enhances confidence in the Program, improves economies and efficiencies, and promotes Program growth. The OIG also provides vital oversight to deter and detect bad actors.

AbilityOne is an engine of opportunity and economic empowerment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities – a population that historically experiences the lowest employment rate of any segment of U.S. society. AbilityOne also holds the potential for increasing economic opportunities for such individuals by launching them into jobs throughout the American economy.

On behalf of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission and the individuals employed nationwide through the AbilityOne Program, thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

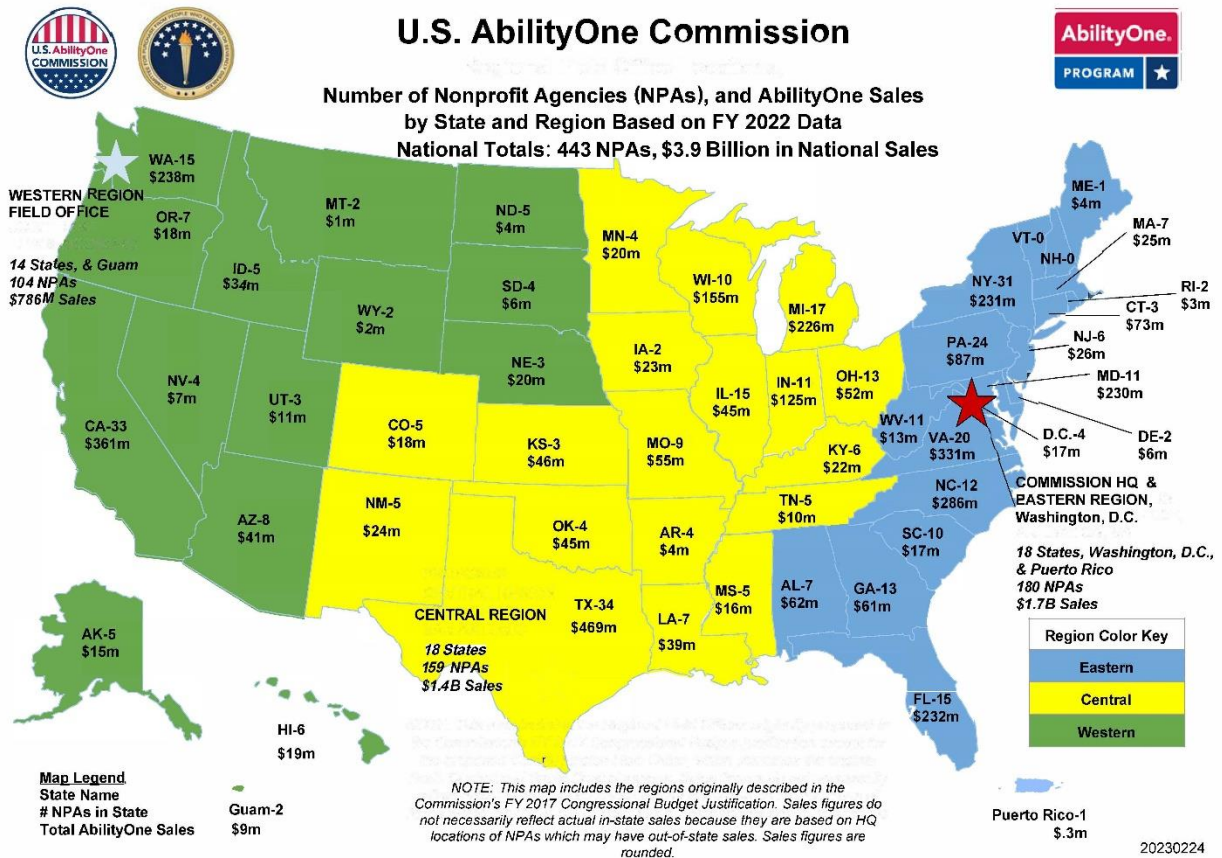
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Jeffrey A. Koses
Chairperson and Presidential Appointee

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AbilityOne People and Numbers – FY 2022	
AbilityOne employees who are blind or have significant disabilities	36,000
AbilityOne wages paid	\$666.4 million
Estimated Health and Welfare Fringe Benefits (in addition to wages)	\$150 million
Average hourly wage	\$16.09
Cost per job (Commission FY 2022 \$11 M budget ÷ 36,000 jobs)	\$306
Sales of products and services to Federal customers	\$3.9 billion
Wounded, ill or injured veterans working in AbilityOne direct labor jobs	2,500
AbilityOne nonprofit agencies remaining open during pandemic	95%
AbilityOne total placements	1,612
AbilityOne total promotions	1,953



1.0 Program and Budget Justification Summary

1.1 Overview

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission¹ FY 2024 budget justification is:

Agency	\$11,800,000
Office of Inspector General (OIG)	\$ 3,600,000
Total	\$15,400,000

The agency's \$11.8 million in net discretionary budget authority represents an increase of \$1.8 million (18 percent) over the 2023 enacted level of \$9.974 million. The increase in budget will be used as follows:

- *\$1,225,000 for salaries and benefits for 7 additional FTEs (see below) and increased salary expenses associated with Congressionally determined FY 2024 cost of living adjustment*
 - AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) Program Manager
 - Audit and Compliance Liaison
 - Communications and Training Specialist
 - Competition Manager
 - Procurement List Information Management System (PLIMS) Product Manager
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist
 - Workforce Data Analyst
- \$575,000 for Job Individualization and Person-Centered Employment Planning Program²

Table 1. FY 2024 Budget Request (in \$ millions)

Category	FY 2020 Enacted	FY 2021 Enacted	FY 2022 Enacted	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Request
Personnel	4.228	4.588	4.607	5.215	6.542
Benefits	1.120	1.357	1.444	1.600	2.066
All Other	3.002*	2.055	2.299	3.159	3.192
OIG	1.650	2.500	2.650	3.150	3.600
Total	10.000	10.500	11.000	13.124	15.400

*The FY 2020 Enacted amount included \$1.35 million for the one-time costs associated with a move of the Commission's headquarters office.

The requested funding is needed for the Commission to fulfill its mission of tapping America's underutilized workforce of individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities to deliver high quality, mission-essential products and services to Federal agencies in quality employment opportunities.

The Commission administers and oversees the AbilityOne Program, through which over 36,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities were employed at more than 440 nonprofit agencies (NPAs) from Guam to Maine during FY 2022.

The AbilityOne Program is important to the nation because people who are blind or have significant disabilities have the highest unemployment level of any other segment of American society, across all age groups and at all levels of educational attainment.³ In addition, the Program has the potential and is building its capacity to be a gateway for employees with disabilities to move to jobs throughout the U.S. economy.

1.2 Benefits of Investments in the Commission

Investments in the Commission enabled the agency to make significant progress in priority areas in FY 2022 and FY 2023, discussed below. Continued investments will sustain and further this progress, while driving results and improving outcomes directly aligned with the agency's statutory mission, White House priorities, Congressional mandates, Federal Government customer feedback, and input from other key stakeholders.

Progress During FY 2022 and FY 2023

Ending Payment of Subminimum Wages on AbilityOne Contracts

- On July 21, 2022, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission issued a [final rule](#) that prohibits payment of subminimum wages on contracts within the AbilityOne Program. The Commission published the final rule in the Federal Register.

- Under the rule, individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities and who work on AbilityOne contracts will earn at least the Federal minimum wage, the applicable local or state minimum wage, or the applicable prevailing wage – whichever is highest.
- The rule was effective October 19, 2022.
- Publication of the final rule completed a formal rulemaking process that began when the Commission published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the Federal Register on October 12, 2021.
- The Commission received more than 180 comments in response to the proposed rule and considered them carefully when drafting the final version.
- While payment of subminimum wages had already been declining in the Program for years, the publication of the final rule was a significant step that reflects the Commission’s unwavering commitment to modernizing the AbilityOne Program.
- The rule sends a message that the work of people with disabilities should be valued equally with that of others.

Strategic Plan for FY 2022-2026

- On June 30, 2022, the Commission issued its [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#), the roadmap for accomplishing the Commission’s priorities over the next five years.
- The Strategic Plan contains updated mission and vision statements that reinforce the purpose of the AbilityOne Program. It also includes [outcome goals, strategies and performance measures](#) that clearly communicate the Commission’s direction and resource prioritization.
- Four overarching Strategic Objectives anchor the plan:
 - 1) Transform the AbilityOne Program to expand competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.
 - 2) Identify, publicize, and support the increase of good jobs and optimal jobs in the AbilityOne Program.
 - 3) Ensure effective governance and results across the AbilityOne Program.
 - 4) Engage in partnerships to increase employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities within and beyond the AbilityOne Program.
- The Commission developed its Strategic Plan in ways that ensured stakeholder and public input.

- On March 18, 2022, the Commission posted a draft strategic plan on the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. The same day, the Commission published a Federal Register notice opening a public comment and review period.
- The Commission received, and carefully considered, more than 70 written comments submitted in response to the draft strategic plan.
- The Commission also sought feedback on the plan through the following:
 - Listening Session with organizations that advocate for people with disabilities.
 - Listening Session with self-advocates who have intellectual or developmental disabilities.
 - Town Hall with AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies.
 - Meetings with the Commission’s designated Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs).
- The plan builds on the recommendations of the [2017 National Defense Authorization Act Section 898 Panel on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability and Integrity](#), as well as recommendations that have been made by disability rights advocates over the years.
- The Commission has developed an [implementation plan](#) for the Strategic Plan.

Modernizing Compliance in the AbilityOne Program

- One of the pillars of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan is modernizing the oversight of NPA compliance to align with Program requirements.
- Driving this modernization process are the following goals for AbilityOne compliance:
 - Protect the integrity of the AbilityOne Program.
 - Ensure that the AbilityOne Program remains a trusted source of supply and services for Federal agencies.
 - Create AbilityOne jobs that provide quality employment and serve as a springboard to upward and outward employment for those employees who desire such career advancement.
 - Ensure compliance with all other statutory and regulatory requirements.
- As a step in the modernization process, on January 27, 2023, the Commission released a series of [new draft compliance policies](#) and invited public feedback by March 15, 2023.

- The draft compliance policies are:
 - 51.400 - AbilityOne Commission Compliance Program (updated January 30, 2023).
 - 51.403 - Documentation of Initial Evaluation Eligibility on the Basis of Blindness or Significant Disability.
 - 51.405 - Job Individualization, Person-Centered Employment Plans, and Career Advancement Programs.
- During the public feedback period for these policies, the Commission is creating multiple opportunities for engagement, including a listening session.
- Once finalized, these new compliance policies will require a fundamental shift for Commission staff, NPAs, CNAs, and stakeholders.
 - For this reason, on February 1, 2023, the Commission paused routine traditional compliance reviews to consider public feedback, retrain staff, develop updated compliance materials for the NPA community, and ensure that the Commission, the NPAs, and the CNAs are in full alignment in the area of compliance.
 - While ongoing reporting and corrective actions will continue, the Commission will limit inspections to critical issues during this pause.
- The Commission is well positioned for compliance modernization. Over the last two years, the agency has rebuilt its compliance team, brought in new leadership, and conducted a review of nearly all NPAs in the Program.
- Lessons learned from those NPA reviews, insights of AbilityOne employees, and dialogue with NPAs and stakeholders informed the drafting of the new compliance policies.
- Next steps in compliance modernization include updating the remaining compliance policies for public feedback, issuing the final set of compliance policies, and developing and entering into revised cooperative agreements with the CNAs.

For more on Commission progress in FY 2022 and FY 2023, please see Section 4.0, Performance Goals, Measures, and Indicators.

Other Benefits of Investments in the Commission

AbilityOne creates jobs for more than 36,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

- More than 2,500 wounded, ill or injured veterans work in direct labor jobs in the AbilityOne Program.

AbilityOne returns dollars to the U.S. economy and the U.S. Treasury

- Empowering AbilityOne employees through job opportunities increases tax revenues from the Program's more than 36,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities.
 - AbilityOne employees earned more than \$666 million in wages in FY 2022, plus an estimated \$150 million in health and welfare fringe benefits.
 - AbilityOne employees have earned more than \$6 billion in wages since 2011.
 - AbilityOne employees have identified more than \$2 billion for de-obligation from AbilityOne contracts through the Program's contract close-out initiative.

The Commission is pursuing opportunities to create thousands of good and optimal jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities by implementing guidance in the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) memorandum on "[Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting](#)."⁴

- The OFPP memorandum encouraged agencies to pledge 1% of their contract spend in FY 2021 to employment of people who are blind or have significant disabilities, and to increase that pledge to 1.5% in FY 2022.
 - Anticipated Program growth as the result of Federal agency pledges to increase spending on AbilityOne products and services will require adequate compliance resources to ensure appropriate oversight.
- Expansion of the AbilityOne Representatives (ABORs) program due to the memorandum has resulted in Federal agencies appointing 21 ABORs to serve as advocates for AbilityOne, plus an additional 7 ABORs at DoD components including the military services.
- Educational sessions about AbilityOne capabilities and utilization for Federal agencies – Commerce, DoD, Education, General Services Administration, Interior, NASA, Treasury, USDA, and VA have all participated in training conducted by the Commission and CNAs.
- The Commission's Strategic Plan for FY 2022-2026 also calls for engagement with a range of Federal agencies with the goal of increasing employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities throughout the economy.

- Complementing the ABORs initiative are AbilityOne employment growth possibilities resulting from the current government-wide focus on equity and inclusiveness. A number of Federal agencies have highlighted AbilityOne contracting in their Equity Action Plans and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) efforts.

AbilityOne is advancing Executive Orders promoting opportunity⁵

- The Commission issued an [Equity Action Plan](#) as required by EO 13985 (“Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government”).
- The Commission issued a Agency Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan, as required by EO 14035 (“Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce”).

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission continues to expand transparency and public engagement to increase public trust and confidence

- Expanded public engagement has significantly boosted participation by, and input from, key stakeholders including the disability community. Increases in Commission public engagement at its regular quarterly public meetings include:
- Changing from in-person to virtual quarterly public meetings has increased attendance from approximately 50 attendees before the pandemic to approximately 470 at the January 31, 2023 quarterly public meeting. Virtual meetings have placed new demands on Commission staff, as well as additional expenses due to video platforms and Federal Register notices.
- Federal Register notices of Commission quarterly public meetings promote greater transparency and public engagement by posing questions for discussion, soliciting written statements to the Commission, and encouraging verbal presentations and exchanges between the public and Commission members.

Examples beginning with FY 2022:

- The Federal Register [notice](#) for the [October 7, 2021](#), Commission quarterly public meeting included the following:

“...the Commission invites comments or suggestions regarding:

“1. Best practices by nonprofit agencies to modernize AbilityOne employment.”

“2. Recommendations for pilot tests to increase integrated employment in the AbilityOne Program—please address how such tests should be designed and how they fit within the Commission's statutory authority.”

- The Federal Register [notice](#) for the February 10, 2022, Commission quarterly public meeting included the following:

“...the Commission invites comments or suggestions regarding:

“1. The Individual Eligibility Evaluation (IEE) forms used by the Commission as documentation of significant disability.”

“2. Third party certification or verification of significant disability.”

- The Federal Register [notice](#) for the July 21, 2022, Commission quarterly public meeting included the following:

“...the Commission invites comments or suggestions regarding the types of technical assistance that may be provided to AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies during future compliance inspections or regulatory assistance visits.

The technical assistance is intended to enhance overall compliance and oversight, and/or to support contract performance quality, and/or to enhance the quality of employment in the AbilityOne Program.”

- The Federal Register [notice](#) for the October 25, 2022, Commission quarterly public meeting included the following:

“The Commission invites public comments or suggestions regarding the scope, requirements, and metrics for the next generation of Cooperative Agreements between the Commission and its designated Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs). The Cooperative Agreements cover the roles and responsibilities of the CNAs and the Commission in the administration of the AbilityOne Program.”

- The Federal Register [notice](#) for the January 31, 2023, Commission quarterly public meeting included the following:

“A panel of Federal customers will broadly address, from an overall acquisition perspective, what is important to Federal agencies in terms of contractor performance—whether or not those contracts are awarded under the auspices of the AbilityOne Program. Panelist topics may include but are not limited to quality, timely delivery, best value, innovation, and compliance with cybersecurity and other Federal guidance.

“...The Commission invites public comments and suggestions about the panel topic, including perspectives on contract performance, quality assurance, and measurement of customer satisfaction.”

- The Commission received valuable responses during these public meetings and has used the input in its decision-making and development of agendas for future public meetings. By continuing this kind of frank and constructive exchange, we can create the shared awareness and understanding that are essential to the success of the Commission and the Program.

- To further increase transparency, the Commission uses its Facebook and LinkedIn accounts to communicate about Commission meetings and actions.

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission continues to meet challenges of Congressional and Executive Branch mandates within resource limitations

- Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, requirements for Commission to (1) establish Cooperative Agreements to govern its relationship with the CNAs, and (2) establish an OIG.
- Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, requirement for a Western U.S. Field Office.
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements for IT and cybersecurity.
- Implementing recommendations of the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Section 898 “Panel on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability, and Integrity” (898 Panel)
 - FY 2017 NDAA directed the Secretary of Defense to establish the Panel, whose mission was to address the effectiveness and internal controls of the AbilityOne Program related to DoD contracts.
 - 898 Panel duties included annual reporting to Congress on ways to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse, and recommending changes to business practices and IT systems.
 - Panel sunsetted after issuing its [Fourth and Final Report to Congress](#) in January 2022. Report tracked 24 recommendations.
 - Under the 2017 NDAA, DoD is authorized to terminate an NPA’s AbilityOne contracts if that NPA does not comply with certain Panel recommendations. Program-wide, failure to implement Panel recommendations could jeopardize approximately 25,000 jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

Commission staff has transitioned to a remote (maximum telework) posture to save money, improve sustainability and expand talent recruitment nationwide

- As part of a required office move, the agency and OIG consolidated offices in FY 2022 and reduced their collective footprint by 24%.
- The COVID-19 pandemic created the conditions in which the agency has demonstrated the overall effectiveness of telework for an extended period of time.

AbilityOne's essential workforce has been an indispensable part of America's response to COVID-19

Modernizing IT and strengthening cybersecurity (see Section 3.2, Information Technology (IT) Requirements)

Enhancing Commission financial stewardship and Enterprise Risk Management (see Section 4.0, Performance Goals, Measures, and Indicators, under 4.3 Strategic Objective 3)

1.3 Current challenges

Current challenges facing the Commission include:

- Implementing the rule prohibiting payment of subminimum wages on contracts within the AbilityOne Program. The rule took effect on Oct. 19, 2022.
- Implementing the Strategic Plan for FY 2022-2026.
- Reviewing all agency policies, and renegotiating the Commission's Cooperative Agreements with the CNAs, to align with the Strategic Plan for FY 2022-2026.
- Bolstering resources to meet mission requirements and increase oversight.
 - Additional staffing is essential for the Commission to increase and manage oversight of this nearly \$4 billion contracting program during the expansion of the AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) program in accordance with the OFPP memorandum "Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting" (see Section 1.2, Benefits of Investments in the Commission).
 - The 898 Panel and AbilityOne's Federal customers cite the need for more funding and staff for the Commission.
 - The Commission's paradigm shift for the AbilityOne Program to become a pathway to careers in upwardly mobile positions both within and outside the AbilityOne employers requires increased funding to develop standards, training, and technical assistance.
 - Increasing operating costs such as inflation and Cost of Living Allowances pay raises.
 - 32 FTEs staffed the agency as of January 31, 2023.
 - Other \$4 billion programs have 100+ FTEs.
- Aging IT infrastructure (see Section 3.2, Information Technology (IT) Requirements).
- Meeting the requirements of the increased number of Congressional and Executive Branch mandates (see above).

2.0 Background

2.1 Legal Authority, Mission, and Vision

The legal authority for the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, which operates as the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, is established in the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act of 1971 (JWOD Act), codified at 41 U.S.C. §§8501-8506, and implemented through 41 C.F.R. Chapter 51.

The Commission is an independent Executive Branch agency, with exclusive responsibility for administering the JWOD Act and the AbilityOne Program, which is responsible for employing more than 36,000 Americans who are blind or have significant disabilities.

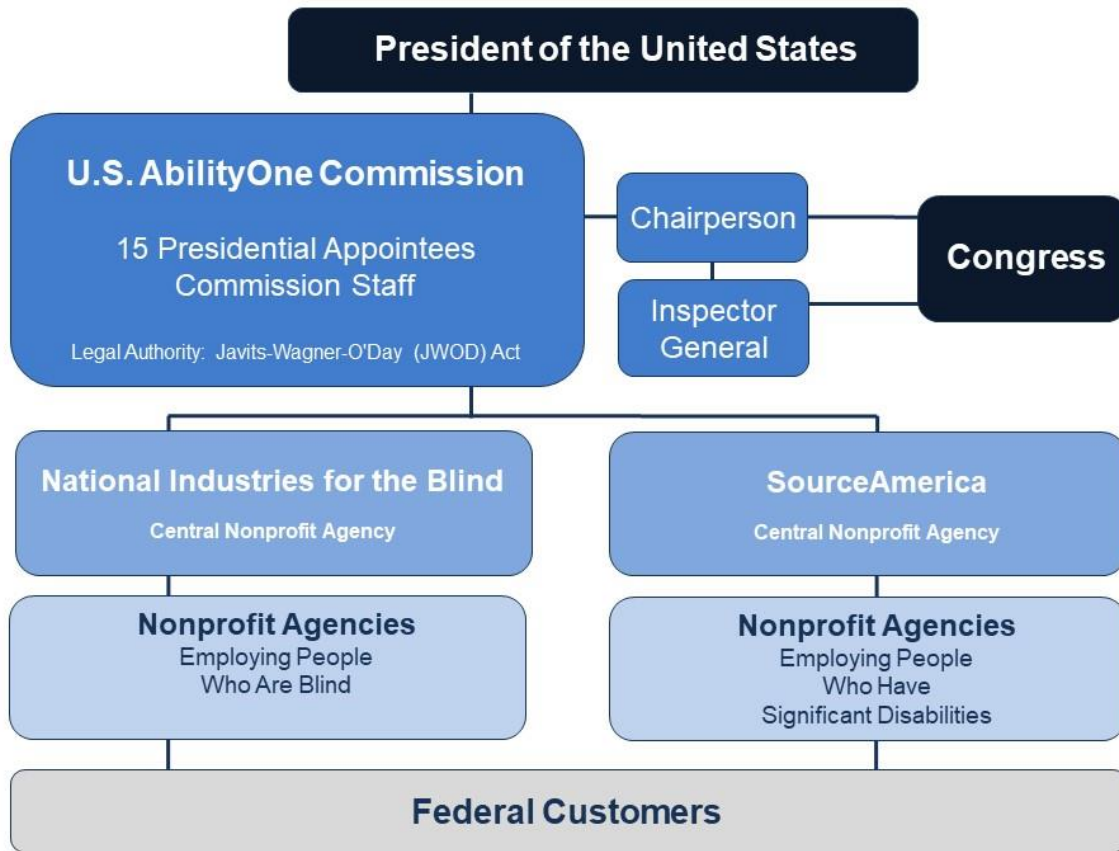
The mission of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission and the AbilityOne Program is:

To tap America's underutilized workforce of individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities to deliver high quality, mission-essential products and services to Federal agencies in quality employment opportunities.

The vision of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission and the AbilityOne Program is:

Remain a trusted source of supply and services for Federal agencies while creating quality employment opportunities across all economic sectors for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

2.2 Program Structure and Responsibilities



Presidential Appointees

The Commission is composed of 15 Presidential appointees. Eleven represent government agencies. Four private citizen members represent the employment concerns of people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

Presidential appointees on the Commission bring extensive expertise and tested judgement that promote the effective implementation of the JWOD Act, the operational efficiency of the Commission and AbilityOne Program, and the interests of people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

Each appointee representing a Federal government agency is a senior procurement official with decades of experience in acquisition and procurement, or a disability employment policy expert responsible for related programs in their own agencies. Each private citizen appointee is an individual with broad knowledge of the employment problems facing people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The Commission currently has 14 of its 15 authorized Presidential appointees. Among its complement of representatives from government agencies, 10 of the 11 positions are filled. All of the four private citizen member positions are filled.

In October 2022, the President [appointed](#) seven Federal agency members, effective October 18, 2022. He had previously announced his [intent to appoint](#) these members. In August 2021, the President had [appointed](#) the four private citizens. We continue to work with the White House to fill the remaining vacancy (Air Force).

Commission Staff

The Commission staff (32 FTEs as of January 31, 2023) maintains agency operations and prepares materials required by law, regulation, and policy to inform the decisions made by the Presidential appointees. The Commission also has an OIG (currently 8 FTEs).

Central Nonprofit Agencies

The Commission has designated two Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs) – National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica – to facilitate the distribution of orders and assist the more than 440 NPAs participating in the AbilityOne Program.

3.0 Analysis of Resources Required

3.1 Personnel Requirements

Table 2. FY 2024 Additional Requested Personnel (7)

Position Needed	FTEs	Source of Requirement / Justification
AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) Program Manager	1	OMB Office of Procurement and Policy Memo, “Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting”
Audit and Compliance Liaison	1	Federal Managers’ Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) & OMB Circular A-123 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 2017 OIG Top Management Challenges Report
Communications and Training Specialist	1	Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) memorandum on “Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting” 2017 NDAA Section 898 "Panel on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability and Integrity" – Reports to Congress, 2018-2022
Competition Manager	1	AbilityOne Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 implementation to support analysis of competition among NPAs
PLIMS Product Manager	1	Modernization of aging IT infrastructure; compliance with Department of Veterans Affairs Contracting Preference Consistency Act of 2020 (PL 116-155)
Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist	1	AbilityOne Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 implementation to support job individualization and person-centered placement
Workforce Data Analyst	1	AbilityOne Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 implementation to support job individualization and person-centered placement

The Commission’s FY 2024 budget justification includes funding for seven (7) additional requested personnel as outlined in Table 2. The agency’s current personnel are described in Table 3. (For OIG, see Section 5.0.)

Additional requested personnel in FY 2024 are required to sustain the Commission’s progress, (see above, Section 1.2, Benefits of Investments in the Commission); to meet increasing mission requirements (see above, Section 1.3, Current Challenges); and to support priorities, including the implementation of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Position responsibilities will include:

- One (1) AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) Program Manager to add to oversight and administration of the ABOR program in accordance with the OFPP memorandum “Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting.” (See Table 2 and Section 1.2, Benefits of Investments in the Commission.)
- One (1) Audit and Compliance Liaison to serve as the primary interface with the Office of Inspector General and other internal and external authorities for all audit matters; ensure effective disposition of findings and recommendations; and serve on the Senior Leadership Team as a direct report to the Chief Risk Officer. (See Table 2.)
- One (1) Communications/Training Specialist to add capability to support increased participation of Americans with disabilities in Federal contracting and recommendations of the 898 Panel, as well as the Commission’s significant expansion of public outreach and engagement to increase transparency and build greater trust and confidence in the Program. (See Table 2.)
- One (1) Competition Manager to support the Strategic Plan’s Strategic Objective 3 (Ensure effective governance and results across the AbilityOne Program) by serving as the senior leader responsible for organizing, coordinating, and conducting the entire spectrum of agency competition activities involving the CNAs and NPAs and Federal Government customer agencies. Ensures all competition actions are consistent with Federal Acquisition Regulations and all AbilityOne agency policies and regulations. Serves on the Senior Leadership Team as a direct report to the Director, Performance Management and Oversight. (See Table 2.)
- One (1) PLIMS Product Manager to be responsible for program and administrative aspects of PLIMS management including development and execution of the acquisition strategy, project requirements, planning and proposals; assisting with budget proposals; and monitoring progress and risks. Will ensure full interoperability with the information technology architecture within the cloud environment. (See Table 2.)
- One (1) Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist to support the Strategic Plan’s Strategic Objective 2 (Identify, publicize, and support the increase of good jobs and optimal jobs in the AbilityOne Program). Responsibilities include developing best practices and metrics for AbilityOne employers to demonstrate they are developing and providing jobs that meet the Commission’s criteria for “good jobs” and/or “optimal jobs” in terms of wages, benefits, legal protections, job individualization, career advancement, and integration. This will allow the Commission to direct and, as needed, provide technical assistance to NPAs participating in the AbilityOne Program. Responsibilities also include assessing and measuring AbilityOne employers’ use of best practices and providing technical assistance to AbilityOne employers and AbilityOne CNAs to align with and fulfill the Commission’s priorities. (See Table 2 and Section 1.2, Benefits of Investments in the Commission.)

- One (1) Workforce Data Analyst to support the implementation of the Commission's Strategic Plan, including by supporting job individualization and person-centered placement. The Strategic Plan emphasizes improving the use of data to measure performance, drive decision-making, and advance the AbilityOne mission. (See Table 2.)

Table 3. Agency FTE Positions Filled (as of January 31, 2023)

Directorate	FTEs	Mission / Value
Oversight and Compliance	4*	Promotes oversight and integrity across AbilityOne Program by ensuring compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
Business Operations	7	Manages Procurement List's approximately 15,000 products and 4,000 services that create employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. Manages Fair Market Prices for AbilityOne products and services.
Contracting and Policy	1	Strengthens AbilityOne Program oversight by identifying and disseminating rules and regulations, as well as developing and updating policy and procedures.
Program Management Office	0	Increases AbilityOne Program accountability by implementing the Cooperative Agreements that govern the relationship between the Commission and CNAs.
Veterans Employment and Initiatives	1	Provides oversight, programming, and strategic planning to maximize AbilityOne employment opportunities for transitioning service members and veterans who are blind or have significant disabilities.
Information Technology	3	Supports agency and OIG operations and mission through modernizing data platforms and cybersecurity, and providing Federal customers, CNAs, and NPAs with enhanced user experience for Commission's digital backbone – the Procurement List Information Management System.
Western U.S. Field Office	1*	Promotes the integrity and efficiency of the AbilityOne Program through effective oversight and advocacy. Supports Federal customers and Commission compliance activities. Office established by Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017.
Office of the General Counsel	4	Provides statutory and regulatory interpretation and advice; provides legal review and advice for Commission's business decisions; supports agency's defense in litigation; and manages Commission's agency Ethics Program.
Office of the Chief Financial Officer	2	Manages Commission's budget formulation, financial management, audit liaison functions, Management Internal Controls Program and Enterprise Risk Management Plan.
Executive Leadership Team	10	Provides agency leadership and strategy. Executive Director; Acting Deputy Executive Director; Chief of Staff; Senior Advisor, Communications and Government Affairs; and support staff.
TOTAL	32	The total number accounts for 1 FTE who is dual-hatted.

* Due to limited staff, Director of Western U.S. Field Office also serves as Director of Oversight and Compliance.

3.2 Information Technology (IT) Requirements

Table 4. Information Technology (IT) Summary Table

Category	(BY) FY 2020 Enacted	(BY) FY 2021 Enacted	(BY) FY 2022 Enacted	(BY) FY 2023 Enacted	(BY) FY 2024 Request
Personnel and Contractors	3 FTE	5 FTE	8 FTE	8 FTE	7 FTE
IT Management			\$237,000	\$225,823	\$242,475
Network Maintenance and Help Desk Support	\$220,000	\$225,000	\$411,000	\$386,264	\$396,000
PLIMS Operations and Maintenance*	\$215,000	\$220,000	\$98,000	\$0	\$0
Cyber Support	\$0	\$400,000	\$304,000	\$348,000	\$506,483
Hardware	\$25,000	\$15,000	\$22,000	\$89,705	\$99,447
Software	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$30,000	\$28,788	\$32,690
New Investments	\$0	\$0	\$600,000	\$125,000	\$149,000
Total	3 FTE \$505,000	5 FTE \$905,000	8 FTE \$1,702,000	8 FTE \$1,203,570	7 FTE 1,426,095

*New IT Support Contract awarded in FY 2022 covers network maintenance, help desk support, and PLIMS operations and maintenance.

Information Technology Requirements

In October 2022, the Commission received an investment from the Technology Modernization Fund (TMF) to support updating the Commission's Procurement List Information Management System (PLIMS) software. This PLIMS core software, which is the legacy application supporting Commission business operations, connects employers of individuals who are blind or who have significant disabilities with Federal agency customers. The TMF investment will improve that connection while also enhancing system accessibility and creating a more secure system. The improvements will also increase the Commission's ability to execute program oversight and will benefit Federal customers who depend on AbilityOne products and services.

The TMF investment is invaluable because the 15-year-old PLIMS has multiple material deficiencies in capability and functionality, interoperability with other Federal acquisition platforms, and user interfaces.

In addition, the Department of Veterans Affairs Contracting Preference Consistency Act of 2020 (PL 116-155) requires VA to buy AbilityOne items which were on the Procurement List prior to 2006. PLIMS does not currently have the functionality to facilitate the data exchange that would readily enable VA to comply. Part of the PLIMS update will better enable VA to comply with this statutory requirement.

IT and Cybersecurity

Commission IT and Cybersecurity priorities are:

1. Enhance Cybersecurity continuous monitoring and vulnerability assessment software tools to monitor protection controls (see costs in Table 4 for details).
2. Protect and modernize Procurement List Information Management System (PLIMS) application.
3. Cloud Service Provider (CSP) to support off-site contingency operations (FISMA alternative work-site requirement), data back-up and recovery activities, and Office 365 email services (contractor support).
4. FISMA-required IT and cybersecurity training for key personnel to identify, protect, detect, respond and recover from cybersecurity incidents.
5. Hire FISMA Annual Assessment Provider (contractor).
6. “Remote Equipment Initiative” funding to provide hardware and software to enable Compliance inspectors conducting on-site NPA assessments to enter data directly into handheld devices.
7. Invest in scheduled enterprise computer hardware and software refresh in order to improve reliability and reduce the risk of equipment and mission failure.
8. Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) application for records management for the Directorate of Oversight and Compliance.
9. Provide total IT and Cyber support to the Office of the Inspector General, and ensure their unique hard and software requirements are fully integrated and operational.

The Commission maintains an IT infrastructure including a local area network and components, a Virtual Private Network (VPN), firewall, and web server. The agency neither operates nor uses external data centers.

The Commission continues to conduct a broad IT system assessment to identify weaknesses, and necessary investments and opportunities for greater efficiencies. For example, the Commission’s Oversight and Compliance Directorate may be more efficient when conducting on-site inspections if they are able to use mobile devices or applications that streamline data entry and other information. Such recommendations continue to be researched and documented for proposal in future budget cycles. Table 4 reflects the current IT enterprise.

IT Resource Statements

The Commission's CIO has reviewed and contributed to the agency's IT investments as described in this budget justification. The CIO routinely reviews and submits the planned IT support for AbilityOne Program objectives, as does the Chief of Staff. The statement attesting to these facts is at Appendix II.

Cybersecurity

The Commission has an interagency agreement with the Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity Division. Under this agreement, DHS provides consolidated intrusion detection, incident analysis, and cyber response capabilities in the protection and defense of the Commission's external access points and network.

3.3 Budget Request by Object Class

Table 5. FY 2024 Budget Request by Object Class (in \$ thousands)

	FY 2020 Enacted	FY 2021 Enacted	FY 2022 Enacted	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Request
Salaries	\$4,228	\$4,558	\$4,607	\$5,215	\$6,542
Benefits	1,120	1,357	1,444	1,600	2,066
Travel	158	20	150	120	120
Rent & Communications	1,820*	406	303	444	462
Printing	36	41	45	55	45
Services	892	1,519	1,608	2,388	2,316
Supplies	46	41	50	50	50
Equipment	50	28	143	102	199
Losses & Claims	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL AGENCY	\$8,350	\$8,000	\$8,350	\$9,974	\$11,800
Office of Inspector General	1,650	2,500	2,650	3,150	3,600
GRAND TOTAL	\$10,000	\$10,500	\$11,000	\$13,124	\$15,400

*The FY 2020 Enacted amount included \$1.35 million for the one-time costs associated with a move of the Commission's headquarters office.

Object Class Narrative for FY 2024 Request

Salaries and Benefits - \$8,608,000. Salary and benefits represent approximately 73% of the agency budget, excluding OIG funding. Personnel and benefits costs include:

- Amount primarily funds 32 agency FTEs (see Table 3 for list of filled positions) and 4 private citizen Commission members who are Special Government Employees (as of January 31, 2023), and backfill of vacant positions (excluding OIG) (approximately \$7,575,000).

- FY 2024 agency planned staffing increase of 7 new government FTEs (approximately \$1,033,000). See Table 2 for list of additional requested personnel.

The requested staffing continues implementation of AbilityOne's Strategic Plan for FY 2022-2026. Specifically, it supports modernization of the AbilityOne Program to achieve optimal employment and governance strategic objectives. The salaries and benefits total accommodates four (4) private citizen Commission members who are appointed by the President to represent the interests of individuals who are blind or who have other significant disabilities. As Special Government Employees, they are paid at the Executive Level IV rate on a per-diem basis when conducting Commission business.

Travel - \$120,000. The Commission's travel-related resources support compliance monitoring and oversight, and mission-essential conferences. This includes technical assistance visits to support NPAs' compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

The Commission continues to conserve meeting-related travel dollars wherever possible and will continue to leverage the use of telephonic or video conferencing for training and other subject matter expertise requirements. This budget line also includes travel by the private citizen Presidential Appointees serving as Commission members, and any travel support required as reasonable accommodations for appointed private citizens with disabilities.

Rent and Communications- \$462,000. The Commission has programmed approximately \$315,500 for space costs. The Commission executed a required move from Arlington, Virginia, to Washington, D.C., during FY 2021. In FY 2022, the Commission took occupancy of its Washington, D.C., headquarters. The lease includes 7,433 square feet to accommodate Commission and OIG staff for collaborative work effort as needed.

The agency has determined that maximum telework best supports the mission objectives. Because the agency effectively deployed telework throughout the pandemic, we have the confidence that a full-time telework posture is an effective standard operating procedure. In addition, the agency and OIG will employ remote hiring as a strategic management tool to attract the best available talent from around the country.

This category also includes \$146,000 in annual charges for IT and telecommunications equipment. The Commission uses strategic sourcing vehicles to obtain discount pricing for requirements such as its wireless phone service. Commission expenses for high-speed web connectivity and remote access Internet service provider accounts have increased commensurate with the agency's increased reliance on telework. Additionally, a small portion of this category includes standard business expenses for postage, domestic package delivery, and teleconference bridge lines.

Printing - \$45,000. In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, the agency continues to have printing costs associated with publishing Federal Register notices. This fulfills legal requirements and promotes transparency. In FY 2024, the Commission will continue its routine publishing cycle for Procurement List additions and deletions and anticipates increased publishing for proposed updates to the Code of Federal Regulations. Based on recent years'

billing, we anticipate that \$45,000 will cover these costs. The Commission does not intend to use such funding to print informational materials or collateral that can be disseminated electronically.

Services - \$2,316,000. The Commission's request for resources in this budget object class reflects \$246,000 allocated for intragovernmental agreements with Federal government agencies for force protection, financial management and payroll, human resources, employee assistance program, background checks, and travel system support. Furthermore, to maximize its productivity, the agency anticipates spending \$805,000 on service contracts to provide agency support for personnel and communications, and IT support for network maintenance and Help Desk support. An increase of \$575,000 is added for the Job Individualization and Person-Centered Placement Program; this continues implementation of AbilityOne Strategic Plan objectives. Additionally, the Acquisition Module to support automation of the agency's contract administration, integrating it with the financial management system, was included at \$454,000. Last, the PLIMS modernization effort includes \$149,000, and \$50,000 for staff training and professional development.

Supplies and Materials - \$50,000. The Commission continues to minimize its expenses for office supplies and operating materials. However, the agency must continue routine purchases of subscriptions for essential technical references such as Westlaw, technical manuals, and other publications that enable employees' performance of official duties. Additionally, funding in this object class covers replacement of peripheral IT components to keep laptops and desktops operational and connected.

Equipment - \$199,000. The Commission uses government-wide contract vehicles or other government discounts to obtain the lowest available prices in this category for hardware purchases, software, and furniture. The agency fully transitioned its IT network infrastructure to the cloud in FY 2023 and anticipates an annual cost of \$81,000 based on expected usage. The migration to the cloud eliminates capital asset refresh costs for network servers, and significantly improves disaster preparedness capability. Funding is also allocated to support network operating system licenses and hardware for new employees.

4.0 Performance Goals, Measures, and Indicators

The Commission issued its [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on June 30, 2022. Four overarching Strategic Objectives anchor the plan:

- 1) Transform the AbilityOne Program to expand competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.
- 2) Identify, publicize, and support the increase of good jobs and optimal jobs in the AbilityOne Program.
- 3) Ensure effective governance and results across the AbilityOne Program.
- 4) Engage in partnerships to increase employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities within and beyond the AbilityOne Program.

The plan also includes [outcome goals, strategies and performance measures](#) that clearly communicate the Commission's direction and resource prioritization.

The Commission has developed a [plan to implement](#) the Strategic Plan.

More information on agency performance can be found in the [March 2021 Report to the President](#) and the [FY 2022 Performance and Accountability Report](#) (PAR).

The following agency performance information is organized under the Strategic Plan's Strategic Objectives.

4.1 Strategic Objective 1: Transform the AbilityOne Program to expand competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

As noted in the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, the Commission believes the AbilityOne Program has the potential to be a driver of competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. However, to achieve that goal fully, Congress must amend the JWOD Act to enable all NPAs to offer CIE to their employees.

The Commission is committed to working effectively with Congress to amend the JWOD Act to support CIE for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

4.2 Strategic Objective 2: Identify, publicize, and support the increase of good jobs and optimal jobs in the AbilityOne Program.

The Commission defines a “good job” in the AbilityOne Program as having four attributes:

- 1) Individuals with disabilities are paid competitive wages and benefits
- 2) The job matches the individual’s interests and skills (“job individualization”).
- 3) Individuals with disabilities are provided with opportunities for employment advancement comparable to those provided to individuals without disabilities.
- 4) Individuals are covered under employment laws.

The Commission believes there are such jobs currently within the AbilityOne Program and that the number of such jobs should be increased.

The Commission defines an “optimal job” as one that includes the four attributes of a “good job,” but also allows AbilityOne employees to work side-by-side with employees without disabilities doing the same or similar work. That is obviously harder, and frequently not possible, to achieve given the direct labor hour ratio mandated by the JWOD Act. Nevertheless, the Commission is aware of several examples in which such workplaces have been achieved in the AbilityOne Program.

The Commission will issue a Request for Information (RFI) to help it identify AbilityOne jobs that include competitive wages and benefits, customized jobs, means for employment advancement, and coverage under employment laws, all of which are neither prohibited nor hindered by the JWOD Act. The RFI will also identify jobs that are optimal in that AbilityOne employees are working side-by-side with employees without disabilities doing the same or similar jobs. It will also identify the strategies the NPAs used to achieve these results within the constraints of JWOD.

Quality Work Environment (QWE) Program

More than 80% of all AbilityOne employees work for NPAs that participate in AbilityOne’s Quality Work Environment (QWE) program – a framework for continuous improvement used to improve the experience and satisfaction of all employees at AbilityOne NPAs, with an emphasis on people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

Central to QWE is the sharing of employer best practices, with emphasis on practices that increase wages, provide training, facilitate upward mobility, provide navigation to other supports and services, and increase inclusion and integration in the workplace. The Commission will work with its CNAs to build on the QWE structure and increase capacity for job individualization to promote the expansion of good jobs and optimal jobs.

More information about QWE can be found on the [Quality Work Environment page](#) of the Commission’s website and in the Commission’s March 2021 [Report to the President](#).

4.3 Strategic Objective 3: Ensure effective governance and results across the AbilityOne Program.

Chief Financial Officer

The Commission’s CFO has advanced effective stewardship through actions that include:

- Maintains financial processes and controls for funds management, obligations, and payments.
- Completed Management Internal Control Program in accordance with the Federal Managers’ Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA); submitted FY 2022 Annual Statement of Assurance.
- Conducted an FY 2022 Management Control Review of 119 Agency controls – one-third of the total 336 controls – and determined Agency internal controls were effective.
- Responsiveness to audits: Closed 7 open financial audit recommendations during FY 2022.
- Conducts quarterly enterprise risk management assessments of risk mitigation plans; closed 4 of 32 risk mitigation plans to date.

Compliance

One of the pillars of the Commission’s 2022-2026 Strategic Plan is modernizing the oversight of NPA compliance to align with Program requirements.

Please see Section 1.2, Benefits of Investments in the Commission, for more on compliance modernization.

Table 6. NPAs in Compliance with 75% Overall Direct Labor Hour Ratio Requirement

	FY 2018 Results	FY 2019 Results	FY 2020 Results	FY 2021 Results	FY 2022 Results
NPAs in Compliance / Total NPAs	469/483	461/480	402/469	353/450	313/443
Percentage of NPAs in Compliance	97%	96%	86% ⁶	78% ⁷	71% ⁸

- A key AbilityOne Program compliance metric is that people who are blind or have significant disabilities must provide at least 75% of an NPA’s overall direct labor hours worked during the fiscal year (referred to as the 75% Overall Direct Labor Hour Ratio Requirement).

- In both FY 2021 and FY 2022, NPA compliance with this key requirement was lower than in previous years due to COVID-19 pandemic impacts that included staffing shortages, supply chain issues, and employees needing to quarantine if affected by or infected with COVID-19.
- Responding to the unique circumstances presented by COVID-19, and consistent with agency practice relating to emergency responses, the agency expanded exceptions to its Direct Labor Ratio Requirements for FY 2020, FY 2021, and FY 2022.⁹ These exceptions included flexibilities to allow NPAs to notify the Commission if, due to or in support of the COVID-19 emergency response or recovery period, they will operate at a ratio below 75 percent.

Customer Satisfaction

Increasing Federal customer satisfaction with AbilityOne products and services is a key Commission priority, one reflected in the Strategic Plan – i.e., “Support the mission of the Federal customer by providing best value through contract performance.”

In addition, the Commission’s vision is to “Remain a trusted source of supply and services for Federal agencies while creating quality employment opportunities across all economic sectors for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.”

Part of advancing this goal will be Commission emphasis on providing technical assistance to support Federal customers who have contract performance quality concerns. This effort includes the Commission’s compliance modernization process (see Section 1.2, Benefits of Investments in the Commission), as well as the Commission’s continuing engagement with ABORs to maximize education and training opportunities to identify problems, highlight best practices, and provide tools to improve contract performance.

Another step toward increasing Federal customer satisfaction is the Commission’s modernization initiative to leverage competition within the Program to improve innovation and transparency. As discussed in Section 3.1, Personnel Requirements, the Commission’s FY 2024 Additional Requested Personnel includes a competition manager to provide capacity and technical expertise to support the competition initiative as part of advancing the Strategic Plan’s Strategic Objective 3, Ensure Effective Governance and Results Across the AbilityOne Program.

- The Commission’s Fall 2021 Regulatory Agenda identified a proposed amendment to the Commission’s regulation that broadens the parameters for the review and negotiation of prices in the AbilityOne Program.
 - In March 2023, the Commission plans to submit a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for publication in the Federal Register and posting for public comment on www.regulations.gov. The proposed rule is “Supporting Competition in the AbilityOne Program.”

Additionally, the agency’s ongoing Strategic Plan focus includes its work to implement the Section 898 Panel’s recommendations, several of which address business processes.

4.4 Strategic Objective 4: Engage in partnerships to increase employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities within and beyond the AbilityOne Program.

Employment Growth

The Commission’s FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan includes initiatives for expanding business lines within the Program, with the outcome of new good jobs and optimal jobs within the Program.

The Strategic Plan also includes initiatives for increasing employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities beyond the AbilityOne Program. The attributes of a “good job” in an AbilityOne contract will include creating person-centered employment plans that can support the outward mobility of employees to other jobs in the economy.

In addition, the Commission intends to collaborate with other Federal agencies to increase employment opportunities in Federal agencies and with other Federal contractors for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

Table 7. AbilityOne Program Key Metrics

	FY 2021	FY 2022	% Change
Direct Labor Hours	43.9 million	41.4 million	-6
Employees*	39,690	36,377	-8
Promotions	2,072	1,953	-6
Wages	\$668.6 million	\$666.4 million	-0.3
Average Hourly Wage	\$15.22	\$16.09	+6
Sales	3.916 billion	3.868 billion	-1

* Table reflects exact numbers for employees.

As shown in the table above, employment within AbilityOne contracts decreased between FY 2021 and FY 2022. The decline in number of jobs can be attributed primarily to:

- COVID-19 pandemic, which caused significant disruption in manufacturing and service delivery schedules, and drastically impacted demand for certain supplies and services.
- To continually assess the impact of COVID-19 on the AbilityOne Program, the Commission closely monitors and engages Federal customers, CNAs and NPAs regarding business decisions related to COVID-19. Whenever possible, the Commission adjusts and adapts to COVID-19 impacts on the AbilityOne Program: e.g., by issuing policy exceptions such as [“AbilityOne Flexibilities Related to the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Emergency and Recovery for the Duration of Fiscal Year 2022.”](#)

- VA’s “Rule of Two” contracting preference program, which prioritizes veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned companies over AbilityOne NPAs, resulting in the loss of some AbilityOne contracts and jobs.

Implementing guidance in the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) memorandum on [“Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting.”](#)

Please see Section 1.2, Benefits of Investments in the Commission.

5.0 U.S. AbilityOne Commission Office of Inspector General

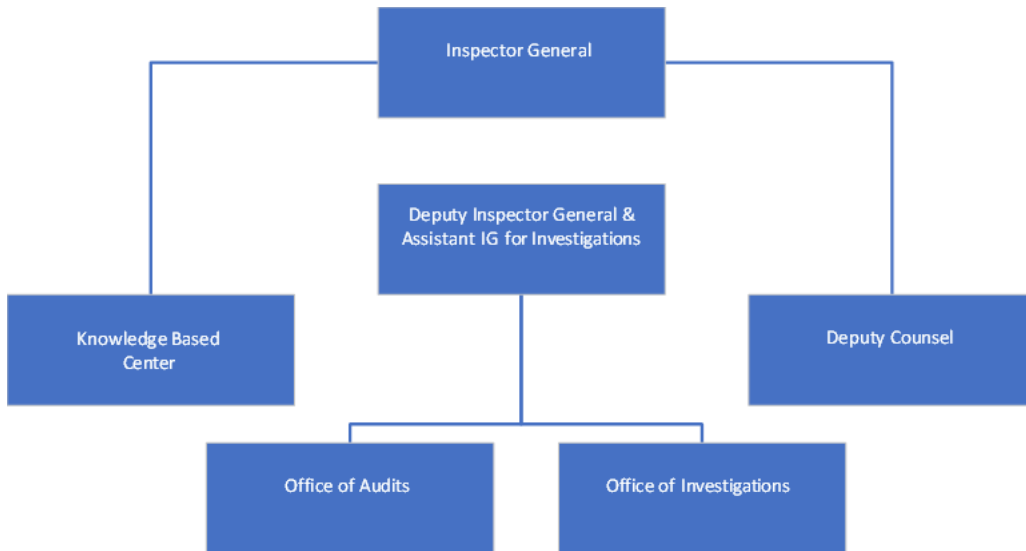
Executive Summary

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission (Commission) is responsible for creating and maintaining employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities. Now headquartered in co-location with the OIG in Washington, D.C., the Commission administers the AbilityOne Program (Program) that supplies \$3.9 billion annually in products and services to the Federal Government, through contracts performed by more than 440 nonprofit agencies (NPAs) located across all 50 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico, and that employ more than 36,000 people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.

With oversight of the Commission and its Program, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is an independent organization designed to detect and deter waste, fraud, and abuse. The OIG, with its operations of audits and investigations, helps promote a more effective and efficient Commission and Program. The OIG protects the integrity of the Commission and its Program by ensuring that agency operations are conducted appropriately and effectively achieve their intended purpose. Governed by the Inspector General Act of 1978 as amended, the first AbilityOne IG stood up the oversight office in 2017 responsible for conducting audits and investigations; recommending policies and procedures that promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of Commission resources and programs; and preventing fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in AbilityOne operations.

The AbilityOne OIG consists of a number of units: the immediate office of the Inspector General (IG), the Deputy Inspector General, the Office of Counsel, the Office of Audits (OA), and the Office of Investigations (OI). The OIG is currently staffed by eight (8) full-time employees: the Inspector General, Deputy Inspector General & Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (AIGI), Deputy Counsel, Assistant Inspector General for Audits (AIGA), an Auditor, and three entry-level Attorneys.

A major OIG leadership development in 2022 was the [announcement](#) of Stefania Pozzi Porter as Inspector General, following a nationwide search. She had served as Acting IG since 2021. Porter was also selected as a member of the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service.

Figure 1: AbilityOne OIG Organizational Structure

To leverage its limited resources, the OIG created and operates a Knowledge-Based Center to share resources with other Federal agencies and developed a robust internship program for both undergraduate and law students operating all year long. This shared services model, with MOUs with other Federal agencies and with support by the rotating internships, has allowed the OIG to continue operating with its limited resources, so far. The OIG has experienced growth in investigation and auditing activities and needs an appropriately increased budget level to be effective going forward.

The OIG has to date developed its Audit and Investigations Plans, published informative Top Management and Performance Challenges Reports, issued Semiannual Reports to Congress, and completed essential audit and investigative reports.

Workforce Needs and Work Product

The current OIG staffing level requires further hiring actions to accomplish the required oversight of the Program, with more than \$3.9 billion in annual contracts. The OIG is requesting \$3,600,000 for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 to fulfill its mission and statutory mandates.

The requested level of funding will allow the OIG to hire requisite staff to perform audits and investigations and to accomplish important oversight milestones. In addition to hiring full-time staff, the OIG intends to further leverage the operations of its Knowledge-Based Center to leverage the time and talents of professionals throughout the Federal community. The OIG is utilizing MOUs with other agencies and hosting interns and CIGIE fellows, as well as leveraging shared services.

Audits

The OIG Risk-Based Audit Plan is a comprehensive blueprint of the scheduled, value-adding oversight work that will build confidence in the program, enhance economy and efficiency, and improve program growth. The plan covers statutorily mandated work products and discretionary work to include emphasis in the areas of AbilityOne’s fair market pricing determinations, contract administration, and controls over the Program during the coronavirus pandemic. The Office of Audits (OA) executes the OIG Risk-Based Audit Plan and provides independent, objective assessments of the AbilityOne Commission’s programs and operations. In FY 2022, the Office of Audits published:

- Three reports with 31 recommendations to improve the performance, accountability, and integrity of the Commission’s financial, administrative, and information security operations (see Table 1). (As of September 30, 2022, there are a total of 70 open audit recommendations.)
- Four OIG Quarterly Audit Recommendation Status Reports to facilitate periodic reporting on the status of recommendations, improve overall risk management, and help enhance Commission operations.

Table 1: OIG FY 2022 Reports and Recommendations Summary

Report Short Name	Report Number	Report Date	Number of Recommendations
Financial Statement Audit	21-01	11/15/2021	23
FISMA Review	21-03	12/09/2021	2
DATA Act Audit	21-05	3/12/2022	6
Total			31

Source: Generated by the OIG using report data compiled as of August 31, 2022

Apart from the 3rd Quarter, FY 2022, Audit Recommendation Status Report, OA outsourced audit/evaluation work to independent public accounting (IPA) firms with one (1) Government auditor overseeing the work in the role of Contracting Officer’s Representative. Increasing the number of audit resources will enable OIG to build in-house audit teams for complex performance audits of the Program and allow the OIG to reduce our reliance on IPA firms to perform this work. The increase in resources will also permit the OA to perform statutorily mandated projects.

With more than 440 NPAs, a Program size of \$3.9 billion, and 70 open audit recommendations requiring aggressive monitoring and follow-up, the allocation of additional resources for OIG to lead and properly execute its audit program is required. OA requires a minimum of five staff to provide in-house AbilityOne Program expertise. We estimate the cost for salaries and benefits together with funding to outsource specialized audits to be \$3,160,000.

Investigations

The OIG Office of Investigations (OI) conducts investigations over the programs and operations of the Commission as well as interagency investigations into fraud, waste, or abuse in the \$3.9 billion Program. OI is responsible for supporting more than 14 complex, nationwide investigations involving potentially several hundred million dollars of contract fraud—resulting in hundreds or thousands of lost job opportunities for Americans who are blind or have another significant disability, many of whom are veterans. Any significant investigation requires focusing all current resources within OI to ensure a timely, effective, and efficient fact-finding investigation can be completed for referral to the Department of Justice for Federal criminal statute violations.

The AbilityOne Program is unique in that its program participants, the more than 440 NPAs that provide vital goods and services to the Federal Government, are geographically dispersed across 50 States, Guam, and Puerto Rico and work with 40 Federal Agencies that use the Program. Consequently, OI works with many Federal Government partner-agencies' OIGs, each of which may assign multiple Special Agents to their investigations. Recent examples of this type of work are available at OIG's new website hosted by oversight.gov (www.abilityone.oversight.gov). The AbilityOne contracts are also unique in that they are awarded via a set-aside, mandatory procurement list and carry higher risk for potential fraud. Based on the annual \$3.9 billion universe of contracts, we estimate approximately \$390,000,000 (10% estimate) in fraud per annum.

States and Territories	52
Individuals Employed	More than 36,000
Federal Locations Hosting Workers	Approximately 1,000

With increased resources, OI can more effectively support and develop its own and interagency investigations, improving efficiencies and saving time and money for the Federal agencies and military entities that utilize the products and services of the AbilityOne Program. OI will establish a proactive investigative program using data analytics to identify fraud indicators. This will increase the number and quality of investigations, bring more cases to resolution, meaningfully decrease fraud in the Program, result in higher levels of recovery for the Federal Government and—most importantly—prevent the job losses due to Program fraud for Americans who are blind or have another significant disability, many of whom are veterans.

In 2021, the OIG selected and hired its first Criminal Investigator (1811 job series) for the role of Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (AIGI). This hiring action empowered the OIG's Office of Investigations to be led by an individual with the leadership experience, knowledge, and investigative expertise to propel the OIG's investigations for positive outcomes.

Since the inception of the first IG in 2017, we have reported to Congress that AbilityOne OIG requires full law enforcement authority to provide the oversight on the Program envisioned by Congress. In March 2021, OIG formally applied with the Department of Justice for such law enforcement authority, which would provide our criminal investigators the much-needed ability to seek and execute search and arrest warrants, seize evidence, carry firearms, and make reasonable arrests without a warrant, like other OIGs.

AbilityOne's complex structure, history of mismanagement, and vulnerable workforce make the Program especially prone to fraud, and the lack of law enforcement authority significantly hampers the OIG ability to provide oversight. As authorized by § 6(f) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (IG Act), law enforcement capabilities would enable the AbilityOne OIG to meet the Congressional mandates of the IG Act to effectively and efficiently investigate crimes involving the more than \$3.9 billion AbilityOne annual contract portfolio.

The OIG requires a minimum of 11 full-time investigative staff to conduct and complete a comprehensive investigative program. As stated above, we estimate the cost for salaries and benefits together with funding to outsource specialized audits to be \$3,160,000 with an additional \$100,000 requested for investments in foundational investigative infrastructure such as digital forensics equipment and software, investigative tools, and specialized training.

OIG has conducted outreach, including fraud awareness training, to the Commission, the Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs), NPAs, and Federal contractors in multiple presentations, including information about Pandemic Relief Accountability Committee (PRAC) efforts and the fraud risks associated with the distribution of funds pursuant to the CARES Act. The Inspector General has also presented information about OIG's civil fraud portfolio, as appropriate. OI has worked with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Justice (DoJ), the Department of Defense (DoD) OIG, General Services Administration (GSA) OIG, Social Security Administration (SSA) OIG, Defense Health Agency (DHA) OIG, Veterans Affairs (VA) OIG, and others, to build processes to better coordinate on investigative referrals and 40 matters of interest to multiple agencies.

Reducing the Federal Footprint and Maximizing Economies

Initially, OIG leased office space in Alexandria that was separate from the Commission's headquarters. In June 2022, OIG and the Commission completed the co-location move. The Commission will be responsible for the lease, and the co-location increases economies and efficiencies. Accordingly, OIG will not have a requirement for separate funds for rent and related expenses in FY 2024.

Technology

The OIG currently does not have in-house access to hardware or software systems that would allow its staff to conduct data analytics, cybersecurity initiatives and activities and efficiently facilitate workflow integration and streamlining. The OIG is in the process of migrating the majority of its digital services to the Microsoft Government Cloud architecture. To continue to improve and enhance its IT capabilities, the OIG will need to expend approximately \$130,000 in FY 2024.

Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE)

Funding will be necessary to support the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) for their operational activities and Government-wide support of the IG community. In accordance with the reporting requirements of Section 6 of the IG Act, this budget request relates to a necessary expense for OIG's support of CIGIE, which is funded from the OIG's discretionary budget.

Training

The OIG training needs are based on training requirements for Federal law enforcement, investigative, legal, and audit personnel. Audit personnel are required to have 80 hours of training every two years to meet generally accepted Government accounting standards (GAGAS), and investigators also have 80 hours of training mandated by CIGIE and DoJ to occur every two years. We are also establishing a core group of managers to stand up the major OIG functions, and we intend to provide them with ongoing quality leadership and management training. OIG's funding request for training is \$199,000.

Budget Exhibits

Inspector General Reform Act Statement

The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, operating as the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, Office of Inspector General (OIG) was authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016. The IG Act requires certain specifications concerning the OIG budget submission for each fiscal year. Each Inspector General is required to transmit a budget request to the head of the agency specifying:

- Aggregate amount of funds requested for the operations of the OIG;
- Portion of this amount requested for OIG training; and
- Portion of this amount necessary to support CIGIE.

Section 6 of the IG Act was amended by the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-409) to require certain information concerning OIG budget submissions. For FY 2024, this information is as follows:

- OIG's aggregate budget estimate and request to OMB for FY 2024 is \$3,600,000 to remain available through September 30, 2024;
- OIG's funding request for training needs is \$199,000; and
- Funding necessary to support CIGIE from OIG's discretionary budget.

The cost for salaries and benefits together with funding to outsource specialized audits to be \$3,160,000.

**Office of Inspector General
Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled**

	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Budget Requested
	\$ 3,124,000	\$ 3,600,000
ALL PERSONNEL	10 FTE	13 FTE
Base Salary, Full-time permanent	\$ 1,336,524	\$ 1,822,562
Performance Awards	\$ 90,000	\$ 120,000
Special Act Awards	\$ 25,000	\$ 30,000
Inspector General Performance Award	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000
Subtotal	\$ 1,481,524	\$ 2,002,562
ALL BENEFITS		
Full Time Employee Benefits	\$ 521,244	\$ 710,799
Law Enforcement Availability Pay (1 FTEs)	\$ 43,000	\$ 90,000
Public Transportation Subsidy	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,500
Subtotal	\$ 570,244	\$ 807,299
ALL TRAVEL		
Mission Related Travel (Domestic)	\$ 85,000	\$ 117,400
Other Transportation of Persons (Domestic)	\$ 7,000	\$ 5,000
Subtotal	\$ 92,000	\$ 122,400
ALL RENT & COMMS		
Rent to GSA	\$ -	\$ -
Wireless Communications Services- Commercial Provider	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Utility Services- Electricity	\$ -	\$ -
Subtotal	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
PRINTING		
Printing and Reproduction	\$ 606	\$ 606
Subtotal	\$ 606	\$ 606
OTHER SERVICES		
Advisory and Assistance - Commercial	\$ 689,626	\$ 351,133
Mission Support Contractual Services- Commercial Sources	\$ 60,000	\$ 75,000
Program Training- Commercial Provider	\$ 103,000	\$ 119,000
Good and services from Federal sources	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Program Training - Fed Agency Provider	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
(PBS only) DHS Security Protection	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
Subtotal	\$ 934,626	\$ 627,133
SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS		
Office and General Supplies- Non- Federal	\$ 20,000	\$ 15,000
Subtotal	\$ 20,000	\$ 15,000
LAND AND STRUCTURES		
Relocation- Buildings, Improvements & Structures, or Moving Expenses	\$ -	\$ -
Subtotal	\$ -	\$ -
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 3,124,000	\$ 3,600,000
	\$ 3,124,000	\$ 3,600,000
	\$ -	\$ -

6.0 Combined Agency-Related Appropriation Language (including OIG)

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For expenses necessary for the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (referred to in this title as "the Committee") established under section 8502 of title 41, United States Code, \$15,400,000:

Provided, That in order to authorize any central nonprofit agency designated pursuant to section 8503(c) of title 41, United States Code, to perform requirements of the Committee as prescribed under section 51-3.2 of title 41, Code of Federal Regulations, the Committee shall enter into a written agreement with any such central nonprofit agency:

Provided further, That such agreement shall contain such auditing, oversight, and reporting provisions as necessary to implement chapter 85 of title 41, United States Code:

Provided further, That such agreement shall include the elements listed under the heading "Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled-Written Agreement Elements" in the explanatory statement described in section 4 of Public Law 114-113 (in the matter preceding division A of that consolidated Act):

Provided further, That any such central nonprofit agency may not charge a fee under section 51-3.5 of title 41, Code of Federal Regulations, prior to executing a written agreement with the Committee:

Provided further, That no less than \$3,600,000 shall be available for the Office of Inspector General.

(Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024.)

Appendix I. Financial Management Summary

Though it is a small independent agency, the Commission accomplishes an important mission that is national in scope – touching the lives of more than 36,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities. It does so with very limited appropriated funds. The Commission’s FY 2023 budget was \$13,124,000, with no less than \$3,150,000 for the Office of Inspector General (OIG). This budget was primarily used to fund salaries and benefits for the Commission’s civil service staff and private citizen members, and to pay for rent and communications, intragovernmental support services, information technology support, and other general expenses.

The Commission’s goals, objectives, targets, and measures are focused on oversight of the AbilityOne Program. Financial efficiencies are achieved to support the Commission’s mission by leveraging financial system shared services under an interagency agreement with the Financial Information and Operations Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Chief Financial Officer. These services include financial management and systems, financial reporting and accounting, budgeting and analysis, and personnel and payroll systems.

The Commission’s FY 2019 and FY 2020 financial audits – including the agency’s management response to the findings – are posted on the Commission’s OIG webpage. In both audit periods, the independent auditors disclosed instances of noncompliance with laws or regulations. In response, the Commission appointed an investigation officer from the General Services Administration. The investigation determined that the instances of noncompliance were violations of the Anti-Deficiency Act (ADA).

The Commission took the appropriate steps for reporting ADA violations to OMB in accordance with OMB Circular A-11, Section 145. To prevent a recurrence of ADA violations, the Commission hired a Chief Financial Officer who is an experienced subject matter expert in financial management. Subsequently, the Commission implemented a corrective action plan, improved separation of financial duties within the agency staff, and implemented a funds control policy with appropriate authority levels and procedures for funds management, obligation, and invoice payment. These actions, combined with internal controls and annual leadership training, addressed the root cause of the violations and the audit recommendations.

Improper Payments Reductions

In accordance with the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002, the Commission reports that it had improper or erroneous payments in FY 2019 and FY 2020. The Commission’s FY 2019 and FY 2020 financial audit included findings regarding potential Anti-Deficiency Act violations.

As indicated above, the investigation of the findings determined that the improper payments were ADA violations. The Commission took required actions in accordance with OMB directives for reporting ADA violations to OMB and applied corrective actions to address the root cause of violations.

The Commission has no grant-making authority, makes no payments to beneficiaries, has no unneeded real property, and has no debt-collection program. Nearly all of the agency's resources are dedicated to personnel, rent and communications, intragovernmental support services, and information technology support. The agency is committed to monthly reconciliation of all spending, including payroll.



Appendix II. Statement of Chief Information Officer

February 28, 2023

I affirm that as the Chief Information Officer of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, I played a significant role in reviewing and recommending planned IT support and increases in IT resources for the agency for the submission of the FY 2024 budget justification. There have been limited IT investments in equipment and cloud storage. The Commission has received Technology Modernization Fund support to upgrade the agency's Procurement List Information Management System (PLIMS), and will identify internal funding to buy IT equipment and software licenses for new employees.


Shang-iong (Edward) Yang, CIO

Endnotes

¹ The U.S. AbilityOne Commission is the operating name of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, an independent Federal agency hereafter referred to as “Commission.”

² Job individualization refers to matching the individual’s interests and skills with a job.

³ Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. “Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics–2022” <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf> (retrieved March 8, 2023).

⁴ The agency’s [Equity Action Plan](#) includes agency actions related to the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) memorandum on “Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting.” The plan was submitted to OMB on January 20, 2022.

⁵ The agency issued a [Tribal Consultation Plan](#) in response to the January 26, 2021 “Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships.”

⁶ This FY 2020 percentage is lower than previous years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷ This FY 2021 percentage is lower than previous years due to the full-year impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data reflects the number of NPAs participating in the AbilityOne Program as of September 30, 2021.

⁸ This FY 2022 percentage is lower than in many previous years due to the full-year impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data reflects the number of NPAs participating in the AbilityOne Program as of September 30, 2022. Percentages are rounded.

⁹ “[AbilityOne Flexibilities Related to the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Emergency and Recovery for the Duration of Fiscal Year 2022](#)” and earlier memos on the [COVID-19 page](#) of the Commission website.