



Listening Session on the U.S. AbilityOne Commission Draft FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan

April 25, 2022



Mission and Vision Statements

Mission Statement

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**.

Vision Statement

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.



U.S. AbilityOne Commission

- **Staff of 32 FTEs** – functional areas include:
 - Business Operations (7 FTEs)
 - Oversight and Compliance (6 FTEs)
 - Cooperative Agreement Program Management (3 FTEs)
 - Office of the General Counsel (3 FTEs)
 - Communications and Government Affairs (1 FTE)
 - Internal Functions: Finance, Admin, HR and IT (12 FTEs)
- **\$8.35 million budget for the Agency**
- **\$2.65 million budget for Inspector General**



National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

Supports **58 nonprofit agencies (NPAs)** with technical and financial assistance to participate in the AbilityOne Program.

Associated NPAs' FY 2021 sales and employment

\$743.9 million in products sales

3,013 direct labor employees - products

\$91.4 million in services sales

871 services direct labor employees - services



SourceAmerica

Supports **392 NPAs** with technical and financial assistance to participate in the AbilityOne Program.

Associated NPAs' FY 2021 sales and employment

\$407.6 million in products sales

4,673 direct labor employees - products

\$2.7 billion in services sales

31,133 direct labor employees - services



Draft Strategic Plan Overview

The plan has three Strategic Objectives:

- I. Expand **competitive integrated employment (CIE)** for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.
- II. Ensure **effective governance** across the AbilityOne Program.
- III. **Partner** with Federal agencies and AbilityOne stakeholders **to increase and improve employment opportunities** for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.



Strategic Objective I -- CIE

Expand competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.

- Via modernization of AbilityOne
- Within the AbilityOne Program as currently constructed



Beyond the AbilityOne Structure

Outcome Goal 1: Work effectively with Congress to amend the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Act to support CIE for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.

Primary issues to address:

- Minimum and maximum ratios of employees with significant disabilities for an NPA to qualify for the AbilityOne Program.
- Definition of “significant disability.”
- Requirements for outward movement of NPA employees.



Within the AbilityOne Structure

Outcome Goal 2:

Modernize the Commission's regulations, policies, and procedures to expand CIE within the AbilityOne Program to the maximum extent possible in light of the constraints of the current statutory structure.



CIE as Defined by WIOA

- CIE as used in this Plan must meet the required three elements from WIOA.
- Employees with disabilities must:
 - + receive competitive wages and benefits;
 - + work in an integrated fashion with employees without disabilities doing the same type of work;
 - + have opportunities for advancement similar to employees without disabilities



CIE Example: Using Subcontractors

- A SourceAmerica NPA is the **prime contractor** for all facilities support at a Department of Defense complex.
- The NPA **subcontracts with a for-profit company** for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing.
- The **NPA's employees participate in an electrical apprenticeship program** run by the for-profit company and the company has hired former NPA employees from that program.
- The NPA is **working with the for-profit company to create a hiring pipeline for NPA employees** to move to positions on the company's commercial contracts.



CIE Example: On-Site Work

- NIB is the prime contractor for **contract closeout work** and subcontracts the work to multiple NPAs.
- The work includes **administrative processes to prepare contract files for closure**, e.g., identifying funds for de-obligation and preparing modifications.
- The work is often performed **on-site in Federal offices**, with NPA employees working side-by-side with Federal employees and other contract employees.
- Since 2010, **90 NPA employees have been hired into Federal jobs.**



Leverage Current Structure for CIE

- **Ensure competitive wages and benefits** in AbilityOne jobs. (Final 14(c) regulation; collection of wage and benefits data)
- **Explore possible CIE via a Request for Information:**
 - Ways to *support CIE within* AbilityOne contracts
 - Ideas for *pilot projects* within AbilityOne to support CIE.
 - Ways to increase *outward movement* from AbilityOne contracts to other CIE jobs.
- **Issue a guidance document on advancing CIE; collect data; and conceptualize and authorize pilot projects.**



Leverage Current Structure for CIE

- **Measure an NPA's performance on CIE** based on data collection.
- **Measure SourceAmerica's and NIB's work in providing resources** to their NPAs to help them achieve CIE.
- **Revise documents required by the Commission** on entry of NPA employees to enable discussion of their employment objectives.
- **Consider how to incentivize an NPA's success** in achieving CIE within the current structure.



Strategic Objective II -- Governance

Ensure effective governance across the AbilityOne Program.

Outcome Goal 1:

Address top management and performance challenges...to improve the operations of the Commission, the CNAs and the NPAs.



Improve Commission Governance

- Continue to strengthen internal Commission operations:
 - **New CFO and Enterprise Risk Management Plan** in place.
 - **Independent IG** with open lines of communication and responsiveness by Commission staff.
 - Focus on onboarding staff with backgrounds in **vocational rehabilitation, and in disability rights and policy.**
 - Enhanced engagement via **public meetings** to solicit new and creative ideas.
 - Ensure **digital accessibility** and use all available means to **increase DEIA** within the Commission.
 - Modernize **information management system** to support the Commission, federal customers, CNAs and NPAs.



Clarify Expectations of CNAs

- **SourceAmerica** collects **\$98 million** in Program Fees from **392 NPAs** and has a **staff of 416 employees**.
- **NIB** collects **\$35 million** in Program Fees from **58 NPAs** and has a **staff of 183 employees**.
- The **Cooperative Agreements** are the vehicle for setting forth the **Commission's expectations of the work the CNAs will do** with the program fees they collect.
- The Cooperative Agreements **will be updated to reflect the priorities of the Strategic Plan**.



Clarify Expectations of CNAs

- **Data:** Update the data collected from the CNAs and NPAs and implement a system for the Commission to receive data efficiently.
- **Site Visits:** Reimagine site visits to include both compliance review and technical assistance to help NPAs meet CIE and quality contract performance.
- **Technical Support:** Support NPAs in eliminating 14(c) certificate use and advancing CIE.
- **NPA Recommendation process:** Introduce more competition.



Federal Customers

Outcome Goal 2:

Support the mission of the Federal customer by providing best value through contract performance.



Provide Best Value Through Contract Performance by NPAs

- In NPA contract allocations, consider **past performance, technical capabilities, and pricing structure.**
- “**Best value**” does **not** necessarily mean **lowest price.**
- Improve coordination between the Federal customer and AbilityOne to obtain **up-to-date metrics for contract performance.**
- Determine the type of **resources** the NPAs need to support their workforce and provide competitively priced products and services.



Strategic Objective III – More Jobs

Increase Employment Overall for People who are Blind or Have Other Significant Disabilities

Outcome Goal 1:

Partner with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) in the White House to facilitate a wide range of employment-enhancing activities through the AbilityOne Representatives (ABORs).



More Jobs in AbilityOne Contracts

The **Office of Federal Procurement Policy in OMB** issued a memo in October 2020 that resulted in **AbilityOne Representatives (ABORs)** being named in 19 large agencies with the goal of **doubling the spend** on AbilityOne contracts **from \$4 billion to \$8 billion**.

- In monthly meetings with the ABORs, **educate them about the Commission's strategic objective to expand CIE.**
- Train and support ABORs to enable them to **promote satisfactory customer experience** in terms of contract performance, price, and/or relationships.



More Jobs Outside AbilityOne

Outcome Goal 2:

Serve as part of the Federal community focused on ensuring employment opportunities for individuals who are blind or have other significant disabilities.



Create Demand for AbilityOne Employees

Collaborate with other Federal agencies to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

- Work with **OPM** and **EEOC** to connect AbilityOne employees with **federal agencies (Section 501 obligation)**.
- Work with Dept of Labor, **OFCCP**, to connect AbilityOne employees with **federal contractors (Section 503 obligation)**.
- Work with **Small Business Administration** to create support for disability-owned businesses.



Discussion

- Please feel free to put questions and comments into the Chat Box throughout the discussion period.
- Registered speakers will be introduced by the moderator and will have 3 minutes to make comments.
- Speakers should unmute themselves. Please turn on your camera while making remarks, if you are comfortable doing so.
- Time permitting, we will address questions and comments in the Chat Box and open the floor to others.