



# U.S. AbilityOne Commission Quarterly Public Meeting

October 12, 2023





# Administrative Remarks

- This official meeting of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission is open to the general public and is being recorded
- ASL interpreters are pinned to the top of the Zoom screen; live captioning is enabled. To see captions on your screen, use the CC icon at the bottom of the Zoom window
- The Zoom setting for public attendees today is listen-only
- The Chat Box is enabled for comments or questions
- Screen reading software users can silence Zoom alerts (including chats), if desired, by muting your computer audio and joining the meeting by phone
- Meeting materials can be found on [www.abilityone.gov](http://www.abilityone.gov)





# Introductions and Opening Remarks



# Agenda

- Chairperson's Opening Remarks
- Meritorious Service Award to George Govan, CFO
- National Disability Employment Awareness Month
- Regulations and Policy Subcommittee Update
- End of Subminimum Wages in AbilityOne
- Executive Director Report
- Inspector General Presentation
- NIB NSITE Overview
- SourceAmerica Initiatives in Support of the Strategic Plan





# Agenda

- BREAK
- Public Engagement Topic:
  - “Commission Guidance to CNAs Regarding Assignments to NPAs for New Contract Work”
    - Background and Context
    - Speakers
    - Public Discussion





# Award Presentation



# National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

**Jennifer Sheehy**

**Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor  
Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)**

#NDEAM | #RehabAct50  
dol.gov/odep

# ADVANCING ACCESS & EQUITY

National Disability Employment  
Awareness Month

Celebrating 50 years of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973



OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

RehabilitationAct  
**50**







# Regulations and Policy Subcommittee Update



# Regs and Policy Update

- Complete final rule: “Supporting Competition in the AbilityOne Program”
- Continue updating Compliance policies (Draft Policies 51.401, 51.402, 51.404, 51.406, 51.407)
- Initiate notice and comment process for updated data collection forms
- Update Policy 51.301 re: Guidance to CNAs for assigning new contract work to NPAs
- Update Policy 51.301 re: Emphasis on contract performance and meeting Program requirements





# Regulatory and Policy Outcomes

- **Regulation:** Eliminate the use of Sec. 14(c) certificates to pay subminimum wages on AbilityOne contracts:
  - **Prohibited** by Commission regulation as of October 2022
  - **Implemented** with no remaining exceptions as of October 2023
- **Policy:** Require AbilityOne service contractors to purchase and use AbilityOne products
  - **Required** by Commission Policy 51.542 as of October 2022, applicable to new services and base-year contract renewals
  - **First-year implementation:** Nearly \$4 million in additional products sales and the equivalent of 12 full-time jobs for people who are blind or visually impaired





# Executive Director Report



# FY 2023 Strategic Resourcing

- Onboarded five new hires (15% increase in staffing)
  - Regs & Policy Counsel: Cassandra Assefa
  - Compliance Counsel: Chris Stewart
  - Program Manager, PLIMS: Vladimir Volodar
  - Procurement Analyst: Christa Pritchett
  - ABOR Program Manager: Rosa Criggedorn
- Awarded PLIMS Modernization contract: Intellect Solutions, LLC
- Awarded Career Planning Support Services contract: Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
- Deployed unlimited USDA AgLearn training and workforce development for all Commission personnel





# FY 2023 Key Activities

- Processed over 2,000 transactions to maintain the Procurement List (additions, deletions, price changes, and other updates)
- Engaged regularly with customers and agency partners
  - New agreement with U.S. Army PEO Solider and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) - Troop Support to coordinate AbilityOne items transitioning from initial fielding to sustainment
- Conducted ongoing communication and outreach: stakeholder meetings, conferences, site visits, interviews, and digital media
- Joined **ABLE National Resource Center** and **ABLE today** to promote education about ABLE Accounts; continuing in FY 2024
  - “Ready and ABLE to Work and Save: A Two-Part Online Event” with ABLE NRC and ACCSES – begins October 17, 2023, at 2 p.m. ET [Ready and ABLE to Work and Save Webinar Registration](#)





# Commission Strategic Plan Implementation FY 2023

**Amy B. Jensen**  
**Acting Deputy Executive Director**



# Strategic Plan Background

FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan issued June 30, 2022

- Established 4 Strategic Objectives, 28 Performance Metrics
- Solicited public comments during development phase
- Successful implementation of Strategic Plan components has been incorporated into Commission staff performance plans







# Strategic Objectives

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 across the AbilityOne Program
4. 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 #1 Progress

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

- Results are dependent on Congressional action
- Developed, received clearance, and delivered three legislative proposals to Congress
- Grew relationships with Congressional committees of jurisdiction and relevant staff





## Strategic Objective #2 Progress

Identify, publicize, and support the increase of good jobs and optimal jobs in the AbilityOne Program:

- Eliminated use of 14(c) certificates on AbilityOne contracts
- Drafted proposed Compliance Policy 51.405 regarding workforce development responsibilities to AbilityOne employees with disabilities (supports “good” jobs)
- Explored new models for integration via subcontracting, including with commercial contractors





# Strategic Objective #3 Progress

Ensure effective governance across the AbilityOne Program

- Implemented an Enterprise Risk Management Program
- Drafted proposed Compliance Policies 51.400 and 51.403 to update compliance procedures, streamline eligibility standards
- Published NPRM: “Supporting Competition in the AbilityOne Program” and held engagement opportunities
- Awarded contract to modernize PLIMS (agency’s IT system)
- Implemented a DEIA strategy; briefed Commission on DEIA activities





## Strategic Objective #4 Progress

Partner with Federal agencies and AbilityOne stakeholders to increase and improve employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities:

- Enhanced AbilityOne Representatives (ABOR) initiative and hired a full-time ABOR Program Manager
- Continued partnerships with OFPP, OPM, EEOC, ODEP, & OFCCP re: joint efforts to promote hiring people with disabilities (Sections 501 and 503 of the Rehabilitation Act)





# U.S. AbilityOne Commission

## Office of Inspector General



Stefania Porter, Inspector General  
Steven Burke, Deputy Inspector General  
October 12, 2023

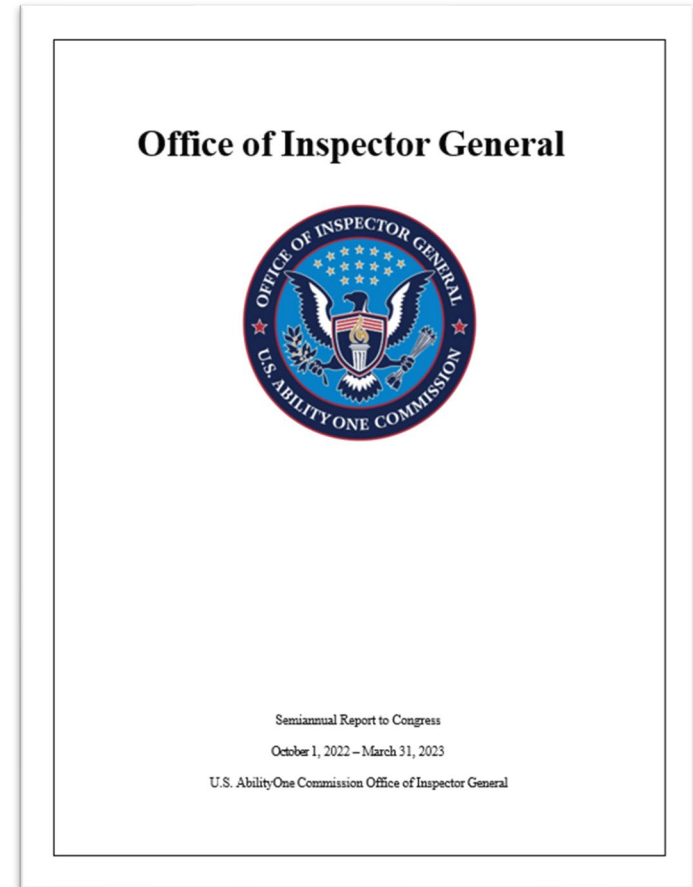




# OIG Semiannual Report to Congress

- SAR Spring 2023  
Theme: **Transformation**
- SAR Fall 2023  
Theme: **Next Stage**

Top Management and Performance  
Challenges report





# OIG activities

Association of Inspectors General, NY:  
Innovation & the Future of Oversight - Panel

AbilityOne IG Stefania Pozzi Porter

Leveraging Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA)  
to Advance Organizational Goals







# OIG Evaluations Unit

OIG is expanding its oversight toolkit

- Investigations
- Audit

Adding the Evaluations Unit

- Bluebook standards





# Audits – upcoming

- Financial Statement Audit FY23
- FISMA
- Publication in the PAR  
Performance and Accountability Report



# OIG Oversight Mission

- OIG's Biennial Oversight Plan
- Maps out OIG oversight over the next 2 years (2024-2025)
- OIG utilizes a comprehensive risk-based methodology to inform planning and future engagements





# OIG Contact Information

## **AbilityOne Office of Inspector General**

<https://abilityone.oversight.gov>

To SUBMIT a COMPLAINT to OIG:

Please submit complaints using our Portal

<https://abilityone.oversight.gov>

You may also submit a complaint via our:

Hotline Toll-Free Number: 1-844-496-1536

Email: [hotline@oig.abilityone.gov](mailto:hotline@oig.abilityone.gov)



# AbilityOne Quarterly Public Meeting

## NSITE Overview

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10.12.2023



# NSITE's Focus

- NSITE is a national resource for BVI professionals to start their career entry, receive in-demand career training, and move into career advancement opportunities.
- NSITE connects talented BVI professionals to careers in AbilityOne and in careers at some of the country's top employers.
- NSITE provides a continuum of employment services that connect employers with talented, dedicated people who are blind, low vision, and/or veterans.
- NSITE accompanies jobseekers and organizations every step of the way as they move through training and professional development programs as well as hiring processes to ensure that finding the right employee-employer match is as smooth and seamless as possible.

# NSITE Professional Training & Career Placement FY23 Outcomes

**93** individuals hired in FY2023

**111%** increase from FY2022

(55% of placements are within the AbilityOne program, 45% are in the private industry)

Roughly 5% of individuals employed were previously AbilityOne contract employees

**1,009** individuals enrolled in training programs in FY2023

**219%** increase from FY2022

Roughly 7.5% of individuals trained were AbilityOne contract employees

# NSITE Professional Placements

## Types of Placements

- HR Generalists
- HR Staffing Coordinators
- Sourcing Specialists
- Financial Analysts
- Senior Sales Associates
- Certified Cisco Networking Associates
- IT Clerks
- Contract Specialists
- Customer Service Specialists



# Recent Career Successes

Anthony S: CCNA graduate

Technical Consulting Engineer – Cisco

Anthony spent 16 years as a logistics clerk before enrolling in NSITE's CCNA program

Brandi H: Sourcing graduate

Human Resources Staffing Coordinator (Promoted) – BISM

Brandi spent 8 years as an administrative assistant before enrolling in NSITE's Sourcing Certificate program

All individuals who come through NSITE programs and services become alumni who stay connected to future career training and mobility opportunities

# NSITE Training/Professional Development Services

## Courses offered in FY23

- Cisco CCNA Certification
- IT Essentials
- Cyber Security
- Grow with Google (4 courses)
- Sourcing Specialist Certification
- ProMOTE (offered in 4 locations through the year)
- Pre-ProMOTE (currently offered in 2 locations)
- Contract Management Support
- Customer Centered Communications
- Business Basics (4 asynchronous courses)
- Business Essentials
- APH Job Seekers Toolkit (5 asynchronous courses)
- NSITE Entrepreneurship Program

## New Courses in Development for FY24

- Python
- Cyber Ops
- LinkedIn In-depth
- Executive Leadership Certification
- Structural Leadership Through Change Management
- Microsoft
  - 365 Fundamentals
  - Azure Administrator
  - Microsoft Power Apps
  - Microsoft Dynamics 365
- Salesforce

# Strategic Partnerships – Professional Training

- Blanchard SLII® - Leadership Development
- Wharton Business School (UPenn) – Entrepreneurship Expertise
- AccessAbility Officer – Utilization of LinkedIn for professional development
- Dean Thompson (Blind TV producer) – Career Mentorship

# Strategic Partnerships - Talent Pipeline

- Vocational Rehabilitation Offices in 43 states
- Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program
- Blind Institute of Technology (BIT)
- American Printing House (APH)
- Inclusively
- Workforce Opportunity Services (WOS)
- Vision Serve Alliance

# Supporting AbilityOne Providers through Training/Professional Development

- Developed a bench of 20 new enrollees in the Contract Management Support program (CMS)
- Enrolled 20 individuals from NPAs across the U.S. into the newly updated Effective Supervision course to increase employee leadership abilities.

At the midway point of the program, a participant and an employee of an NPA, Johnathan S. shared, *“I am learning so much, it has already had a direct impact on how I complete my job, and I am bringing better practices back to my workplace already.”*

John S. obtained his A+ certification in May.

# Contact Information

**NSITE** is here to make the working world a more inclusive place for people who are blind or low vision and to help organizations build a more diverse, innovative, and productive workforce.

Want to learn more about the work we're doing?

- Visit our website at [nsite.org](https://nsite.org)
- Follow us on Facebook [NSITE](https://www.facebook.com/NSITE)
- Follow us on Twitter [@get\\_nsite](https://twitter.com/get_nsite)
- Follow us on LinkedIn [@NSITE](https://www.linkedin.com/company/NSITE)
- For more information, mail [info@nsite.org](mailto:info@nsite.org)

Jonathan Lucus  
Executive Director  
[jlucus@nsite.org](mailto:jlucus@nsite.org)

# SourceAmerica Initiatives Supporting the U.S. AbilityOne Commission's Strategic Plan



**Richard Belden, President and CEO**

**October 12, 2023**

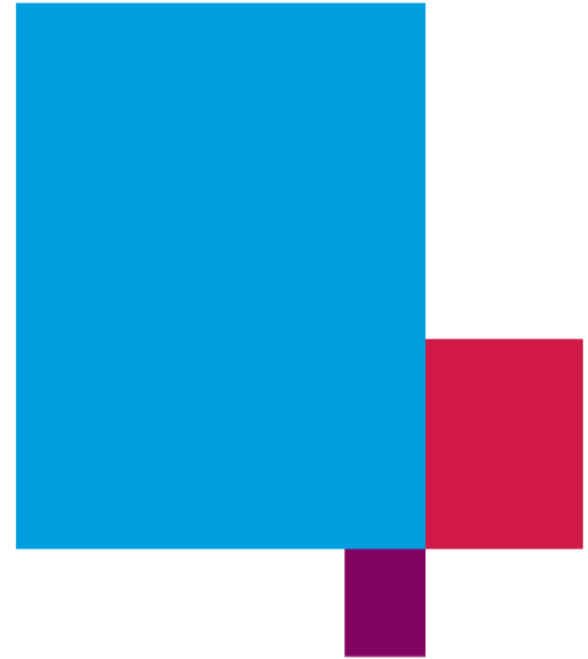
# Agenda

- **14(c) Transition**
- **Promoting New Ways to Create Good/Optimal Jobs**
- **Expanding Partnerships – Objective Four**
- **Future Communications**





# 14(c) Transition



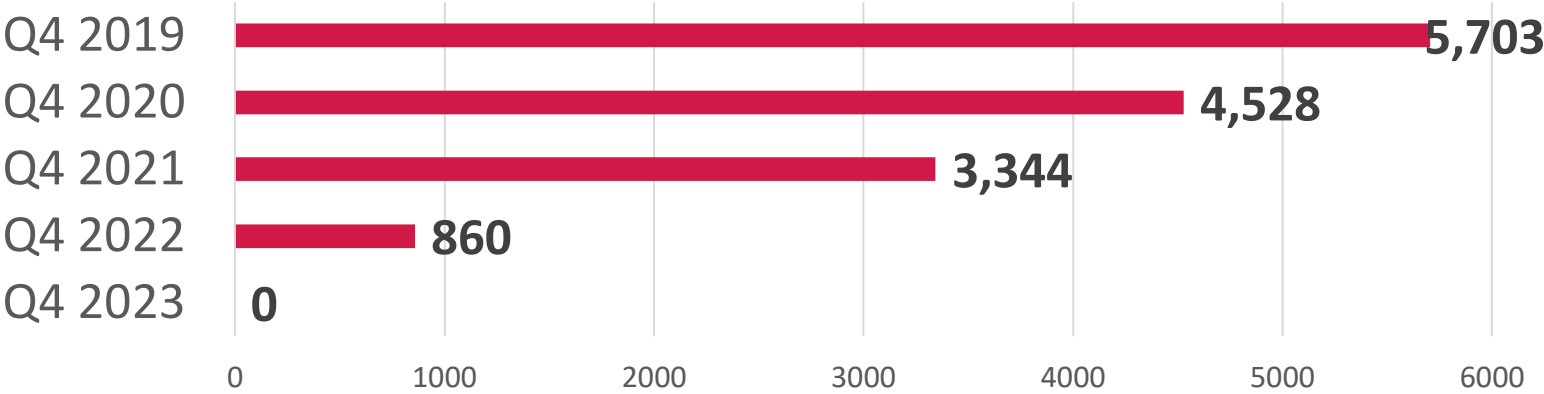
# 14(c) Transition Program

## Overview

- **Provided technical, financial, and a variety of other assistance**
- **Disbursed over \$3M in grant funding**
- **Dedicated staff to directly support the network**
- **Incorporated outside resources**

# 14(c) Transition Program by the Numbers

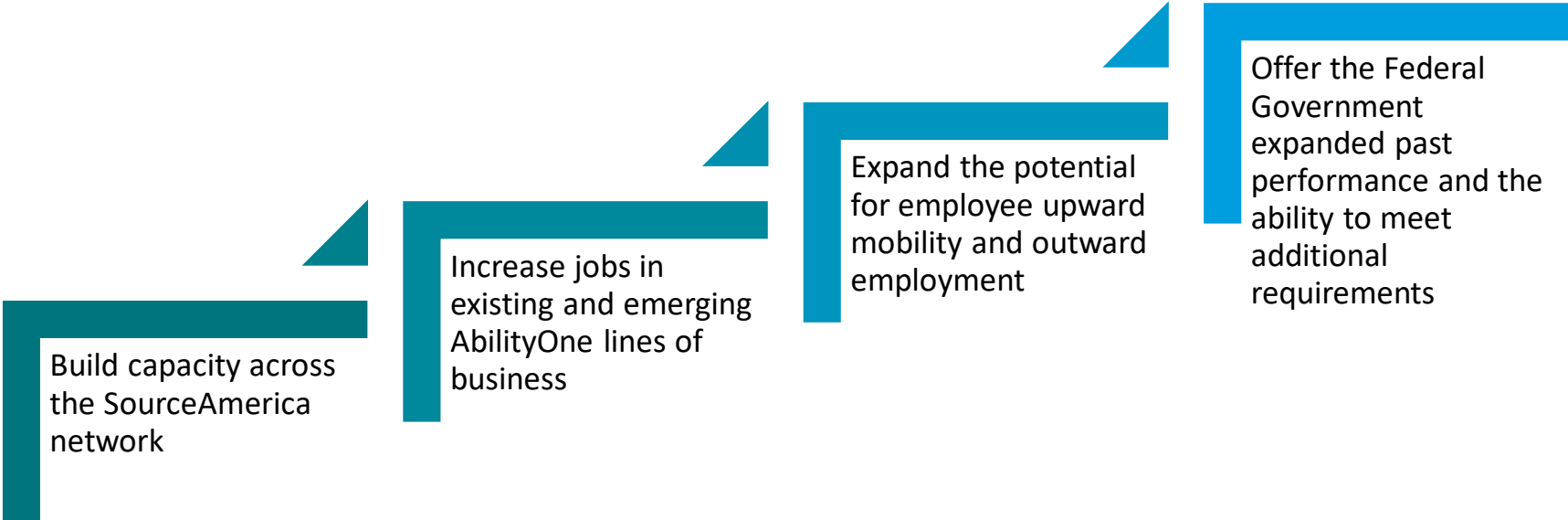
Estimated number of employees paid using 14(c) certificates on AbilityOne contracts



# Promoting New Ways to Create Good and Optimal Jobs



# SourceAmerica Mentor/Protégé Program



Build capacity across the SourceAmerica network

Increase jobs in existing and emerging AbilityOne lines of business

Expand the potential for employee upward mobility and outward employment

Offer the Federal Government expanded past performance and the ability to meet additional requirements

# Subcontracting with AbilityOne

## Why AbilityOne subcontracting?

- Supports employment growth
- Counts toward AbilityOne spend on the ABOR scorecard
- Counts toward the Prime contractor's Small Business subcontracting goals on DoD contracts (DFARS 219.703)

## SourceAmerica's role:

- Review the requirement to determine suitability for AbilityOne
- Assist in determining language that fits the specific requirement, whether a carve-out or percentage goal
- Provide a list of qualified AbilityOne contractors to the Prime contractor



# Expanding Partnerships – Objective 4



# Examples and Opportunities

## **Active SourceAmerica Programs**

- Social Security Ticket to Work administrative employment network services
- Refugees with Disabilities Vocational Training and Employment

## **AbilityOne Collaboration Opportunities**

- U.S. Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Housing Choice Voucher Program



# Building Capacity for Career Support Planning

- Developed SourceAmerica staff to support the Commission's policy direction
- Created training and certification opportunities for direct support professionals
- Provided a maturity model framework for establishing and expanding "good jobs"
- Conducted extensive research on Career Support Plans



# Future Communications

- **Our perspective:**
  - **Support Program modernization while acknowledging the merits of the existing Program**
  - **Conversation should be “Yes, and” rather than “Instead of”**



# Break



# Public Engagement Topic:

Commission Guidance to CNAs  
Regarding Assignments to NPAs  
for New Contract Work



# Background and Context



## Commission Policy 51.301: Selection of Nonprofit Agencies For Project Assignment and Order Allocation

- Existing policy provides guidance for:
  - Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs) to review nonprofit agency capabilities and assign potential new contracts
  - CNAs to recommend to the Commission which nonprofit agency(ies) should receive a new contract
- Several policy improvements recommended by GAO (2013), NCD Report (2020), OIG Performance Audit (2021)
- Updated policy must:
  - Ensure fair and equitable distribution to NPAs
  - Meet Government customers' needs and timeframes
  - Incentivize “good” and “optimal” jobs





# Speakers

- Jeff Dolven, President and CEO, Skookum
- John McKeever, Branch Chief, Office of Acquisition Mgmt Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Dennis Edwards, Executive Director, Rising Star Resource Development Corporation
- Dan Kelly, President and CEO, IFB Solutions
- Charlotte Hammond, President & CEO, Challenge Unlimited
- Vincent Sanchez, AQM Deputy Director, Office of the Procurement Executive, Department of State
- Dwight Davis, President, Alliance for Expanding America's Workforce
- Michael Hatzenbeler, President & CEO, PROVAIL





# Audience Comments and General Discussion





# Chairperson Closing Remarks