

AbilityOne and Federal Customers Perceptions and Facts



AbilityOne Overview

The AbilityOne® Program is among the largest sources of employment in the United States for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities. More than 42,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including 3,200 veterans, work in an array of occupations at approximately 500 nonprofit agencies nationwide. More than 25,000 AbilityOne employees work on Department of Defense contracts.

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission®, an independent Federal agency, oversees the AbilityOne Program, and has designated National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica® as central nonprofit agencies (CNAs) to help administer the Program.

MISSION: Provide employment opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities in the manufacture and delivery of products and services to the Federal Government.

VISION: Enable all people who are blind or have other significant disabilities to achieve their maximum employment potential.

Perception:

The Federal customer has to accept the price proposal offered by a nonprofit agency.

Facts:

Federal customers, nonprofit agencies, and CNAs negotiate a fair market price in good faith. The Commission reviews and ultimately sets the fair market price. In the rare event of an impasse, the Commission conducts a review and makes a final determination.

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 15, "Contracting by Negotiation," describes the procedures for competitive and noncompetitive open market acquisitions exceeding the Simplified Acquisition Threshold. **FAR Section 15.403-1** describes the exemption from certified cost and pricing data.

Perception:

The quality of AbilityOne products and services is inferior to that of commercial vendors.

Facts:

A rigorous set of tools – matching those of any competitors – ensures quality performance and provides for corrective measures for performance issues.

92% of Federal customers rated the quality of AbilityOne products and services equal to or higher than those of other contractors.¹

Perception:

People who are blind or have significant disabilities can't be productive in a workplace without expensive equipment.

Facts:

People who are blind or have significant disabilities have a variety of skills and abilities that enable them to make meaningful contributions in the workplace.

56% of workplace accommodations cost nothing to implement, while the rest have a typical cost of only \$500, according to a survey funded by the Department of Labor.²

Perception:

Federal customers have limited options to change vendors in the event of AbilityOne performance issues.

Facts:

Formal mechanisms exist to remove a nonprofit agency, if necessary. NIB and SourceAmerica work with Federal customers to ensure quality and performance, and are prepared to intervene before concerns become problematic.

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission encourages nonprofit agencies to communicate frequently and in writing with Federal customers to prevent misunderstandings and allow for additional direction if the contractor is doing something that the Contracting Officer disagrees with.

87% of Federal customers surveyed were satisfied with the technical capability of their AbilityOne contractor.³

Perception:

NIB and SourceAmerica represent the nonprofits and therefore are not neutral parties.

Facts:

NIB and SourceAmerica are designated by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission to facilitate the distribution of Federal Government orders for products and services among qualified nonprofit agencies within the AbilityOne Program, as directed by the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act.

NIB and SourceAmerica assist nonprofit agencies and Federal customers in adhering to guidelines, regulations, and laws in the FAR, Code of Federal Regulations, and AbilityOne Program, as well as contractual commitments between parties.

87% of Federal customers indicated that their SourceAmerica representative negotiated with integrity and fairness.⁴



Joseph Hamm
General Maintenance Employee
Joint Base Lewis-McChord
PCSI

"I've seen with my own eyes how people with disabilities have gotten jobs through BAC. People with disabilities can do anything."*

Desiree Ralston
Lead Night Shelf Stocker
Brevard Achievement Center

*Speaking about her work at Patrick Space Force Base Commissary

Key Websites

U.S. AbilityOne Commission
www.AbilityOne.gov

National Industries for the Blind
www.NIB.org

SourceAmerica
www.SourceAmerica.org

¹ 2020 SourceAmerica Federal Customer Satisfaction Survey

² "Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact" survey, Job Accommodation Network, www.askjan.org, October 21, 2020

³ 2020 SourceAmerica Federal Customer Satisfaction Survey

⁴ 2020 SourceAmerica Federal Customer Satisfaction Survey