



U.S. ABILITYONE COMMISSION

March 23, 2020

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Chairperson of the Board
National Industries for the Blind
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Alexandria, VA 22305

Mr. Norman Lorentz
Chairman of the Board
SourceAmerica
8401 Old Courthouse Road
Vienna, VA 22182

Dear Dr. Healy and Mr. Lorentz,

As America confronts the unprecedented challenge of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), I want to assure you that one thing will not change – the U.S. AbilityOne Commission's commitment both to the AbilityOne mission, and to the health and safety of AbilityOne employees. For those reasons, we ask that you urge all employees to stay vigilant and informed to maintain their well-being and that of their loved ones and colleagues.

The most important asset of the AbilityOne Program is our people. They are a national resource that the country, at this time of great need, is calling upon to help respond to this crisis. AbilityOne's nearly 45,000 employees are answering this call by providing products and services used at locations including military bases, government buildings, hospitals and other medical facilities. They are helping to strengthen our national security and protect the American people. It is important that they receive the appropriate guidance and equipment to safeguard them in the course of their work. Please ensure our people, if displaced by COVID-19, have a safety net as much as possible. I expect everyone to be vigilant with this request.

During this national emergency, the Commission remains operational. It continues to maintain its established communication channels with the Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs), Nonprofit Agencies (NPAs) and Federal customers. Our focus is on continuing mission-critical work while closely adhering to Federal government policy and directives. We are prioritizing operations to execute the mission and avoid interruption of critical functions.

Mission-critical Commission priorities include AbilityOne employees, product and service delivery, Procurement List actions, and working within the AbilityOne network to assist with contract questions and actions. It is important to the Commission that all NPAs notify the CNAs of any concerns or changes regarding AbilityOne employees or sustainability of contract performance. The Commission expects the CNAs to provide it with regular situation reports reflecting this information.



COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED
An Independent Federal Agency



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We strongly encourage NPAs to talk to their Contracting Officers and keep them aware of any changes in performance or delivery, especially those resulting from COVID-19. It is customary and reasonable to communicate in writing, and to document contract and performance matters in a memo for record -- including sending that memo for record in a weekly or, if warranted, daily update to the Contracting Officer.

Communicating frequently and in writing will provide the information needed by the Contracting Officer to correct a situation sooner rather than later. Regular written communication also prevents misunderstandings and allows for additional direction if the contractor is doing something the Contracting Officer disagrees with. We strongly encourage you to review your contracts and contract provisions, and discuss and agree to a way forward as appropriate.

In addition, we are aware that circumstances related to COVID-19 will affect many NPAs' direct labor hour ratios – e.g., resulting from surges in demand for certain Procurement List items and/or changes in NPA daily workforce composition.

The Commission's guidance to NPAs is to focus first on taking care of your employees, and second on fulfilling your government contract requirements. The Commission will issue interim guidance regarding direct labor hour ratio flexibilities.

Within the Commission, we are managing resources in a way that aligns with the national goal of slowing the transmission of COVID-19. In addition, we are monitoring changes in the acquisition environment that may result from the President's invocation of the Stafford Act and the Defense Production Act. To keep our stakeholders informed, the Commission response to this crisis has included:

- Initiating a [Telework Pilot Test](#) – Commission staff are teleworking full-time, consistent with guidance from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Federal government agencies to maximize telework while maintaining mission-critical workforce needs. We will assess telework status every two weeks.

Our Procurement List Information Management System (PLIMS) allows us to handle Procurement List transactions remotely. Daily business is continuing with office phones forwarded to mobile phones.

- Cancelling the Commission's April 7, 2020, quarterly public meeting.
- Suspending all official travel.



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- Reporting Commission and AbilityOne Program activities to the President's Coronavirus Task Force, and other White House offices as appropriate.
- Informing Congress.
- Participating in internal government-wide conference calls to maintain situational awareness of Federal operations and required actions.
- Communicating with stakeholders including Commission Members and Federal agency staffs; CEOs of National Industries for the Blind (NIB), SourceAmerica, and American Foundation for the Blind (AFB); and the heads of the National Association for the Employment of People Who Are Blind (NAEPB) and National Council of SourceAmerica Employers (NCSE).

We will continue to closely monitor the situation, evaluate our practices, and make changes as circumstances warrant.

The Commission looks forward to working with the CNAs and NPAs, and will provide updated information as it becomes available. We are confident that together we will successfully confront the challenges of COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Thomas D. Robinson
Chairperson and Presidential Appointee

cc: Robert Kelly, Vice-Chairperson, U.S. AbilityOne Commission
James Kesteloot, Immediate Past Chairperson, U.S. AbilityOne Commission
E. Ballard, Executive Director, U.S. AbilityOne Commission
Debbie Dennis, Chairperson of the Board, American Foundation for the Blind
Kevin Lynch, President and CEO, National Industries for the Blind
Vince Loose, President and CEO, SourceAmerica
Kirk Adams, President and CEO, American Foundation for the Blind

