



## **U.S. AbilityOne Commission Announces American Foundation for the Blind's Successful Completion of Research and Studies Phase, and Decision to End Cooperative Agreement**

ARLINGTON, Va., Dec. 2, 2020 – The U.S. AbilityOne Commission announced today that the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has successfully completed the initial phase of its Cooperative Agreement with the Commission – a research and studies phase designed to identify innovative business models and practices that increase employment opportunities for blind individuals in knowledge-based careers.

Following this period of productive partnership and completion of its research and deliverables, AFB has decided not to pursue the second phase of the Cooperative Agreement with the Commission, thereby ending AFB's status as an AbilityOne Central Nonprofit Agency (CNA) effective December 31, 2020.

"AFB's successful performance in the research and studies phase has been particularly valuable in expanding the potential for more knowledge-based jobs in the AbilityOne Program," said Jeffrey A. Koses, the Commission's Interim Chairperson. "AFB's contributions have significantly advanced the Commission's understanding of technology-related and other emerging career fields that present opportunities for people who are blind. The Commission will use the knowledge gained to continue to explore additional opportunities to create more jobs in the AbilityOne Program."

AFB was designated as an AbilityOne Central Nonprofit Agency on July 26, 2018, to provide the Program with an emphasis on competitive, knowledge-based opportunities at a time when changes in employment trends point to a new direction for AbilityOne jobs. AFB's research and studies provided new insights and more detailed information about developing career opportunities in sectors such as information technology, financial management, and human resources, presenting growth opportunities for the AbilityOne Program. This outcome supports the Commission's longstanding goal of creating more jobs, innovation and competition within the AbilityOne Program.

Recognizing that the current business environment evolves at a rapid pace, the three-phase Cooperative Agreement between the Commission and AFB was deliberately designed to provide both parties with the flexibility to end the agreement at any time.



AFB informed the Commission that its decision to exit the Cooperative Agreement at the end of Phase 1 (the initial “Research and Studies” phase) is based on a reassessment of AFB’s strategic goals in the current business environment.

The Commission designates Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs) to facilitate the distribution of Federal government orders for products and services to nonprofit agencies employing people who are blind or have significant disabilities. The Commission currently executes the AbilityOne Program based on cooperative agreements with two longstanding CNAs: National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica. NIB and SourceAmerica continue to represent nearly 500 nonprofit agencies in the AbilityOne Program and facilitate the creation and maintenance of almost 45,000 jobs for the AbilityOne Program workforce. AFB’s research and recommendations may be leveraged by NIB and SourceAmerica to facilitate employment growth in the Program.

### **About the AbilityOne Program**

The AbilityOne Program is one of the largest sources of employment in the United States for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. Approximately 45,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including approximately 3,000 veterans, are employed at approximately 500 nonprofit agencies nationwide, across 15 time zones, from Maine to Guam.

In FY 2019, AbilityOne provided nearly \$4 billion in products and services to the Federal government. The Program operates at more than 1,000 locations, representing 40 government agencies. It operates more than 150 Base Supply Centers at military installations and government facilities.

Over the past 10 years, AbilityOne employees:

- Earned nearly \$6 billion in wages.
- Received more than 3,800 promotions.
- On contract-closeout projects, identified \$2.7 billion in unused contract funds that can be returned to the U.S. Treasury.

### **About the U.S. AbilityOne Commission**

The AbilityOne Program is administered by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, the operating name of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. The Commission is an independent Federal agency comprised of 15 Presidential appointees: 11 represent Federal agencies, and four serve as private citizens who are knowledgeable about employment barriers facing people who are blind or have significant disabilities. The Commission designates Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs) to facilitate the employment of people who are blind or have significant disabilities. CNA cooperative agreements with the Commission include performance work statements, quality assurance surveillance plan deliverables, and agreement clauses. The Commission currently executes the AbilityOne Program based on cooperative agreements with two CNAs: National Industries for the Blind and SourceAmerica. CNAs are private sector organizations.

