Federal Exchange on Employment and Disability (FEED) Meeting

April 12, 2021
Today’s Agenda

Welcoming Remarks
- Lou Orsline, Director, Employer & Workplace Policy, ODEP, Department of Labor
- Dexter Brooks, Associate Director, Federal Sector Programs, Office of Federal Operations, EEOC

Presentation: Update on EEOC Section 501 Reviews of Agency Affirmative Action Plans
- Lori Grant, Assistant Director, Federal Sector Programs, Office of Federal Operations, EEOC
- Marqui Willoughby, Attorney Advisor, Federal Sector Programs, Office of Federal Operations, EEOC

Question and Answer Session

Agency Spotlight: State Department Technology Center
- Jameela Akbari, Director, Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, Bureau of Global Talent Management, U.S. Department of State
- David Conner, Acting Chief of Accessibility Division, Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, Bureau of Global Talent Management, U.S. Department of State
- Rich McCarthy, Assistive Technology Specialist, Accessibility Division, Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, Bureau of Global Talent Management, U.S. Department of State
- Natalie Veeney, Governmentwide Diversity Program Director (Acting), Outreach, Diversity and Inclusion, U.S. Office of Personnel Management (Moderator)

Question and Answer Session

Closing Remarks
- Wendy Strobel Gower, Co-Project Director, EARN, Cornell University
PROMISING PRACTICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Lori Grant and Marqui Willoughby

EEOC-Office of Federal Operations, Federal Sector Programs
AFFIRMATIVE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

• Federal agencies are required to establish effective affirmative programs of equal employment opportunity under Section 717 of Title VII and effective affirmative action programs under Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act.

• Affirmative Employment under Title VII does not involve the use of numerical goals or preferences based on protected status.
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLANS

• Section 501 of Rehabilitation Act requires federal agencies to engage in affirmative action for people with disabilities, but it does not explain what "affirmative action" means.
• In January 2017, EEOC issued a final rule in the federal workforce regarding federal agency’s affirmative action obligations. The final rule is found at 29 CFR § 1614.203.
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLANS

- Pursuant to the Rehab Act, each agency must implement an Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) that provides sufficient assurances, procedures, and commitments to ensure adequate hiring, placement, and advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities at all levels of federal employment.

- Pursuant to 29 CFR 1614.203, each agency’s AAP must commit to numerical goals for PWDs (12%) and PWTDs (2%).
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLANS

- We have selected a variety of promising practices using agencies’ Affirmative Action Plans and information we learned during technical assistance visits.

- We will address the following topics:
  - Recruitment
  - Hiring
  - Retention
  - Advancement
PROMISING PRACTICES: RECRUITMENT

• **USDA-Food and Inspection Service:**
  FSIS has a Veterans and Disability Recruitment Program Coordinator who assists candidates with disabilities and disabled veterans in the recruitment process by providing resume guidance and guidance regarding veterans’ preference, non-competitive hiring, and the application process. FSIS also created a resume repository of individuals with disabilities.

• **USDA-Rural Development:**
  In FY 2019, Rural Development attended 27 events designed to introduce USDA to potential applicants with disabilities, including Scott Air Force Base Transition Assistance Programs, CSUN Assistive Technology Conference, and National Federation for the Blind Conference. Through these events, the agency raised awareness about potential job opportunities for qualified candidates. Over 1,300 participants attended.
PROMISING PRACTICES: RECRUITMENT

• Treasury-Bureau of Engraving & Printing:
As part of BEP’s efforts to recruit PWD, the agency has developed a tool to assist veterans, including those with disabilities, gain federal employment. The agency partnered with Treasury and Monster Government Services to create a customized job search tool that provides veterans services, including a federal résumé tutorial, a military skills translator, and a résumé to job match capability.

• Treasury-Internal Revenue Service:
IRS created a Standard Operating Procedure containing established contacts with State Vocational organizations as well as other information to assist in the recruitment of PWD/PWTD.
PROMISING PRACTICES: RECRUITMENT

• **Central Intelligence Agency:**
  CIA hired a recruiter dedicated to recruiting PWD.

• **Department of Energy:**
  DOE hosted a disability mentoring day for students with disabilities from 10 colleges to provide information on internships and career opportunities.

• **National Credit Union Administration:**
  NCUA placed a full-page ad in DIVERSEability magazine.
PROMISING PRACTICES: RECRUITMENT

- **DHS-Federal Law Enforcement Training Center:**
  FLETC maintains an open and continuous voluntary applicant file for specific series and grades for candidates who are appointable using Schedule A and 30% or more disabled veteran hiring authorities. These files are reviewed for all position openings and forwarded to the hiring official prior to the announcements being released.

- **DOD-Defense Health Agency:**
  DHA’s Human Resources office, Learning and Development Team, and Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management program created a Diversity and Strategic Plan to recruit PWTD. The agency also participated in the Workforce Recruitment Program, Wounded Warriors Programs, and career fairs to recruit applicants with disabilities.
• **DOD-Defense Media Agency:**

In 2018, DMA hosted an “Open House for Individuals with Disabilities,” in which agency officials provided feedback to PWD regarding their resumes and informed them about current vacancies within the agency. During the event, attendees also received briefings about the Schedule A hiring authority and how to apply for positions on USAJobs.

• **DOD-Washington Headquarters Services:**

WHS offered resume-writing workshops, federal hiring authority sessions, one-on-one assistance, and preliminary interviews at targeted disabled veteran recruiting events, such as the Wounded Warrior Education and Hiring Expo.
• Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service:

The Office of Human Resources is working with the Digital Media Strategist to develop a social media outreach program to promote opportunities for individuals with disabilities on the agency's Facebook page and website.
PROMISING PRACTICES: HIRING

- Securities and Exchange Commission:
  1. The Office of Human Resources’ Staffing Specialists use a checklist when vacant positions are identified to ensure hiring managers understand all their options for filling positions, including using Schedule A and veterans’ hiring authorities for those applicants with a service-connected disability of 30% or more.
  2. SEC’s Learning and Development Team and Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management Program created a Diversity and Strategic Plan to recruit PWTD.
PROMISING PRACTICES: HIRING

• Department of Homeland Security:
DHS created a Disability Employment Fact Sheet, which provides hiring officials with information about the Disability Employment Program’s goal to increase employment of PWDs. In FY 2019, DHS updated the fact sheet to include its obligations under 29 CFR 1614.

• Central Intelligence Agency:
CIA created an Ability Talent Broker (ATB) position in FY 2019 to facilitate the processing of PWDs from application to onboarding. ATBs also ensure CIA applicants with disabilities are given reasonable accommodations during their hiring process.
PROMISING PRACTICES: HIRING

- **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:**
  1. The agency head referenced the PWD/PWTD hiring goals in an all-managers communication to leverage Schedule A and other non-competitive hiring authorities that promote disability hiring and advancement.
  2. CFPB requires supervisors and managers at all levels to take training within their first supervisory year, and every two to three years thereafter, on the use of hiring authorities, such as Schedule A.
  3. CFPB encourages hiring managers to use programs, such as the Workplace Recruitment Program, to identify, interview, and hire PWD and PWTD.
PROMISING PRACTICES: HIRING

- **Small Business Administration:**
  SBA created an internal database, which contains resumes for persons with disabilities and veterans who are 30% or more disabled. The resumes are shared with supervisors and managers upon request.

- **Nuclear Regulatory Commission:**
  During FY 2019, NRC provided training to 104 hiring managers on the use of hiring authorities for PWD and how to use and access resumes of PWD as part of mandatory annual training.
• **DOD Defense Technical Information Center:**

DTIC reported that its managers are now required to review the Schedule A eligible database for positions before any hiring action occurs. The agency has increased its hiring of PWD as a result.

• **DOD National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency:**

NGA’s Human Development Directorate (HD) hosted various symposiums and hiring events in FY 2017. In particular, the Persons with Disabilities Recruitment Showcase promoted awareness of the Geospatial Intelligence to attendees from seven universities. As a result, NGA made 26 on-the-spot offers of employment (direct hires) to persons with disabilities.
• **Agency for Global Media:**

AGM purchased a secure tracking system for the RA program, which allows the agency to quickly identify expired accommodations or those that may need updated medical documentation. The system records the requests, defines the process, tracks implementation, and generates statistical reports for future analysis.

• **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:**

CFPB created a captioning budget within the Technology and Innovation Division to ensure that agency-wide meetings and events have funding outside of the Reasonable Accommodation budget.
PROMISING PRACTICES: RETENTION

• **Department of Agriculture:**

USDA’s dynamic Reasonable Accommodation website features captioned video segment on basics of RA and indexed discussions of topics about the RA Process; Types of RAs; RA Roles and Responsibilities; the Interactive Process; Supervisors and Managers Do’s and Don’ts for RA; Medical Documentation; Timeframes; Confidentiality Requirements; Undue Hardship and Animals in the Workplace as an RA.

• **Department of Education:**

ED has two lift-equipment vans (Separate and apart from shuttle services) in its motor pool for use by headquarters employees. ED is seeking to secure accessible vans in regional office motor pools and will provide an accessible vehicle through rental or contract if necessary.
PROMISING PRACTICES: RETENTION

• Department of Commerce:
  1. In FY 2019, DOC conducted a department-wide retention survey to investigate why certain demographic groups, including PWD, were separating at disproportionately higher rates. Over 10,841 employees were surveyed with a 41.6% response rate.
  2. In FY 2018, DOC established a system to monitor the status of Schedule A employees to maximize conversion opportunities. All eligible Schedule A employees with disabilities were converted after two years.
• Federal Trade Commission:
  1. FTC’s Disability Program Manager (DPM) facilitated an Introduction to Reasonable Accommodation training session to provide new managers in the Bureau of Consumer Protection with necessary information to timely respond to reasonable accommodation requests.
  2. In FY 2018, FTC processed 65 out of 66 reasonable accommodation requests in 10 business days or less. The agency stated the average processing time was two business days.
• HHS-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

The Disability Program Manager, HRO, and disABILITY LINK conducted a Disability Awareness Seminar. Topics discussed were Disability Etiquette & Language, Hiring and Retention of People with Disabilities, and Schedule A hiring.
PROMISING PRACTICES: ADVANCEMENT

- **Department of Labor**

  DOL utilizes all available methods to provide internal advancement opportunities for PWD, including:

  1. Increase awareness of managers to reach affirmative action goals;
  2. Encourage managers to restructure jobs, design bridge positions, and implement individual development plans for PWD;
  3. Encourage use of skills-building survey to address PWD’s potential gaps in skills; and
  4. Encourage PWD to participate in training opportunities offered by the agency’s Disability Action Group.
PROMISING PRACTICES: ADVANCEMENT

• **DOD-Washington Headquarters Services:**
  The Special Emphasis Program endeavors to place PWD in a billet that has promotion potential, when possible. In addition to providing accessible technology, the agency encourages PWD to participate in training and development opportunities.

• **DOD-Defense Intelligence Agency:**
  DIA created a Disability Council that has improved accessibility within the agency: (1) installed motion sensor water stations; (2) relocated badge-swiping to be more accessible for PWD; (3) installed additional push plates; and (4) improved push plate functionality/reliability. The agency also established a sign language group.
PROMISING PRACTICES: ADVANCEMENT

• HHS-Health Resources and Services Administration

HRSA communicates advancement opportunities to the agency’s Council on Employees with Disabilities to ensure broad dissemination.
Poll Questions:

- How many agencies state that they encourage PWD to apply to training programs and promotions and then use a competitive selection process?
- Can agencies establish an advancement plan that designates slots for PWD in training programs?
- Can agencies establish an advancement plan that sets aside vacant positions for PWD?
Overall, the Federal Sector has identified few promising practices concerning advancement plans for PWD. We need more ideas! Let’s brainstorm about what the Federal Sector can do to advance PWD.
PROMISING PRACTICES: OTHER

• **Agency for International Development:**
  AID sponsors a PWD Employee Resource Group (ERG) that partners with its leadership to exchange information on best practices for PWD through brown bag sessions, panel sessions, and other events.

• **Department of Justice:**
  DOJ offered Accessibility Training in FY 2019, which trained employees to create and convert DOJ electronic documents into 508-compliant documents.
PROMISING PRACTICES: OTHER

- Central Intelligence Agency
  1. CIA established an Accessibility Tiger Team in FY 2018, including senior leaders from each Directorate and key stakeholder offices. The purpose of the team is to review accessibility issues, identify a corporate approach to address accessibility concerns, streamline the reasonable accommodation process, and improve the office culture for people with disabilities. As a result of the team’s efforts, CIA has updated and enhanced its facilities and application tools to ensure they are accessible.
  2. CIA created a specialized webpage for personal care assistance requests. The agency has dedicated personal care assistants and on-call assistants available to respond to requests from staff.
PROMISING PRACTICES: OTHER

• **DOD-Army & Air Force Exchange Service**
  
  AAFES conducts an annual self-identification campaign to encourage staff to update their disability status.

• **DOD-National Security Agency**
  
  NSA has developed a new training course, Fundamentals in Accessibility Training (FIAT), which teaches how to design, develop, and test accessible web sites and applications to ensure they support PWD. The agency is optimistic that educating the workforce about accessibility will help to bridge the gap to full inclusion.
QUESTIONS AND CLOSING

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING!
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM)
Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA)

Jameela Raja Akbari – GTM/OAA Director
David Conner – GTM/OAA/AD Accessibility Division (AD) Chief, Acting
Richard McCarthy – GTM/OAA/AD Assistive Technology Specialist
Establishment of the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA)

• Created in May 2015 as part of the Bureau of Human Resources (now the Bureau of Global Talent Management)

• Teams from different bureaus came together to form one cohesive office -- differs from other federal agencies

• Goal: Center of expertise on accessibility, accommodation, and disability ("one-stop shop")
The Access Center held its ceremonial ribbon cutting on December 3rd, 2020.

518 23rd Street NW (SA-1B),
Washington, DC 20037
Access Center Virtual Tour
The Computer Accommodation Technology Center (CATC)

• Started off as a small dusty space in the basement of the main State Department building.
• Offered limited to no privacy because it was placed next to the parking garage entrance.
• Book store located directly across from the space.
Need for New Space

• Lack of privacy in conducting assessments with employees either at the CATC or at OAA employees' desks surrounded by coworkers was a concern.

• OAA staff needed a space where accommodations and PII could be openly discussed with the privacy necessary to make employees comfortable.
First Steps

• Response to privacy needs of clients
• Stay competitive
• Larger needs identified
• Leadership buy-in
• Multiple stakeholders
• Collaboration across the Department was key
Creating the Space
Inventory and Cost Estimates

- Creating a comprehensive list of accommodations needed to outfit the space
- Tiered approach (nice to have vs. must have)
- Cost estimates
- Quotes from vendors
- Developed total cost to outfit the center for the initial opening

- Gave us an idea of how much a yearly refresh would cost budget-wise.
"It is the policy of my Administration to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a national security imperative, in order to ensure critical perspectives and talents are represented in the national security workforce."

– President Joseph R. Biden, February 4, 2021

"We cannot do our job of advancing America’s interests, values, and commitment to democracy without a State Department that is truly representative of the American people."

– Secretary Anthony Blinken, January 27, 2021
Contact Information

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