



# Building an Inclusive Workforce

A Four-Step Reference Guide to Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining Employees with Disabilities

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U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Disability Employment Policy  
[dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep)



# Competence and Flexibility...

...they are vital skills that employers seek. Today more than ever, businesses need people with the ability to adapt to different situations and circumstances. And perhaps more than any other group, people with disabilities possess precisely these attributes. On a daily basis, people with disabilities must think creatively about how to solve problems and accomplish tasks. In the workplace, this translates into innovative thinking, fresh ideas and varied approaches to confronting challenges and achieving success.

While research shows that people with disabilities make excellent employees, not all employers know how to effectively recruit, retain and advance individuals with disabilities. That's where this booklet can help. It provides a quick outline of four simple steps to increasing workforce inclusion, complete with web links to resources available to help businesses benefit from the talents of qualified individuals with disabilities.

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*Niki Swann,  
English Teacher  
and Graduate  
Student*



Introduction

# Competence and Flexibility...

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This tool was developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). To learn more about DOL's efforts to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities, visit ODEP's website at [dol.gov/odep](http://dol.gov/odep).

*The people featured in this guide are people with disabilities—not models—photographed in their workplaces. Some of their disabilities are apparent, some are not. They reflect just a few of the millions of people with disabilities who add value to America's workplaces and economy every day.*

*Elizabeth Kumar,  
Peer Mentor*



Introduction

# Business Strategies that Work

When it comes to doing business, inclusion of workers with disabilities offers a competitive edge. By incorporating people with disabilities into their human capital strategies, employers expand their pool of talent, skills and creative business solutions. The resources below illustrate how workplace practices that include people with disabilities benefit everyone and make good business sense.

- **Business Strategies that Work: A Framework for Disability Inclusion**

Identifies promising employment policies and practices for recruiting, hiring, retaining and advancing qualified individuals with disabilities

[dol.gov/odep/pdf/BusinessStrategiesThatWork.pdf](http://dol.gov/odep/pdf/BusinessStrategiesThatWork.pdf)

- **Employer Engagement Strategy Final Report**

Discusses commitment to hire, workplace diversity and inclusiveness

[dol.gov/odep/pdf/20150201EESFinalReport.pdf](http://dol.gov/odep/pdf/20150201EESFinalReport.pdf)

- **Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact**

Summary of research revealing the low cost of accommodations for employees with disabilities relative to their positive impact

[AskJAN.org/media/lowcosthighimpact.html](http://AskJAN.org/media/lowcosthighimpact.html)

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*Mat McCollough,  
Executive Director  
of a Municipal Agency*



STEP 1 - Business Strategies that Work

# Business Strategies that Work

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- **Tax Incentives**

Description of various tax incentives for which employers who hire people with disabilities may qualify

[AskJAN.org/media/tax.html](http://AskJAN.org/media/tax.html)

- **Business Sense**

Monthly newsletter featuring disability-related topics of interest to employers

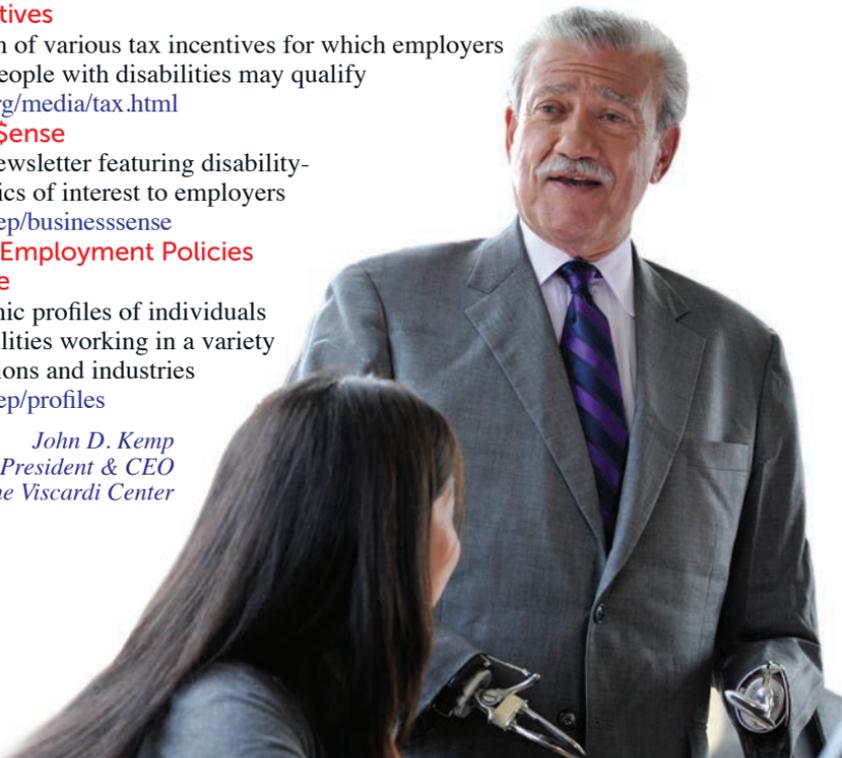
[dol.gov/odep/businesssense](http://dol.gov/odep/businesssense)

- **Disability Employment Policies in Practice**

Photographic profiles of individuals with disabilities working in a variety of occupations and industries

[dol.gov/odep/profiles](http://dol.gov/odep/profiles)

*John D. Kemp  
President & CEO  
The Viscardi Center*



STEP 1 - Business Strategies that Work

# Creating an Inclusive Culture

Organizations that value and appreciate each person for their individual differences and experiences benefit from diverse perspectives. Creating such an inclusive culture isn't difficult, but does require some forethought. The resources below can foster a welcoming work environment that is flexible and open to the talents of all qualified individuals, including those with disabilities.

- **What can YOU do? Campaign for Disability Employment**

Nationwide campaign that offers a range of resources to assist organizations in implementing internal disability employment awareness programs  
[whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org)

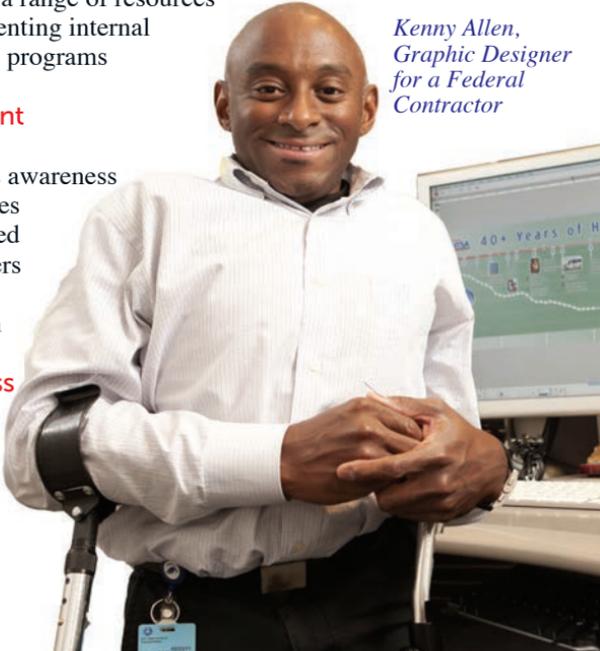
- **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

Annual outreach effort that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/topics/NDEAM.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/NDEAM.htm)

- **Small Business & Disability Employment: Steps to Success**

Outlines effective strategies for small businesses for recruiting and retaining qualified people with disabilities  
[AskEARN.org/StepsToSuccess](http://AskEARN.org/StepsToSuccess)

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*Kenny Allen,  
Graphic Designer  
for a Federal  
Contractor*

STEP 2 - Creating an Inclusive Culture

# Creating an Inclusive Culture

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- **A Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups**

Guidance for employers interested in developing or enhancing an Employee Resource Group (ERG) focused on disability

[AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/erg\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.asha.org/askearn/wp-content/uploads/docs/erg_toolkit.pdf)

- **Emergency Preparedness Resources**

Effective emergency plans and resources for employees with disabilities

[dol.gov/odep/topics/EmergencyPreparedness.htm](https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/EmergencyPreparedness.htm)

- **Disability Etiquette Resources**

Information about disability etiquette in various workplace settings, including speaking engagements and customer service environments

[AskJAN.org/topics/disetiq.htm](https://www.asha.org/askjan/topics/disetiq.htm)

- **Disability Nondiscrimination Law Advisor**

Guidance for employers on determining which federal disability nondiscrimination laws apply to their business or organization and how to ensure compliance with them

[dol.gov/elaws/odep.htm](https://www.dol.gov/elaws/odep.htm)

*R.J. Martin,  
Circulation  
Clerk at a  
County  
Library*



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**STEP 2 - Creating an Inclusive Culture**

# Creating an Inclusive Culture

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- **Do Ask, Do Tell: Encouraging Employees with Disabilities to Self-Identify**

Explores research related to disability disclosure in the workplace and identifies strategies for encouraging it in the context of the updates to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act

[AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/do\\_ask\\_do\\_tell.pdf](http://AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/do_ask_do_tell.pdf)

- **2014 National Study of Employers: Including the Talents of Employees with Disabilities**

Proposes recommendations for employers invested in improving employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities

[familiesandwork.org/downloads/nse-14-disabilities.pdf](http://familiesandwork.org/downloads/nse-14-disabilities.pdf)

- **Fostering Disability-Inclusive Workplaces Through Employee Resource Groups**

Explores how Employee Resource Groups can benefit employee and employer alike

[AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/askearn\\_employeeresourcegroup\\_factsheet.pdf](http://AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/askearn_employeeresourcegroup_factsheet.pdf)

For additional resources related to creating an inclusive culture, visit ODEP's Diversity and Inclusion webpage at: [dol.gov/odep/topics/diversityandinclusion.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/diversityandinclusion.htm) and Changing Attitudes webpage: [dol.gov/odep/topics/changingattitudes.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/changingattitudes.htm).

# Recruiting and Hiring

The goal of the recruitment and hiring process is to attract and identify individuals who have the best mix of skills and attributes for the job available. Ensuring that all qualified individuals—including those with disabilities—can participate in the process is critical to achieving this goal. The resources below can assist in understanding how to be disability inclusive in recruiting and hiring.

- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)**  
Free consultation and technical assistance for employers seeking to recruit and hire qualified individuals with disabilities  
[AskEARN.org](http://AskEARN.org)
- **Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)**  
Program that connects employers with pre-screened, highly motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities seeking internships or permanent employment  
[dol.gov/odep/wrp](http://dol.gov/odep/wrp)

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*Munir Bashir,  
Team Leader at an  
Electronics Store*



**STEP 3 - Recruiting and Hiring**

# Recruiting and Hiring

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- **American Job Centers**  
Nationwide network of centers that can help businesses find qualified workers, including workers with disabilities  
[servicelocator.org](http://servicelocator.org); 1-877-USA-JOBS
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies**  
State agencies that link employers to job candidates with disabilities in their local areas  
[soar.AskJAN.org/IssueConcern/214](http://soar.AskJAN.org/IssueConcern/214)
- **Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT)**  
Multi-faceted initiative promoting the employment, retention and career advancement of people with disabilities through the development, adoption and promotion of accessible technology  
[PEATworks.org](http://PEATworks.org)
- **TalentWorks**  
A service of PEAT that helps employers and human resources (HR) professionals make their eRecruiting technologies accessible to all job seekers—including those with disabilities  
[PEATworks.org/talentworks](http://PEATworks.org/talentworks)

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*Meg Krause,  
Public Relations  
Professional  
and Veteran*

# Recruiting and Hiring

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- **Inclusive Internship Programs: A How-To Guide for Employers**

Provides background and guidance on establishing inclusive internship programs  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/InclusiveInternshipPrograms.pdf](https://dol.gov/odep/pdf/InclusiveInternshipPrograms.pdf)

For additional resources related to the recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities, visit ODEP's Recruitment and Retention webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm) and Accommodations webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm).



*Michael Adams,  
Accounting Assistant*

STEP 3 - Recruiting and Hiring

# Retaining and Advancing Valued Employees

Employers and employees both benefit from a work environment that facilitates the retention of all skilled, qualified workers through effective job accommodations for employees with disabilities. The resources below can assist in understanding how to effectively retain the talents of qualified employees with disabilities and help them advance and achieve workplace success.

- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**

Free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities

[AskJAN.org](http://AskJAN.org); 1-800-526-7234 (Voice); 1-877-781-9403 (TTY)

- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)**

Free consultation and technical assistance for employers seeking to retain and advance employees with disabilities

[AskEARN.org](http://AskEARN.org)

- **Return-to-Work Toolkit**

Information about the return-to-work process and resources to assist in getting employees back on the job quickly and smoothly after illness or injury

[dol.gov/odep/return-to-work](http://dol.gov/odep/return-to-work)

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*Eric Wright,  
Lead Technologist*



# Retaining and Advancing Valued Employees

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- **Workplace Flexibility Toolkit**  
Tools employers can use to adjust time, location and manner in which an employee works  
[dol.gov/odep/workplaceflexibility/](http://dol.gov/odep/workplaceflexibility/)
- **Workplace Accommodation Toolkit**  
Resources and guidance on inclusive practices related to the reasonable accommodation process  
[askjan.org/toolkit](http://askjan.org/toolkit)
- **Customized Employment/Flexible Work Arrangements**  
Information about customized employment, a flexible work arrangement that can assist users in retaining valued employees, including those with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/topics/customizedemployment.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/customizedemployment.htm)
- **Soft Skills**  
Introduction to workplace interpersonal and professional skills for employees  
[dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills)

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*Kathy Peery,  
Legislative Affairs  
Specialist for a  
Federal Agency*



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- **Supporting Employees Who Experience Unexpected Illness or Disability**  
Factsheet on Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work strategies  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/20140917StayAtWork.pdf](http://dol.gov/odep/pdf/20140917StayAtWork.pdf)
- **Job Accommodation Network Multimedia Training Microsite**  
Provides resources for employers to conduct training on disability employment topics for individuals or groups of employees  
[askjan.org/training/library.htm](http://askjan.org/training/library.htm)
- **Medical- and Disability-Related Leave Advisor**  
Guidance on the medical and disability leave to which employees may be entitled  
[webapps.dol.gov/elaws/mdrl](http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/mdrl)

For additional resources related to retaining and advancing people with disabilities, visit ODEP's Recruitment and Retention webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/recruitmentandretention.htm) and Accommodations webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm](http://dol.gov/odep/topics/accommodations.htm).

# Resources and Links for Federal Agencies

As the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government must model effective policies and practices that advance America's ideal of equal opportunity for all. Regulations implementing Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 501) specify that federal agencies must become model employers of individuals with disabilities. Federal agencies are required to develop and maintain "an affirmative action program plan" for the hiring, placement and advancement of individuals with disabilities.

The resources on the next two pages can assist in fulfilling this directive.

- **Toolkit for Federal Agencies on Hiring People with Disabilities**  
Outline of five-step process and related resources to assist federal agencies in their efforts to increase the employment of people with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/federal-hire](http://dol.gov/odep/federal-hire)
- **eFedLink**  
Online community of practice designed to help federal disability employment professionals advance federal employment for persons with disabilities  
[eFedLink.org](http://eFedLink.org)
- **Federal Agency Employment Strategies: A Framework for Disability Inclusion**  
Outline of proactive disability employment strategies to attract and retain qualified job seekers with disabilities  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/FAEStrategies.pdf](http://dol.gov/odep/pdf/FAEStrategies.pdf)
- **Workforce Recruitment Program**  
Program that connects federal employers with pre-screened, highly motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities seeking internships or permanent employment  
[dol.gov/odep/wrp](http://dol.gov/odep/wrp)

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# Resources and Links for Federal Agencies

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- **Schedule A Hiring Authority: Your Fast Track to Disability Inclusion!**  
Explains the use of the Schedule A hiring authority for a variety of audiences  
[dol.gov/odep/pdf/20160129-ScheduleA.pdf](https://dol.gov/odep/pdf/20160129-ScheduleA.pdf)
- **Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP)**  
Centrally funded accommodation program that provides assistive technology and services free of charge to federal agencies  
[cap.mil](https://cap.mil)
- **Federal Workplace Mentoring Primer**  
Overview of basic practices, strategies and available tools and resources for establishing formal mentoring relationships and programs within federal workplaces  
[AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/fed-wmp.pdf](https://AskEARN.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/fed-wmp.pdf)
- **Veterans Preference Advisor**  
Guidance on preferences that veterans, including wounded warriors, may be entitled to with regard to federal employment  
[dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm](https://dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm)
- **Federal Disability Hiring Programs**  
An overview of initiatives and flexibilities in hiring processes intended to increase the employment of people with disabilities in the Federal Government  
[opm.gov/disability](https://opm.gov/disability)
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**  
A resource for laws, regulations, policy guidance, fact sheets, Q & A's, best practices and other information on disability discrimination  
[eoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm](https://eoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm)

For additional resources for federal employers, visit ODEP's Federal Employers webpage at [dol.gov/odep/topics/federalemployment.htm](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/federalemployment.htm).

# DRIVING CHANGE CREATING OPPORTUNITY



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Disability Employment Policy  
[dol.gov/odep](https://dol.gov/odep)

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