Meeting of the Federal Exchange on Employment and Disability (FEED)

April 13, 2022
Introduction (1:00-1:05 p.m.)
• Akinyemi Banjo, Policy Advisor, Employer and Workplace Policy, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), Department of Labor

Welcoming Remarks (1:05-1:10 p.m.)
• Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, ODEP, Department of Labor

Updates from OPM (1:10-1:15 p.m.)
• Jennifer Croft, Diversity Program Manager, Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility, Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Presentation: Establishing an Effective Disability Working Group (1:15-2:00 p.m.)
• Brianne Burger, Liaison to Special Institutions, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, Board Member, Deaf in Government
• Suzy Rosen Singleton, Chief, Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Federal Communications Commission

Building Strength Through Collective Action: Growing Agency Disability Resource Groups (2:00-2:35 p.m.)
• Ollie Cantos, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary, Office of Civil Rights, Department of Education (ED), Co-Lead, Disability Resource Group at ED
• Teri Williams, Diversity Program Specialist, Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility, OPM

Question and Answer Session (2:35-2:55 p.m.)

Closing Remarks (2:55-3:00 p.m.)
• Lou Orslene, Director, Employer and Workplace Policy, ODEP, Department of Labor
Presenters: Establishing an Effective Disability Working Group

Brianne Burger  
Liaison, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)  
Deaf In Government Board Member

Suzy Rosen Singleton, Esq.  
Chief, Disability Rights Office  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Federal Communications Commission
Establishing Effective Disability Working Groups
3rd Top Strategy: “Establish a disability working group within each agency to implement the agency DEIA Strategic Plan.”

Some comments:

Ensure consistency, accountability and awareness across the agency

• This workgroup would:
  ▪ Identify barriers and training needs to ensure agencies are hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.
  ▪ Provide consistency and accountability among offices throughout the agency regarding reasonable accommodation and accessibility.
  ▪ Bring agency-wide awareness and increase visibility of disability-related issues, resources and information.

Working group composition

• Engaging employees from across the agency to participate in a working group builds inclusion and the expectation that DEIA is everyone's responsibility.

• Including people with disabilities is critical in order to get their perspectives and ideas on how to be a model employer of people with disabilities, ensure equal access and maximize inclusivity.
Create a strong infrastructure to support workplace initiatives through senior leadership, commitment and accountability by establishing an agency-wide team consisting of executives, managers and employees with disabilities to support and advance the recruiting, hiring, retention and promotion of individuals with disabilities. This team may also function as a disability-focused employee resource group (ERG) or affinity group. Responsibilities of the team may include:

- Notifying supervisors and employees of their responsibilities.
- Providing updates on significant changes to laws, regulations and guidelines.
- Identifying barriers to employment opportunities.
- Recommending strategies and actions to remove identified or potential barriers.
- Monitoring and evaluating progress of initiatives.
Deaf In Government Recommendations for DEIA

- Deaf In Government (DIG) released a position paper in January 2022 to provide specific recommendations for federal agencies’ DEIA strategic plans as mandated by Executive Order 14035. This paper builds upon DIG’s extensive July 2021 comments regarding Executive Order 13985.

- Creating and maintaining a federal disability voice are highlighted throughout this document.
  
  ▪ For example, DIG requests agency staffing that includes people with targeted disabilities at every level of employment, including senior leadership positions, and specialized positions to advance accessibility and disability employment. Agencies with significant public interaction should establish a direct American Sign Language consumer support line.

  ▪ Agencies should establish a diversity committee comprised of the Disability Emphasis Program Manager, Selective Placement Coordinator, Reasonable Accommodations Manager, selected managers, and members of affinity groups and diversified employees with targeted disabilities to address the hiring, advancement and retention of all EEO groups, including people with targeted disabilities.

Link: [https://deafingov.org/DEIAPositionPaper](https://deafingov.org/DEIAPositionPaper)
Deaf In Government (DIG)

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit national organization.
- Serves as an employee support group for local, state and federal employees who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- And as a resource organization for the government.

Some of DIG’s activities include:

- Notifying supervisors and employees of their responsibilities.
- Providing updates on significant changes to laws, regulations and guidelines.
- Identifying barriers to employment opportunities.
- Recommending strategies and actions to remove identified or potential barriers.
- Monitoring and evaluating progress of initiatives.

DIG also hosts conferences, workshops and events.
Federal Employees with Disabilities (FEDs)

• Established in March 2012 as a national membership organization.
• Mission was to increase the hiring, inclusion, advancement, promotion and retention of federal workers and applicants with disabilities.
• Partnered with DIG on activities.
• Reinstatement needs committed and passionate volunteers to maintain the longevity success of the organization.
Establishing an Employee Resource Group (ERG)

• General Rules:
  Administrative Personnel Agency Relationships with Organizations Representing Federal Employees and Other Organizations (5 CFR Section 251)

• Agency or Departmental Regulations

• Agency Petitions
Expectations of ERGs

• Requires support from senior leadership.
• Relies on employees to willingly volunteer, time and efforts.
• Depending on agency’s regulation or policy, may require developing a charter, bylaws, hosting elections, etc.
• Most agencies do not support the ERG financially, some do not permit the ERG to hold financial accounts.
• Commitment in collaborative efforts to maintain longevity success of the ERG.
Brianne is the co-founder of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employee Resource Group of U.S. Dept of Agriculture (DHH USDA)

Other affinity group examples include:

• Deaf DOT
• Deaf LOC
• Deaf IRS
• Interagency Deaf Coalition of Intelligence Agencies
Interagency Efforts Regarding Disability Policy & Accommodations

• White House Disability Policy Workgroup
• Interagency Disability Senior Leadership
• DOD’s CAP Program
• GSA Schedule & Authorized Services

Question: What are ideal ways to ensure the federal disability voice?
Disability Advisory Committee

• Since 2014, the Federal Communications Commission maintains a Disability Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendation to the FCC on a wide array of disability issues. The DAC includes a diversity of industry and consumer stakeholders.

• The DAC is now in its fourth term, and information is at www.fcc.gov/dac.
Questions?

Contact:

Brianne Burger, Brianne.burger@ed.gov or Brianne.burger@deafingov.org

Suzy Rosen Singleton, Suzanne.Singleton@fcc.gov

Deaf In Government: www.deafingov.org or learning@deafingov.org
Presenters: Growing Agency Disability Resource Groups

Ollie Cantos
Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary
Department of Education (ED)
Office of Civil Rights
Co-Lead, Disability Resource Group at ED

Teri Williams
Diversity Program Specialist
Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
OPM
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