MICHELLE ALVORD: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Michelle Alvord. I’ll be your technical assistant this afternoon. I’d like to welcome you all. So, we have two different rooms today and I’m going to do a quick tech intro for both. In the Adobe Connect room, you should see a poll. In the Zoom room, you’re going to see a poll as well. Please go ahead and answer that poll question. And you should also see a chat box to the right-hand side of your screen. You can use that to answer if you’d like. And to the right of the chat box in the Adobe Connect room is also a Q&A box that we will also be utilizing today. In that Q&A box, you’ll find a phone number. If your bandwidth maybe goes down or you have any difficulties hearing the audio, please go ahead and call in to that phone line.

At the very bottom of the Adobe Connect room, you should see a caption pod. You can adjust it, make it slightly larger, by clicking on that little bar beneath the font area selections. If you have any questions in the Zoom room, please move your cursor and it will bring up your Q&A box, your chat box, and any audio settings that you might need. You can select from all of that, but you do have to move your cursor if you are in Zoom to get those selections. So, without further ado, let me turn things over to Akinyemi Banjo.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Akinyemi Banjo. I think most of you know me by now (laughter). I’d like to welcome everyone to today’s meeting. It is my pleasure to introduce Jennifer Sheehy, who is the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor. She will be providing some welcoming remarks. Jennifer, please go ahead.

JENNIFER SHEEHY: Thank you so much. Thanks Akinyemi and thanks Michelle. It’s always nice to see your name. This is one of my favorite groups and I’m really sorry that we’re not together in person, but soon! I’m feeling very optimistic we will be together soon and this will be behind us. I want to thank our friends Dexter and Natalie and the others from EARN, Cornell, and Concepts. It’s a large group of folks that are really dedicated to providing as much information as possible and creating a platform for us to have these discussions with our colleagues in the disability advocacy community. So, without further ado, let me turn things over to Akinyemi Banjo.

We have a lot to work on here. Certainly top of mind for this group will be the racial equity executive order and the executive order about a data-driven COVID response that President Biden just issued very, very quickly into his administration, I might add. I look forward to contributing to that and making sure that people with disabilities are included, counted and included. With that, we have a big agenda. I’m going to turn it back over to Akinyemi.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Thanks, Jennifer. And now we will hear from Dexter Brooks. He’s the Associate Director of Federal Sector Programs in the Office of Federal Operations at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

DEXTER BROOKS: Thanks, Akinyemi, Jennifer, Lou, and Natalie, all the partners that work on this effort from EARN, Cornell, and Concepts. It’s a large group of folks that are really dedicated to providing as much information as possible and creating a platform for us to have these discussions with our colleagues in the disability advocacy community. So, thanks to everyone. This has been a successful workgroup for us, I think. We've been able to leverage it in many different ways to share information and gain knowledge, which we'll continue to do this fiscal year and going forward, as Jennifer indicated. I just want to say thank you for all the efforts over the last few years. I'm looking forward to continuing this great partnership.
This year, as everyone else is going through transition, we're going through transition of leadership. I send you greetings from our new Chair, Charlotte Borrows. She's been with EEOC for six years. She was first appointed a commissioner under the Obama Administration and was reappointed during the Trump Administration. She has a long civil rights background in this sense, since her job with the Justice Department. She had some time on the Hill working in advocacy roles, and she has a strong interest in making sure that the federal sector is the leading sector in terms of providing meaningful employment opportunities, including and expressly for people with disabilities.

So at EEOC this year, we'll continue down the path started in 2020 where we're providing as much information as possible related to COVID. And as we move to new stages of evolution of this pandemic, we'll be addressing return to work issues, vaccine-related questions, and more. Most of you are already aware that we have an active Q&A on our website at www.EEOC.gov, which we update information as we put out new questions and answers based on what we're hearing from our various stakeholders. So please use that resource, that's what it's there for. We know that there are going to be other issues as the pandemic continues, and we'll continue to update that information source.

In the federal sector, we are working to understand how agencies are progressing in their affirmative action plans for people with disabilities, effective since 2017. And we had the first round of reports coming in and are reviewing them. Starting last year, we now do three-year cycles reviewing federal agencies. So, the first year of a three-year cycle we'll meet with all the cabinet and large independent agencies and we'll discuss various things in terms of equality of opportunity. Last year, this year, and next year for 100% of the agencies, we'll review the plans. And we're seeing that they're making meaningful opportunities as outlined in our regulations. We've completed the review of our departments and this year we're meeting with all the subcomponents - sometimes they're independent operators. So, we meet with them independently to get an assessment of their programs.

Next year, in 2022, we'll meet with the small and micro-agencies. At the end of the three years, we'll have a composite of the complete Federal Government and we'll share areas of improvement. We'll be working with our partners at DOL, OPM, and EARN on leading practices and where we go from here as a collaborative community, as we've done in the past.

So, that's where we are at EEOC. It's always a pleasure to have a chance to share feedback with Jennifer. This is one of my favorite groups. I say that to every group, but I only mean it this time (laughter). Seriously, working with the colleagues that I work with in this group is almost like a reunion of close friends versus work to me. So, it's always great to be a part of this. We look forward to working with you in 2021 and hope that you have a great meeting today. Thanks, Akinyemi.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Thank you so much, Dexter for your support. Next up will be Lou Orslene. Lou is the Director of Employer and Workplace Policy at ODEP.

LOU ORSLENE: Good afternoon, everyone. We're very excited to hear of the EEOC reviews that Dexter told us about and very much looking forward to hearing about those leading practices. I appreciate you participating in today's meeting and am particularly appreciative to Hassan and Kevin, our presenters today. I also really appreciate both Cornell and PepsiCo's efforts, Cornell will be sharing about their research on people with disabilities within the Federal Government and Kevin will discuss PepsiCo's self-identification efforts.

We welcome you to the first FEED meeting of 2021. It’s really an exciting time with the transition to the new administration, particularly with the Biden Administration's goal, as he has written, confronting the deep racial and ethnic inequities in this country. I think this is really going to be providing the framework for much of our work in the future to make sure that everyone is included in all of our agency work.

So, while it's an exciting time as well, there's some caution. There's still some health and safety issues that continue to threaten our workplaces, that of course being COVID. I wish all of you luck in arranging
your vaccine. I think that's the main topic with most families at this point.

As Jennifer mentioned, the Biden Administration in response to all the various overlapping challenges has issued a number of presidential orders. I think not the least of them really is Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. This Executive Order on advancing racial equity is meant to ensure that everyone, including people with disabilities who are Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian are included in our work. It challenges us to understand unique barriers to employment in the respective communities. And as I said, this Executive Order really provides the framework for our future efforts.

The mantra we've adapted for the employer team over at ODEP is “deliberate and intentional inclusion of all people.” So, I think that's something for us to ponder and for us also to then operationalize. I think other important Executive Orders, of course, that Jennifer also mentioned are the Executive Order on ensuring a data-driven response to COVID-19 and also the EO on Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery. So, it’s just important to note that Biden’s COVID-19 plan really depends on a data driven approach and to direct federal agencies to ramp up, collect, share, and analyze data to support an equitable COVID-19 response and recovery. I think really when we see all of this data, which we have been feverishly collecting, our research team has been excellent in getting this information and compiling it for us, what we really need to do is make sure that we can facilitate all people with disabilities, again, all of the marginalized groups. We can do this safely, so people can either remain in their jobs or return to their jobs with the prospect of all of us enjoying the recovery.

I think another relevant EO, or rather memorandum, is the memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking. I think we were heading in this direction certainly during the Obama era, using metrics and taking a more evidence-based approach and using the best scientific data in practices. I think we're really up to meeting these challenges, not only the challenges of this COVID environment, but also the Biden Administration priorities with regard to people with disabilities. I kind of feel it’s important to remind us all about the 2016 report that came out that showed that the Federal Government was very successful in hiring 110 new employees with disabilities during the Obama Administration. We have to move more assertively during the recovery and again ensure that all people with disabilities are included.

That brings me to a point that we've been discussing on our team and we've discussed it with Natalie and Dexter as well. And that's looking back to these initiatives of the Obama Administration where we were making progress. Let's ask ourselves what was on the table before the change of administration in 2016 and never acted upon. One of the things that Akinwemi identified was a manual on Schedule A that OPM and EEOC had developed, but it has never been approved or released. This is the kind of low-hanging fruit that I think that we can all look to dusting off to really build upon these past successes.

I sometimes overuse this word, but “leapfrog” is in order here. So, we can look at what was done in the past and we can move that much more quickly to the new future, and I think that is what we all really want here.

One more thing I want to mention as I wrap up is to remind everybody that the WRP database has been released. Again, just to remind people that this allows agencies to hire without posting a job announcement or going through the certification process, which is a real benefit. I also wanted to say that we have, in relation to WRP, if you go to AskEARN.org, you'll see a couple new WRP success stories talking about young people who have been hired and launched successful careers through WRP.

Also, I want to remind folks that the next EARN webinar is taking place March 11 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. We'll explore what it takes to create a workplace culture that promotes workers' mental health. It will feature Diana Gulick, Associate Director for Global Benefits and Wellbeing at Merck, who will be highlighting some of their employee mental health initiatives that they've launched during COVID.
The last thing I want to mention is we've released the new document “The Relationship between Federal Agency Disability Practices and Employee Outcomes.” This document complements Cornell's presentation today.

I just want to say again, we're very grateful for your participation and your input during this meeting. We have a number of poll questions today because we really want to gauge your future interest in these meetings throughout 2021. So with that, I'll turn it back over to Akinyemi. Thanks, everyone.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Thank you, Lou, Dexter, and Jennifer. Now, I will introduce Natalie Veeney, who will lead us from this point forward. Natalie is the Governmentwide Diversity Program Director in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the Office of Personnel Management. She will be moderating today. Natalie, please go ahead.

NATALIE VEENEY: Good afternoon, everybody. I’m so excited to be here today. I don't want to reiterate the comments said before. I enjoy these sessions. I miss everybody’s faces. It’s good to see the numbers on the screen of those participating. I'll keep us moving forward because we don't want to run out of time. It looks like we have some great presenters.

If Michelle could bring up poll question number 1 again for everyone. For those of you that perhaps just joined or were not able to participate in the poll during the introduction, please take a moment to do that now. I’m going to leave it open for just a few seconds and give everyone here a chance to vote. For those of you that may not be familiar with polls, they’re a great way to keep you engaged with us as we learn what you would like to see in the coming year. We'll have lots of poll questions today. If you’re not comfortable answering the polls, by the end of this session today, you will be.

Poll Question #1: What do you hope to learn from FEED meetings this year?

A. Specific best and emerging inclusionary practices that could be embraced by my agency: 18.62%
B. Effective ways to measure the impact of agency EEO/diversity and inclusion efforts: 16.55%
C. Information about disability focused EEO/diversity and inclusion initiatives across the Federal Government: 34.48%
D. Updates from EEOC, ODEP, and OPM about current efforts to increase inclusion of people with disabilities in the Federal Government: 20%
E. Other (open chat): 10.34%

The first poll question is “What do you hope to learn from FEED meetings this year”? The first answer option is “Specific best and emerging inclusionary practices that could be embraced by my agency.” The second is, “Effective ways to measure the impact of agency EEO/diversity and inclusion efforts.” The third option, option C, is “Information about disability focused EEO/diversity and inclusion initiative the across the Federal Government.” Answer option D is “Updates from EEOC, ODEP, and OPM about current efforts to increase inclusion of people with disabilities in the Federal Government.” If you have another option that is not listed here, we would like you to put those in the chat, that is answer option E. I see a couple of those so far.

I see people typing their answers in the chat. If you want to choose only one option, we would like you to use the voting mechanism to the left of your screen and click on A, B, C, D, or E. If you want to choose more than one option, you can put that in the chat box, but what we are really trying to see with this poll is if there are main priorities of FEED members. We'll leave the poll open for a few more seconds.

Are we ready to close the chat box? So, the chat is closed now. And I have a question from somewhere. The question is, “If you’re participating via phone, how will we be able to participate in the polls?”
think unfortunately you're not going to be able to participate in the polls unless you're using the computer connection because there's no way for you to input this information via phone. Correct me if I'm wrong, Michelle.

MICHELLE ALVORD: You are correct. There isn't a way if you're participating only on the phone to enter your poll answer. I’m sorry about that.

NATALIE VEENEY: So, we’re going to have these poll questions moving forward, both in today’s meeting and in future meetings. I'll try to clarify some of the points for better ease of the polls as we go on. To reiterate, Option E is if you want to choose another option other than what is listed in answer options A-D, then you can choose E and put your choice in the chat so we can tabulate that for later.

So, for the first question, it looks like answer option C, “Disability focused EEO/diversity and inclusion initiatives across the Federal Government” was the most selected answer with 34.48%. So, with that we're going to move forward and go into our presentations today. The first presentation is going to be around data. But before we go into that, we're going to try another poll question.

Poll Question #2
What federal EEO data questions would you like to have addressed at future FEED meetings?

A. Differences in education, training, and work experience of federal employees with and without disabilities: 13.48%
B. Disparities in career advancement opportunities for federal employees with disabilities: 28.08%
C. Effectiveness of the accommodation process within federal agencies: 35.95%
D. Participation in professional development opportunities (including training) by disability status: 10.11%
E. Use of Schedule A: 8.98%
F. Other (open chat): 3.37%

The second poll question reads “What federal EEO data questions would you like to have addressed at future FEED meetings?” The poll is now open. Option A is differences in education, training, and work experience of federal employees request and without disabilities. Option B. Disparities in career advancement opportunities for federal employees with disabilities. Option C. The effectiveness of the accommodation process within federal agencies. Option D. Participation in professional development opportunities including training by disability status. Option E. Use of Schedule and Option F is “Other,” which is open chat. If you’d like to add something else that you would like to have addressed at future FEED meetings, you can put that in the chat. We'll give it about 30 seconds before we close the chat.

I see the numbers still moving. I'll give you a couple more seconds. Laura, I see you put all of the above. A couple folks are saying all the options are good and would like to see them addressed at future FEED meetings. This is where we can see where the most interest lies and maybe prioritize which ones we do first, second, and third. It’s great that you're excited about all of them!

We're going to close the poll. And it looks like for this poll, option C, “Effectiveness of the accommodation process within federal agencies” received the most votes, with nearly 36%. But like I said, a lot of people had some other suggestions. Other ideas we got were “calls by agencies for settlements,” “elaborating on better hiring practices,” “conflicts with Schedule A,” and “accessibility compliance,” and a few other areas that folks would like talk about at future FEED meetings.

With that, we'll move into our first presentation today. Our first presenter today is going to talk about the relationship between federal agency disability practices and employee outcomes. We would like to welcome Hassan Enayati. He's a research associate at the Yang-Tan Institute at Cornell University.
Hassan?

**HASSAN ENAYATI:** Great. Thank you for that welcome. I'm delighted to be with you all today to talk about the relationship between federal agency disability practices and employee outcomes. I'll try to keep us in line with the timing on the agenda. As was said before, we have a packed schedule today.

I do want to note that the content of this presentation was developed under a grant to Cornell with the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) at the Administration for Community Living at HHS, and that it does not necessary reflect the views and policies of NIDILRR or the investigator, who is Sarah von Shrader, who has presented at these meetings in the past (slide 5). I had the pleasure of working with a great team on this project (slide 6).

Before I jump into a discussion of the EARN tool, I want to give you some background on the study upon which the tool was based (slide 7). The relationship between employer practices and employment outcomes is important in improving workplace equity and opportunity. Most of the existing literature establishes operational research with individuals with disabilities. Employer practices and policies, as well as detailed employment outcome data, is important to examine the role of practices on employment of individuals with disabilities. We supplement these findings with the experiences of individuals with disabilities using the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

The project has four core objectives (slide 8). The first being to develop a thorough knowledge base of how diversity practice adoption impacts employment outcomes like representation or allegations of discrimination. Number two is to reveal whether diversity practice adoption moderates differential employee experiences and attitudes of individuals with disabilities. The third is to enhance our understanding of findings and increase relevance to our target audience of employers through focus groups of employer representatives and employees. And the final one is to broadly share these findings.

So, today I'll be discussing the contents of the recent EARN tool, “The Relationship Between Federal Agency Disability Practices and Employee Outcomes” (slide 9). The tool focuses on the outcome of disability representation defined as the percent of the workforce that identifies as having a disability using headcount data from the MD-715 B tables. Employer policy data are collected from the MD-715 Part G table. From Part G, we were able to identify 29 policies relating to employment practices and use analysis for these policies were grouped into nine clusters.

Three of the nine clusters predict improved participation in the quantitative analysis. This was enforced by qualitative analysis from focus groups (slide 10). The first of the three significantly related to improved disability representation within federal agencies was sufficient staffing and budget for equal employment opportunity (EEO programs). That cluster includes policies like the authority and funding by the EEO director to ensure implementation of action plans and to improve EEO program efficacy and limit identified barriers. Another policy under this cluster would be sufficient resources to enable the agency to conduct a thorough barrier analysis of the workforce. There were a few other policies under this practice.

The next significantly statistic is trend analysis. This includes specific policies like workforce profiles conducted by race, national origin, sex, and disability- the effects of management and policies conducted by race, national origin, sex, and disability. There were again a few other items under this cluster.

The third and final cluster that we identified as being important here is direct supervision of the EEO director by agency head. This cluster includes only two practices. Those are EEO directors under the direct supervision of the agency head and also the EEO director officer is under the immediate supervision of the lower level components' head official. So we found that as the number of items
within each scale for the trend analysis and direct supervision of the EEO director by agency head clusters increased. So, as the number of those sub-policies that were responded to affirmatively in the Part G table increased, so too did the predicted level of disability representation within that agency.

For the next step, we examined the extent to which disability representation varies across occupation (slide 11). So, this graphic represents the percent of either employees with disabilities or employees without disabilities across major occupational groups as reported in the MD-715 Part B tables. In this graph, all the red bars sum up to roughly 100% and all the black bars sum up to 100%. They're slightly under 100%, in case anybody is checking the math, due to rounding and a few being dropped to improve the readability of this graphic.

So, what does this mean? Well, for example, one point would be that nearly 20% of individuals with disabilities are in administrative support roles compared to 11% of individuals without disabilities being in those same roles. While the Federal Government is a model employer of people with disabilities, there continues to be room for increased equity by occupation.

The work that I described here today is in a book chapter, which is provided in this citation (slide 12). Now I'd like to open it up to questions. Thank you.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Everyone, you can type your questions into the chat box so we can read them to Hassan? Hassan, somebody asked if you separated out targeted disabilities in this study.

HASSAN ENAYATI: Great question. We did not. We have the data necessary to do that, but this study looks at comparing individuals that identified as having a disability relative to those that do not. The truth of the matter is, I'm not sure we would have the data necessary in terms of the number of observations needed to make any sort of compelling claims just because of the low occurrence.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Hassan, a second question: Can we review the slide comparing disabilities versus no disabilities (slide 11)? Everyone will be getting the slide deck after the meeting. So, you'll have the slides for your reference.

HASSAN ENAYATI: Also, I want to note that while the colors are different in this graphic, the graphic is the exact same as the one that is provided in the EARN tool upon which this presentation was provided. So, for example, another thing is that the origin of this type of analysis stems from occupational segregation work. Typically you look in terms of the occupational segregation that occurs, say for women, and with this we applied the same kind of framework for individuals with disabilities. As I said, we see that there's evidence that we have overrepresentation of individuals with disabilities in some occupational groups and under representation in others.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Another question: What is considered “sufficient staff and budget”? 

HASSAN ENAYATI: So, if my colleague Sarah has the ability to respond, I would be happy to welcome her to speak up. But I don't believe there's any clear direction as to what that means in the MD-715 language and in the documents provided to the individuals completing MD-715 paperwork. I believe that that is a subjective response. I don't believe there's a threshold upon which the response is based.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Another question - is this data trending up or down?

HASSAN ENAYATI: I'm going to do my best to answer this, but I might not be responding to the right part. One way to think about this is asking the question “Is representation of individuals with disabilities trending up or trending down?” And it's trending up, or at least the last time that I looked at aggregate data it was trending up. So, as of fiscal year close 2018, it was trending up. That said, we've also observed that while there's been a tremendous growth in the representation of individuals with disabilities in the last decade and a half, one thing to note is that for a sizeable share of individuals, that growth comes from individuals that identify both as having a disability and as having veteran status. It's
certainly very important to make sure that we’re improving opportunities and equity in the workforce for individuals who are veterans, but I want to highlight that a lot of those trends don’t include individuals with disabilities who don’t have veteran status. That is an important distinction in that trend. I’m going to guess that’s what you were asking about because we were talking about representation.

**WENDY STROBEL GOWER:** Natalie, we have a number of questions left, and I just wanted to get a read from you on if we should collect the questions and answer them offline or if you wanted me to go ahead with questions.

**NATALIE VEENEY:** That is a great suggestion. In the essence of time, and we do have another presentation and them some interesting questions at the end, I think we should collect the questions. So, if you have a question, please put it in the chat box so we can collect it. Afterwards, we’ll answer and we’ll send that information to you. Thank you, everyone.

**WENDY STROBEL GOWER:** Thank you, Hassan.

**NATALIE VEENEY:** Thank you for your participation in the chat. It looks like we have a lot of interesting questions from the group. So, I do appreciate your participation because that does help inform our presentations a lot.

Moving on, the next presentation is going to be about self-identification. Just to get us warmed up, guess what, folks? We have another poll. We’re going to open poll question #3. So, if you were sitting by idly sipping your coffee, now is time to get your mouse going.

**Poll Question #3**

*What is your agency’s greatest challenge related to self-identification?*

- A. Concerns about confidentiality: 34.06%
- B. Understanding the benefits of self-identification: 26.37%
- C. Understanding how the information is used: 16.48%
- D. Understanding the process to self-identify: 5.49%
- E. Uncertain if the disability label applies: 9.89%
- F. Other (open chat): 7.69%

The question is: “What is your agency’s greatest challenge related to self-identification?” And the answer options are A. Concerns about confidentiality. B. Understanding the benefits of self-identification. C. Understanding how the information is used. D. Understanding the process to self-identify. E. Uncertain if the disability label applies, and then F is “Other” and you can respond in the chat box if you have another reason to suggest about your agency's greatest challenge related to self-identification. There's also a no vote option, but we're not going to use that one because we know everyone here has something to contribute. Okay, I see some poll numbers coming in.

Another option I see in the chat box is “Getting the agency to actually do the survey.” We still have a lot of people writing their answers in the chat who may not be participating in the poll. I do get to see those. Getting employees to self-ID seems to be trending in the chat. I'll give it a couple more seconds because I see the poll numbers are still moving. If you haven’t participated, now’s your chance before we close the poll. Again, the question is “What is your agency’s greatest challenge related to self-identification?” This is an important topic that dovetails nicely with the previous topic because in order to have good data, we need to know who is in our workforce. If the individual doesn’t self-identify, that affects the data that we get.

All right. We're going to close the poll. And it looks as though concerns about confidentiality is the
greatest challenge when related to self-identification (34%). Thank you for your participation. And we will note that and perhaps that is something that we can expound upon later to help agencies address concerns employees have about confidentiality.

Now I would like to move on to our next presenter, Kevin Fitzpatrick. Kevin is the EEO/AA Compliance Director for the Employment Law Team at PepsiCo. Kevin, are you on?

**KEVIN FITZPATRICK:** Hi everyone. Thanks for letting me come out and be a part of the agenda today. It’s exciting to see people engaged in the chat. I’m thrilled to be a part of this.

I want to extend a special note of gratitude to ODEP. Jennifer Sheehy and Lou, I want to thank you so much for your partnership during the course of the last few years, helping to lend a voice to the federal contractor community. Our engagement over the last two or three years has really been tremendous. We really appreciate all that work. Again, thank you for inviting me to be a part of your agenda today. Actually that last poll you just did, I’m going to adjust some of the things I was going to say so I can address those things because that was so insightful.

So, today I’ll talk about our program embracing people with disabilities across PepsiCo (slide 15). This is kind of a pet project of mine. Of all the different initiatives I get to be a part of, this is my favorite project to be on. I’m thrilled to share some of this with you. And I can’t do any of this alone. A big part is getting the voice of the disability community inside PepsiCo. That comes through our employee resource group (ERG), EnAble, and the accent is on being able, celebrating the best of our employees, regardless of whatever condition they may have, their ability to unlock that potential is really what we want to do. For us to be competitive in the marketplace, we have to have all of our employees firing on all eight cylinders and leverage all of their skillsets to be able to contribute to the whole of the company.

So the ERG group champions inclusion of people with different abilities and provides support resources for PepsiCo associates with different abilities and for their caregivers. We get a lot of the voice that hasn’t been captured in data around caregivers, because a lot of the disability community is not solely on the individual who has the disability. It’s their entire circle or support network that has to be celebrated during the course of these initiatives. I think that’s one of the big voices that comes through in this work.

As a practical matter, all of the federal contractor community did adjust to changes in the Section 503 regulation that took place in March of 2014 for us to start collecting data for people to go through the process to self-identify - saying either “Yes, I have a disability,” “No, I don’t have a disabilities,” or “I choose not to identify” (slide 16). That was a big change for employers to suddenly inviting people to talk about disability in the workplace in an open format where it’s historically been kind of tabu to talk about it, so that was a big change.

Part of that regulation (and I know this is commonplace to this audience) states that every fifth year, federal contractors are obligated to conduct a mass survey of all their employees across the enterprise to invite them to self-identify as a person with a disability. At PepsiCo, we do this twice a year. Every March and October, we do a big self-ID campaign. So, our fifth year of that cycle was 2019. I’ll talk a little bit about our program as we dialed up to compete with other things going on with the business during that time frame.

Looking back at 2019, we collected a couple things to inform the campaign (slide 17). I did a series of roundtables with employees in the enterprise, including those in EnAble and in the HR community, to get the voice of our disability community and learn what are the things that trigger that group to engage. And one of the things we have learned was that the message had to be authentic, and it had to be delivered in a way that was clear that we’re speaking directly to meeting people with disabilities where they are and finding stories that resonate in our workforce.
We wanted to give a holistic view where the rubber meets the road of how people with disabilities and those who have a variety of different conditions can perform at their best and find success in their career at PepsiCo. So, we needed to find examples of that, and we had the privilege to have our own film studio and crew. We had a small crew that we would take with us an on-site news team to different facilities across the enterprise to have people with disabilities who were willing to talk about their personal story share it in a little vignette that we could cascade to help close the gap and show people what the face of disability looks like inside the walls of PepsiCo. So, whether it’s Frito-Lay, Gatorade, Pepsi, Naked Juice, Tropicana, or Quaker, whatever it is, how do we see people with disabilities represented in our own workforce? There are many things that you probably have seen that come out through Walgreens, Walmart, or Marriott International, who have done tremendous work in this space, along with other employers.

One thing we heard from our own workforce was, “That's great that you see it happening somewhere else, but what does that look like in here? How does that authentic messaging show how PepsiCo embraces people with disabilities?” They needed to see people in a common worksite or on our production floor or in the marketplace – they needed to see the PepsiCo employee experience to demonstrate what PepsiCo has that’s happening right now, today, in our workforce. That motivates people to self-identify and celebrate individuals with disabilities.

So, we interviewed people in their worksite, whether it was in a warehouse, production site, or going out into the trade side - supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, etc. where our people work to demonstrate how people with a variety of different conditions all thrive in their careers at PepsiCo. That was a tremendous way of doing it.

As we collected these various vignettes, we blocked out a period of time for them to tell their stories. We got great stories from these individuals, but as a practical matter, when you build a companywide video and it lasts five minutes or so, each person will only get so much time. So, if you have ten people that have a story to tell and you’re putting them all into that video, they only get 15 to 20 seconds of airtime each to tell their story. But the quality of the stories that we got out of this was so rich, we decided we needed more. So, we cut out basically a minute to 90 second video for each of the employees that we highlighted in this video series and we gave each one of the employees a whole week of being saturated throughout our business through various communication methods.

There are video communication boards throughout all of our facilities in common high traffic areas where employees see them. All of our videos have closed captioning as part of that, so even in a hallway where there can't be sound on, there's closed captioning at the bottom of all the videos. Through the course of regular scheduled meetings, shift change meetings, we had an engagement with an entire workforce to invite them to self-identify. We also had a tutorial on how to go into our HRS system and navigate to the area to self-identify.

One of the things we learned, and I want to address this now because one of the questions you had asked earlier was about confidentiality, is that if you’re inviting people to self-identify, you need to talk about this. We talk a little bit about the legal obligation of PepsiCo as a federal contractor to invite employees to self-identify. Then we walk them through the process of the HRS system to self-identify and we emphasize multiple times about how only the employee can go into their own profile to self-identify. Their direct manager can't see it, their local HR person can't see it. It's just the number of people wo went through the reporting mechanism that my team gets - we don’t get their personal information. That's the only visibility that anyone would have, so we protect the confidentiality and privacy of those individuals.

I think the real underlying issue of confidentiality is the question of consequences. What are the consequences if I self-identify? Will any adverse action happen to me? Am I exposing myself in any way if I go through the process to self-identify? We had to unbox the fear and stigma that kind of surrounds
the disability conversation and really flip that on its head to accentuate the possibility of unlocking the
skillset that is harnessed inside the disability community and the contributions that they can make to
the overall PepsiCo enterprise.

So, going back to the initiative, each week from August 1- September 30, we featured in house videos.
And then in October, for the final push, we shared the full video where we highlighted three of our top
tier executives, including Ramon Laguarta, who is the Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, and Umran Bebe,
who was Chief Global and Diversity Engagement Officer. She has since left the company, and Tina got
that role. We used to work closely together, so it's wonderful to be reunited with her at this later stage
of my career. And Patrick McLaughlin, who is the SVP, Chief HR Officer of Frito-Lay and Quaker Foods,
was also in the video. They had their own endorsement of this project to invite their people to
self-identify. And this was the real meat of the project for the employees and caregivers in terms of
addressing the questions of how the rubber meets the road, how they can thrive in their career at
PepsiCo, and how the company embraces them, since the overall message of the video is, “You belong
here.” It’s a big thing on a human level, I mean, that's what everyone wants to hear - that you belong
here. We want to find a way to unlock your potential and self-identifying allows us the opportunity for a
leadership team, and for the other team members if need be, to understand that if we know this about
you, then we can adjust on the fly in order to allow you to perform at your best.

The mantra inside PepsiCo is “Winning with Purpose.” So winning and competition is fundamental and
engrained in our DNA. We have this concentration on competition. You can see this from yesterday’s
Super Bowl and the things we did around that. We had ads during the Super Bowl for Rockstar Energy
Drink and 3-D Doritos. So, exciting and fun things that bring people together as part of our brands and
that we use to cascade our messaging.

So, we have a voice inside our workforce that really speaks to that winning with purpose. We decided to
have a way to reward employee participation, to hold a raffle as an incentive (slide 19). So, we weren’t
paying people to self-identify, we were just creating a pathway to a competition that plugged into
PepsiCo employees’ sense of competition, because winning with purpose is an overall theme of
everything that we do. As a practical matter, when you see all of the different brands that we represent,
whether it’s Doritos, Pepsi, or Mountain Dew, all of those brands are big and loud. It's hard to take an
initiative to self-identify and get that share of mind among all these big, colorful, loud brands. How do
you attract attention to compete for a share of that space? So, we developed this competition and this is
the actual flier we used on all of our video monitors and it was also passed out at meetings - shift
changeover meetings and the like.

Let me take a quick step back. I build all our affirmative action brands for all brands of PepsiCo across
the United States. It's a little more than 500 action plans. For each of our establishment IDs, we had a
raffle. So, if you went on to the HRS system and engaged in the system in any way, whether you said, “I
have a disability,” “I don't have a disability,” or “I choose not to self-identify,” if you engaged with the
self-ID system, then you qualified - your name got put into a hat, so to speak, for a raffle for a $200 gift
card. We collected that data kind of behind the scenes, tracking who engaged with the system. And then
at the close of the 12-week cycle that I mentioned earlier, we did an algorithm by site to randomly select
a winner. We contacted that employee directly through mail. So their manager, local HR folks, etc. never
knew who won or self-identified. That was again to maintain privacy throughout the process.

At the close of the project, I did a cascading broad message across the enterprise that all the winners
have been selected. They were all contacted and sent their gift card as part of that and we closed it out.
We never released the names because someone might assume that if they won, that they had
self-identified as a person with a disability, which wasn’t necessarily the case - they had just engaged
with the system. So, that helped with getting people to feel comfortable with disclosing or participating
in the process.
So the big takeaway for us was the communication structure (slide 20). What we learned in the early parts of the process through the roundtables and talking to our employees and them to tell us, was what’s the right way to communicate and the right language to use that was going to trigger participation in the process.

In a partnership with Disability Solutions, who came in to do fear and stigma training, we worked to demystify common misconceptions of engaging people with disabilities in the workforce. That was a major unlock for us to answer questions or address assumptions that people may have had. I think that helped a lot, but we reserve the right to continue to get better. It’s an ongoing process to create a culture where people feel good about participating and self-identifying.

There were also multiple levels of leadership involved. We had our senior executives. They were in the videos that were cascaded across the enterprise, but all of management was engaged. Our HR community was instrumental in trying to cascade this message and saturate the business with the opportunity to self-identify. And we learned we have to feed who we are. Understanding who we are as PepsiCo and feeding our culture around competition was a big part of it. Finding a way to tap into that need to compete with share of mind with all the other big brands and initiatives going on across the enterprise and figuring out how to get this initiative to compete in that same space with the same vigor was key. We knew if there wasn’t a score card for it, it won’t get paid any attention. So, we had score cards that collected data in the aggregate and cascaded it on weekly trackers so that management could track it, and that fed the competition. Managers would ask, “How many people did I get to self-identify at my worksite?” and compare that to others. That score card was tapping into who we are as PepsiCo and feeding the behaviors that trigger our employees and leadership to pay attention.

Overall, we want to inspire the best performance from our employees. It’s a high competition climate that we operate in. That ability to perform is a practical matter – it’s a matter of our ability to continue to grow the business. So, all of our employees have to feel good about where they are and feel fully supported. If they don’t feel supported or happy with what they’re doing, they won’t perform to their optimum level. With the competitiveness of the marketplace we’re in, we can’t have employees that are not fully engaged or you can’t deliver the different metrics that are required.

So, this is a competitive advantage, nothing to do with regulations. It’s about our ability to compete in the marketplace and is really centered around our people being able to perform at their very best. So we want to engage with people with disabilities from where they are and where they come from, including caregivers of people with disabilities, as they have different issues to address. If you’re worried about something outside of work and we don’t know about it, you don’t feel good about talking about it around other employees, that is a portion of your potential that you’re not living up to. In order for us to compete effectively, we have to make that connection and enable people to perform at their best.

I appreciate you giving me some time on your agenda. I know there are a lot of things going on today. I'll stop and answer any questions if there's still time available.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Someone asked this question: HR presents the self-identification form at the time of new employee orientation and bears responsibility to post such self-declarations. How did you manage confidentiality with HR posting such declarations?

KEVIN FITZPATRICK: We do invite people to self-identify at new hire orientation. Part of the way we do this is our HRS system is self-serve. So we guide our new employees on how they can access their own profile in the system so that the local HR person is not engaged in how someone self-identifies, but they can help direct the individual in how to navigate to their profile. Only the employee themselves can go in and make that selection that’s on the CC-305 form to self-identify as a person with a disability.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: The next question is: Who funded the raffle opportunities?
KEVIN FITZPATRICK: So, that was from my center. And that’s a good question. You always want to know where the money is coming from. So, as I mentioned, I run all the affirmative action plans across the enterprise. It is that important from a legal team strategy that my center absorbed all of that cost. And it actually motivated the local team that they had something to offer that wasn’t coming out of their local budget. So, that was funded from my center and came out of my budget.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: We have another question: One of the challenges in large federal government agencies is the disconnect between high-level commitment to inclusion and ground level indifference. Did PepsiCo have a similar challenge and what was the solution?

KEVIN FITZPATRICK: So, that’s the “what's in it from me?” question. And there's a benefit to PepsiCo as a federal contractor that we can report on what our disability status is or about those that self-identify to meet the 503 obligations. The win for the employee is that we have a creative environment inside PepsiCo’s workforce and that “winning with purpose” mentality. It’s part of the DNA of that competitive environment. If there's anything about me as an individual or I have a condition and it’s harboring 20-30% of my potential because I'm channeling it around whatever that condition is, that’s 20-30% that is not contributed and that may impact my career potential. I may not be living up to my abilities if certain parts of my energy are taken up around things I haven't disclosed. If I'm able to speak freely to my supervisor or my teammates, that’s an advantage.

A couple of the videos I've shared include people talking about this sort of thing, saying things like, “As soon as I told my manager about my disability” or “As soon as I shared with my teammate about what my condition is or that I have a child with autism, the team rallied around me.” They want to see the team perform. If there’s something that we can do to adjust or accommodate those around us to perform at their best, and ultimately meet our collective goal in order to do that, we will do that. So I think it’s about unlocking that potential. To go back to the part I shared earlier about confidentiality and potential consequences of self-identifying, a big part of the initiative that I just shared with you is about unlocking this, really flipping that fear and stigma on its head and celebrating the worth and value of employees and focusing on what each person can give when they flip that switch to self-identify or share with their team about their disability because this allows the people around them to support them so they can perform at their best.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: This is a nice follow up to the answer you just give: Who provides fear and stigma training for PepsiCo? Because that sounds like a good resource to know who that trainer is.

KEVIN FITZPATRICK: So, as I said, we reserve the right to get better in this space. One of the initiatives that we have is something called Pepsi ACT - Achieving Change Together. As part of this, we have a third-party partner called Disability Solutions, led by Julie Sowash, provide this training. She is absolutely brilliant. Julie and I are going to present at the NILG conference in Nashville the first week of August. We’ll be joining Lou for a separate presentation with ODEP there as well. So, Disability Solutions helps as a third party to come in and make that connection for people with disabilities and provide that fear and stigma training. They do an excellent job of demystifying preconceived notions that can inhibit people from self-identifying. So, they are a good source for that.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Next question: How did the percentage of those that self-identified increase as a result of the incentive program?

KEVIN FITZPATRICK: We actually saw that the beverage side of our business was ahead of the curve because the Pepsi ACT program has been in place about nine years now. Actually just this year we're launching a Frito ACT program on the food side of the business. So, the food side of the business has not been as openly engaged. But we found that self-ID on the beverage side of the business increased by 25% as a result of this initiative, because we really tapped into the culture of PepsiCo. We were speaking their language and tapping into the competition aspect of who we are.
WENDY STROBEL GOWER: 25% is a pretty good increase. Somebody else asked: How does PepsiCo capture data on employees who become disabled after they are hired?

KEVIN FITZPATRICK: So, turnover can be a program, and this issue is not unique to Pepsico. This is one of my pitches to hiring managers as well. Turnover can be a problem, especially in front line, hourly, and commission-based roles. The annual churn that happens in those jobs can be pretty high, so that's where we do most of our hiring. But having consistency is key to our ability to meet production lines and customer needs, so the turnover that happens at that level can be a tremendous disruption in the business. So, the loyalty that happens within the disability community, once we get them hired, is actually significantly higher than that of the nondisabled community, in our experience. We actually see a higher retention rate for those who self-identify.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Someone asked about the timing of your self-identification campaign. They wanted to know if you did an annual reminder to everyone on how and why to self-identify or update their status?

KEVIN FITZPATRICK: Yes, absolutely. We do our affirmative action rollout in March and self-ID is part of that. I have a cascade on both the food and beverage sides. The beverage side is divided into four divisions and I have separate calls in that group and that cascades throughout the various levels on that side of the business. The food side of the business includes Quaker is nine regions. I have a separate call that cascades to the HR department and subsequent to that, to local HR teams, who disseminate that information. Our affirmative action plan is inside their space. They have to do a report back on what action plans they're putting in place and how they're leveraging outreach in the coming year. A big part of that is the self-identification campaign.

As a federal contractor, we are obligated every fifth year to do this, but it’s so important to us that so we do it twice a year, in March and October. October is a natural time because it's National Disability Employment Awareness Month. We have an ERG that's actively engaged to cascade that message across the business. So, those are the two times for us that we do self-ID campaigns. From a practical sense, it makes sense that we do this during those times, because we have something called “100 Days of Summer.” The volume size from a sales perspective of what happens for the beverage and food brands that sell during that 100 days of summer, the volume is so high and tremendous, you can't have anything else getting in the way of business during that time.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: So somebody asked how you can tell if all people with disabilities in your workforce self-identify?

KEVIN FITZPATRICK: I mean, as I said, we are always trying to do better. And I certainly think part of that is education about the breadth of all the different conditions that qualify under that term “disability.” I think that's a big component that requires partnership with other activities and with our EnAble team to figure out how we branch out on this and get more people to self-identify.

A lot of people have conditions that qualify as a disability. There's feedback that we get, like “I have this condition, but I manage it personally. It doesn't impact my business, so why would I tell you?” It's kind of an interesting dynamic. But we encourage people by telling them that this is an environment where you should feel good about bringing your whole self to work. That's a common phrase you'll hear around our space, bringing your whole self to work. It's not isolated to disability, it's LGBTQ, veteran status, anything that's part of your whole story. I mentioned earlier about the “unlock,” meaning unlocking your full potential. If there's some portion of who you are that's being held back because of identifying your race, gender, sexual orientation, disability statues, etc. - if that's eating up 20-30% of the potential of who you are, that's not acceptable. We need to bring all of that into the open so we celebrate all of your potential so you can really elevate your career by bringing your whole self to work - that's fundamental to PepsiCo's ability to perform.
**WENDY STROBEL GOWER**: Somebody asked if you could share some of your videos. I think we have some of those on AskEARN.org. We will make sure that you guys get those through Akinyemi. Someone else asked if you have shared your best practices with the Federal Government for possible replication toward promoting self-identification?

**KEVIN FITZPATRICK**: Yeah, I'm kind of a gluten for that (laugher). The more I can engage with OFCCP and ODEP, the better. I started with a wonderful relationship with Jennifer and Lou and a platform that has provided ways to engage. I'm also active on the board of Disability:IN, and I'm the National Chair for the NILG annual conference, which is being held this year in Nashville. So, I’m actively engaging in any opportunity I can to share because I think I have a lot to learn. I have learned a lot in my engagement with Jennifer and Lou and members of OFCCP. I think the relationships in that regard have been tremendous in our ability to talk openly and get educated around how to engage people with disabilities in a meaningful way to unlock their potential.

**WENDY STROBEL GOWER**: The last question is: How do you go about having conversations between managers and individuals that self-identify? I'm sure a lot of individuals with disabilities are nervous how they'll be perceived. What training do you provide for managers?

**KEVIN FITZPATRICK**: That goes into the confidentiality aspect, which has that hidden aspect of potential consequences. All the managers go through fear and stigma training. Your strength as a leader is dependent on your ability to engage with all those that report to you. There's this idea of service leadership that you've probably heard of. In order to be a good leader, even in my own role as I engage others, I have to demonstrate that personally. How is it that I can provide a service to you to unlock your potential? My employees have to be able to speak openly about who they are and the challenges that they have in their life to celebrate the different things they bring to the workplace. And honestly, there's a sense of loyalty that comes along with that. Sort of, “Hey, my boss sees me for who I am.”

I think the level of personal connection that you have as a leader is important and as you demonstrate that, even people that don't directly report to you see that - they witness your behavior, and that's the kind of thing you want to emulate. That's a team that you have to have - people that are so engrained in the organization because of the way that you treat them that they're willing to run through walls if that's what you need to do to achieve goals. I think as a leader, that's certainly my goal, my people have to be as actively engaged and on fire about the initiatives as I am.

**WENDY STROBEL GOWER**: Thank you so much, Kevin, for sharing. I'm going to turn it back to Natalie to move on with the rest of the program. We sure do appreciate you taking the time to present and answer questions.

**NATALIE VEENEY**: Thank you, Kevin. I think that was wonderful. Thanks to everyone who had a question. Obviously self-identification is something we need to keep on the radar and keep doing it to engage our new employees, as well as our employees that have been with us for a while. But to incentivize it in general is important. With that, moving forward we're going to do a series of poll questions. We really need you to participate in this section in order for it to be engaging.

We're going to ask the question and then go through the poll results. There will be a time after for you to ask questions via the chat box. Presenters, feel free to step in if you would like to respond to those questions. I don't have to answer all the questions. We want to make this as conversational as we can.

**AKINYEMI BANJO**: There is a quick question from Lou that is for Kevin. The question is: Who at PepsiCo champions the self-ID program? Is it the CEO or somebody else? I think this is interesting as we're trying to put together this kind of information. Who needs to legitimize it to make it important for people to put their support behind it?

**KEVIN FITZPATRICK**: I'll try to answer this as quickly as I can and keep it on point. In a practical sense, I'm
part of the law department. I report to the Senior VP of Global Employment Law, Michelle Thatcher. We do business in 200 countries around the world. Disability doesn't know borders. We need to engage our workforce around the globe in order to unlock this potential across the enterprise.

The legal precedent in the U.S. is that 503 regulation regarding the obligation to invite people to self-identify. We have obligations as a federal contractor, the CC-305 form, about how we roll that out. As a tactical point, we have to address that. The Board has to review that. We have the legal obligation and we go through that tactically. I had to outline the plan of how we're meeting the objectives and our obligations as a federal contractor. And we know that this ties into the work of the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) team and think about how to cascade that across the enterprise, so it's not just checking a box to meet a legal requirement.

We also need to figure out how we are using this as an initiative to empower our people to perform at their best. I really thing that this is a win when we connect to people on a human level. The diversity, equity, and inclusion standpoint is much more than helping the company to check a box to meet legal obligations. I hope that's not too long-winded of an answer. Basically, the answer for us is we do this through the legal arm of what the legal obligations are and also getting the DEI team to buy in so that those two teams work in harmony.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Thank you so much, Kevin. Back to you, Natalie.

NATALIE VEENEY: So again, thank you, Kevin. I enjoyed that segment very much. It’s exciting to hear all about PepsiCo and what you’re doing.

Participants, FEED members, we really want to get some information from you now. Like I said, there is going to be a series of poll questions. We'll have time after each poll question for you to ask questions around the topics, if you have them, before we move into the next poll.

So please stay with us and participate so that we can make these meetings about what you want them to be about, because that is the goal - making sure that the community is getting what they need. In his presentation, Kevin talked about “feeding the culture” of an organization. I love that phrasing. So, we want to make sure that when we plan these meetings, we're “feeding” our practitioners. So, the next poll question is about what specific topics you would like FEED meetings to discuss this year.

Poll Question #4

What specific topics would you like FEED meetings to discuss this year?

- A. Accessibility/technology: 11.68%
- B. Best practices in reporting and measuring success, including self-identification: 18.18%
- C. Hiring and recruiting, including use of Schedule A: 18.18%
- D. Information on reasonable accommodations (including accommodations for specific types of disabilities, such as Deaf/Hard of Hearing or neurodiverse employees): 23.37%
- E. Retention and career advancement for federal employees with disabilities: 23.37%
- F. Other (open chat): 5.19%

The first answer option, option A, is accessibility/technology. Answer option B is best practices in reporting and measuring success, including self-identification. If you want more on the topic, choose that one. Option C is hiring and recruiting, including Schedule A. Option D is information on reasonable accommodations, including accommodations for specific types of disabilities, such as Deaf and hard of hearing or neurodiverse employees. Option E is retention and career advancement for federal employees with disabilities. And option F is other, so put your selection in the chat box for that one. Again, what specific topics would you like FEED meetings to discuss? If it's not listed in the poll, feel free
to write it in the chat box.

Remember that we meet quarterly. If there are things that we’re not able to get to this year, we can tee them up for next year. Again, if you think we need all of these, but that in the chat box like we did for the last segment. We definitely want to cover these topics. I’m going to give it a few more seconds. A reminder that you can’t choose multiple entries in the poll, so you have to choose the one you want to hear about the most right now, or if it’s more than one option, put that in the chat box. Some things I’m seeing in the chat box are “developing awareness and buy-in from leadership and management for disability inclusion programs” and “best practices on engaging people with disabilities through employee engagement.” So, we’re going to close the poll now.

It looks like we have a tie between option D, which is information on reasonable accommodations, including accommodations for specific types of disabilities, and option E, which is retention and career advancement for federal employees with disabilities. Do we have any questions in the Q&A box, Wendy?

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: People just have a lot of ideas about providing assistance to hiring managers about the selection process and using disability as a positive during hiring, that sort of thing, but no one has any questions in the Q&A.

NATALIE VEENEY: Thank you. It looks like you guys have gotten this poll thing down. So, we’re going to go on to the next poll question. Today it was very, very refreshing to hear about what the private sector is doing in the area of self-identification. I know you guys love me, Dexter, Akinyemi, Lou, and Jennifer, but we want to know who here would like to present or facilitate a discussion at an upcoming FEED meeting. This space is for all of us as practitioners in this field. So the poll question is, “Would you be interested in presenting and or facilitating discussion at an upcoming FEED meeting?

Poll Question #5

Would you be interested in presenting and/or facilitating discussion at an upcoming FEED meeting?

A. Yes: 8.06%
B. No: 46.77%
C. Not Sure: 43.54%
D. If Yes, please include information about the topic you’d like to facilitate/present about (open chat): 1.61%

The answer options are, A. yes. I should see 100% (laugher). B is no, not interested in presenting or facilitating. C is you’re not sure. You might but, you might not be. D, if yes, go ahead and include your information about the topic that you’d like to present in the chat. We need to see those yeses increasing. It's not as hard as you think it is, I promise. I’ve done it a couple of times. Malcolm says he has a presentation on neuroinclusion and someone else wants to present about reasonable accommodations. Would anyone else like to volunteer? Elaine? Anyone else? Come on down to the Price is Right (laugher).

We really want to encourage people to present so we can hear from some different voices across different sectors of the federal space to talk about disability employment. Even though some of us have the same issues, how we tackle them might be a little bit different. So, that leadership buy-in that we were talking about in the last question for Kevin may be a little different from one sector to another. We can join together offline to come up with some strategies that could be facilitated or presented at a FEED meeting.

Okay, we’ll close this poll now. It looks like almost 44% of you are just not sure. Okay, we hear you.
Thanks for those that said yes. I’m not saying that we’ll reach out to you tomorrow or anything like that, but it’s good to see when we do have space in the agenda, what presenters we can give a call and ask if the meeting is around this topic, would you be interested in presenting? I do thank you for volunteering in your specialty area. We all have different gifts and areas of interest that we want to relate to the community.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: I was going to say, maybe we can have a little bit of a conversation about what people are unsure about or what they’re worried about at the end of the poll questions.

NATALIE VEENEY: I will make a note of this. And just so everyone knows, there are only a couple more poll questions. I don’t want you to think there’s another half hour of polls. There’s only a couple more, and then we can go into a more discussion type of forum. So, the next poll question is, “FEED meetings will likely remain online for the immediate future. What interactive features would you like to see in future meetings?"

Poll Question #6

FEED meetings will likely remain online only for the immediate future. What interactive features would you like to see in future meetings?

   A. Opportunities to ask questions or share ideas in the chat box during meetings: 21.91%
   B. Opportunities to ask question verbally during meetings: 10.95%
   C. Opportunities to respond to poll questions before, during, or after meetings: 21.91%
   D. Opportunities to share ideas via email or another method before or after meetings: 43.83%
   E. Other (open chat): 1.36%

So, the answer options are A. opportunities to ask questions or share ideas in the chat. B. opportunities to ask questions verbally during meetings. C. opportunities to respond to poll questions before, during, or after meetings. D. opportunities to share ideas via email or another method before or after meetings, and E. other, put your answer in the chat box.

It looks like D is the winner here - opportunities to share ideas via email or another method before or after the meeting. Then there is a tie between opportunities to ask questions or ideas in the chat and opportunities to respond to poll questions before, during, or after the meeting. So some people love the chat! Someone in the chat box mentioned having short breakout sessions in order to do a collaborative engagement/interactive session in a future meeting. Wendy, did I miss anything else?

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Someone suggested an accessible virtual meeting, which I guess is a different format. I'll have to look into that, and a lot of people just picked multiple options.

NATALIE VEENEY: Thanks for the link in the chat. That tool is helpful for us as virtual meetings is what we'll all be hosting for quite some time. If there are some things we're not participating in or not doing well, there are probably nuggets in there for all of us to learn and grow from.

We have one more poll question and then we'll wrap up. And the question is “Would you prefer an overview of presentations designed to increase understanding of EEO/diversity and inclusion practices and presentations on implementation of specific EEO/diversity and inclusion practices?”

Poll Question #7

Would you prefer overview presentations designed to increase understanding of EEO/diversity and inclusion practices or presentations on implementation of specific EEO/diversity and inclusion practices?

   A. Overview presentations: 2.5%
B. Specific practices: 15%
C. A mix of both: 81.25%
D. Other (open chat): 0%

The answer options are A. overview presentations, B. specific practices, C. a mix of both, and D. other options that you can put in through the chat box. I see that someone suggested getting information in advance to help us prepare, including questions. So that's important to the group. It looks like a mix of both is the winner. I think people like that. They want an overview, but maybe some specifics to help them on the implementation side. That's probably typical to what we have seen even when we were meeting in person.

I know we have a few more minutes and I want to try to have a brief discussion. I'm not sure if you want to put poll question number 5 back up. It was about being interested in presenting or facilitating a discussion at an upcoming FEED meeting. Almost 44% of you said you were not sure about facilitating or presenting to the group. I was wondering is there a way for you to tell us a little bit more about what are you unsure about? You can put your response in the chat.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: I was going to say that one thing that would be really great because people would like a mix of both the overview/big picture and the practical application is when we decide on a topic, we could invite people to share practices in their agency so that it could be like a roundtable discussion representing a number of agencies when we get to the implementation piece.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Also, it could just be highlighting specific practices within a particular agency. So it doesn't always have to be a big, major topic. Maybe just certain things or ideas that we try out that a participant may want to highlight and share with other group members to show its success or get ideas from colleagues.

NATALIE VEENEY: Annette says, and I love this, we need a list of DPMs or disability leaders that are willing to help new DPMs get acclimated and share knowledge, almost like our group mentoring program. I think that would be a great way to build connections and networking outside the meetings that could then be brought to the meetings as updates. I think that would be good.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Someone else recommended giving the requirements for the participation, what's the length? What's the audience? What's the scope? What's the format? So, we could send out an ask when we want people to participate on the topic about what would be required of them.

NATALIE VEENEY: We want people to provide information on what they're doing at their agencies that is working. It's great when OPM, EEOC, or DOL puts out guidance for agencies, but how that actually works can sometimes be very different. Trust me, I've worked in an agency and I've worked in a department. It's one thing to read something, but then you think, “How do we get that done across the agency or department if it's nationwide?” So implementation is key, I think, and suggestions around implementing big or small initiatives can give you a different perspective, especially from an agency or group that's outside your sector that may have tried something very different than what you're used to, but has seen success. Networking amongst this group is probably one of our greatest strengths. If we have a call for meetings on different topics, an extension of what you said Wendy, we could see if there's buy in.

I'm seeing some things in the chat box about not being an expert in the field, and I'm not quite sure we have a threshold of what makes you an expert or not. I've decided I'm an expert in the field because I'm passionate about some of these topics and I'm going to talk about them. So, I don't know if expert has to always be in your title for you to present. I don't want people to think what you're contributing daily isn't worthwhile to someone else because you may not have expert or SME in front of your name. I think
that comes along with just your service and your experience. So, I don’t want to downplay anyone’s gifts. Don’t think we’re only listening to “experts” here. I think there’s room for a lot of people to have their voice heard or amplified as part of this group. Also, there is a questions about a platform for lessons learned.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: A lot of people in the chat are talking about their interest in ERGs and how to start an ERG, brainstorming about ERGs, that sort of thing. That seems to be a really popular topic and people are connecting in the chat about this, which is wonderful.

NATALIE VEENEY: I'm excited to hear that. I'm going to give a shout out to my agency really quickly. If you're interested in ERGs, employee resource groups, we have a quarterly ERG practice group meeting at our office and it's for any ERG leaders or program managers. It has information like how to start one, how to get a charter, how to network, how to get everyone involved, etc. There's a lot of aspects that that those meetings cover. I think it's a great space for ERG leaders to learn more about how to make the most of your ERG opportunity. If you send an email to diversityandinclusion@OPM.gov and ask to get on the list serve for the ERG community of practice (COP), you can join the list. It may be something that we can bring to this meeting as well, I won't take that off the table, but I wanted to let folks know that it does exist and meets quarterly. Either way, we may be able to bring them here or you can join a quarterly meeting.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Someone in the chat box is saying “HR really isn't my area. I'm the program manager. I'm not sure if I have anything to contribute.”

NATALIE VEENEY: Stephanie said that? She has a lot to contribute. Sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off. I was like, “No, don't say that. You can always contribute.” We would love to hear about 508. I think the changes and getting that implemented in an agency in a way that really is foundational with the business of the organization is a hard, hard task for any 508 coordinator. Yeah, I do think that may be something and you could volunteer to give us a presentation on - 508 from an agency level perspective. Those are the things we want to know more about. I appreciate you saying that.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: People in the chat box are discussing wanting to have discussions offline and asking could there be a platform for lessons learned? Someone else asked if we could put up polls that people could respond to about agency practices. For example, whether their reasonable accommodation process is centralized or decentralized. And there is a lot of interest in having offline conversations, it seems.

NATALIE VEENEY: I'm excited about all we can do moving forward. If we don't have any more specific questions, I would like to ask any of our other partners if they have anything to say before we move to Wendy's closing remarks?

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Dexter said in the chat box that maybe we could set up informal mentoring opportunities and have some experienced FEED members volunteer to assist new members.

NATALIE VEENEY: I like that idea. I don't think we've ever done anything like that before and I'm wondering how we would set that up, if there is some virtual way to do this or an easier means to make that connection.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: We would have to talk about it. I've heard about micromentoring. That sounds like a really cool thing, but I don't know much about it. We'll have to learn.

AKINYEMI BANJO: Maybe there's something we can discuss together internally and come up with some more ideas.

NATALIE VEENEY: I'm all for it! So, thanks everyone for participating, I'm going to turn it over to Wendy
to give our closing remarks now.

WENDY STROBEL GOWER: Thank you, everyone. We are going to capture the questions that you asked today. There were a number for Hassan and Sarah that we didn’t get to. So, we will take those out of the Q&A and get answers to those from Hassan and Sarah and share those with you through Akinyemi. So, we will get those answers to you shortly. We’ll also scan the Q&A and make sure we didn’t miss anything else. We did our best to keep up. Someone asked about a recording. We don’t generally post a recording, but we post the transcript to the FEED page on AskEARN.org. If you want a recording, I'd reach out to Akinyemi and we’ll see what we can do, but I know we usually don’t disseminate those.

So, I just wanted to share a couple of EARN highlights if you will bear with me. We're in the process of revamping the EARN website so it's a little easier to navigate and find information on topics of interest. So, we're going to keep you posted on our progress on that in future FEED meetings. We’ve also released a couple of new practical tools and checklists that we’re hoping you’ll use and give us feedback on. The first is on job descriptions and announcements. There's a checklist on how to write a job description that is inclusive for people with disabilities and an explainer that explains the role job announcements and descriptions play in accessibility and why they’re important.

The second one is a checklist on accessible and authentic interviews for candidates with disabilities. So you may want to share this with some of your managers who may not be experienced with interviewing candidates with a disability, just to give them a little bit of background on what’s important and how they can go about getting ready for an accessible interview.

The other thing I wanted to share was the Communicating the Benefits of Self-identification fact sheet, which is very relevant to today’s topic, that our friends at Concepts did for us. It lists five steps to success for communicating about self-ID. I also wanted to remind you that Hassan and Sarah have created a fact sheet on their research that’s available on AskEARN.org.

That’s all I have today. Lou, if I’ve missed anything, please feel free to jump in here. We will get the transcript up in probably about a week or two. And Akinyemi can send that out to you all through the list serve. Natalie, do you want to close us out?

NATALIE VEENEY: Thank you, everyone, for your participation today. I hope that this was a learning event for you as well, as a time to share and network with colleagues - I know we haven't seen each other in a while. It's good to see people's names. I get excited, there's so and so, even though we can't really see each other. That connection I think is important. We hope to see you at our next quarterly FEED meeting. Have a great day.

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