STATE 25

OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

State As a Model Employer (SAME) Task Force Report

August 1, 2018

State As a Model Employer Task Force

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Executive Summary

In March 2018, Louisiana set a goal to serve as a "model employer for business by a commitment to improved hiring, recruitment, and retention of people with disabilities" through an Executive Order signed by Governor John Bel Edwards. The convening of a State As a Model Employer Task Force and this Task Force report are the first steps in launching this important initiative that will enhance the diversity of the public workforce, lead the business community, and highlight the State's position as a leader in the protection of civil rights for individuals living with disabilities. The Task Force report includes a series of recommendations and policies that will support the State in achieving the goals of the Executive Order and encourage State agencies as they seek to expand the diversity of their workforce.

I. Introduction

Louisiana is committed to maintain a diverse workforce in state government in order to provide access to opportunities to all its citizens and to reflect the talents of its diverse population. In order to achieve this goal of a talented and diverse state employee workforce, the State has a vested interest in erasing obstacles to meaningful employment specifically among individuals with disabilities. One estimate, cited in the National Governor' Association Report, A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities, projects the percent of the U.S. population with a disability to double in the next two decades.[1] Coupled with an aging population, this means that state governments will need to attend to a rapidly changing workforce to identify and attract skilled state employees. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) stresses that "Individuals with disabilities represent an underrepresented and largely untapped segment of the labor pool for consideration in state government employment."[2]

Louisiana also is eager to be a leader in advancing the civil rights and welfare of individuals with disabilities. According to the States as Model Employers of People with Disabilities: A Comprehensive Review of Policies, Practices, and Strategies by Employer Assistance Resource Network (EARN), "Employment serves two primary functions for individuals and families: It provides a livelihood and increases social engagement"[3]; and in the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Report: Fulfilling the Promise: Overcoming Persistent Barriers to Economic

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[1] Stewart, L., Shanbacker, E. and Wills, M. (2013). *A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities*. [online] Nasddds.org. Available at: http://www.nasddds.org/uploads/documents/NGA_2013_Better_Bottom_Line1.pdf [Accessed 31 Jul. 2018].

[2] Ncsl.org. (2018). *State as Model Employer Policies*. [online] Available at: http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-as-model-employer-policies.aspx [Accessed 31 Jul. 2018].

[3] Krepcio, K. and Barnett, S. (2013). *State as a Model Employer with People With Disabilities: A Comprehensive Review of Policies, Practices, and Strategies*. [online] Askearn.org. Available at: http://www.askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/statemodel.pdf [Accessed 31 Jul. 2018].

Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities "People with disabilities experience significantly lower rates of employment than individuals without disabilities and consequently experience higher rates of poverty[RP3]."[4]

In pursuit of these ends, Governor Edwards enacted an Executive Order in March 2018 that established a goal for Louisiana as a model employer and set out steps for enhancing employment for individuals with disabilities. The State As a Model Employer Task Force (hereinafter "SAME Task Force") was appointed under the Executive Order to address the gap in employment of this underrepresented population in the workforce.

The SAME Task Force was delegated responsibility to: develop policies, strategies, and services designed to achieve the employment targets established in the Order; establish a five-year plan with annual goals that will enable the state workforce to reach parity with the percentage of working age people with disabilities in Louisiana; and to provide guidance and other support to agencies and institutions of higher education for recruitment, retention, accommodations, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Each state agency was required to designate a State as Model Employer point of contact and delegated responsibility to develop an individual agency plan to promote hiring, recruitment and retention.

In the few months since this Task Force was appointed, members have met and developed a better understanding of the landscape for State employment of people living with disabilities and the steps through which the State will become a model employer of people living with disabilities. As a relative newcomer to the State as a Model Employer Movement, the Task Force also sought to learn much from the work and actions of other states and national thought-leaders on the subject, including The Council of State Governments and National Conference of State Legislatures Report:

[4] Nasuad.org. (2014). *Fulfilling the Promise: Overcoming Persistent Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities*. [online] Available at: http://www.nasuad.org/sites/nasuad/files/HELP%20Committee%20Disability%20and%20Poverty%20Report.pdf [Accessed 31 Jul. 2018].

Work Matters A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities.[5]

This report describes and summarizes the SAME Task Force's findings, recommendations, and guidelines. Specifically, this report sets out in three sections: 1) findings as to current capacity and goals to be pursued to achieve the desired outcomes; 2) a recommended plan for the State that recommends policies and strategies and a process for completing the five-year plan by collecting data and then establishing annual goals for employment of individuals with disabilities; and 3) guidance to agencies and institutions to assist them in development of their individual agency plans. This Task Force is also recommending the continuation of its work to support the State, agencies, and institutions of higher education to expand hiring, recruitment, and retention so that the State is a model employer for all of business throughout the State. This recommendation is included in the recommended plan.

As Louisiana moves forward to adopt SAME strategies, it positions itself to become an example to other agencies, entities, industries, and small businesses. Furthermore, implementing and sharing SAME best practices will move the needle in helping to allay fears that engaging and employing people with disabilities is an unwise business decision. Rather, continued efforts to intentionally design a more disability-inclusive workplace is consistent with continuing public and private sector efforts to recruit and retain a skilled, diverse, and representative workforce.

[5] Whitehouse, E., Ingram, K. and Silverstein, B. (2016). *Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Developmentfor People with Disabilities*. [ebook] Office of Disability Employment Policy. Available at: http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/employ/Work_Matters_Report.pdf [Accessed 1 Aug. 2018].

II. Current Landscape

Through meetings, exchange of knowledge, review of practices and regulations, and discussion of strategies utilized in other States, the SAME Task Force has identified the following specific needs, achievements, and capacities that will inform the recommendations in this report.

1. The Need for the SAME initiative

The Task Force incorporates, as part of this report, the findings of the Executive Order as follows.

- According to the 2017 Annual Disabilities Statistics Compendium, 30% of people with disabilities in Louisiana live in poverty compared to 16% of people without a disability.
- Only 33% of people with disabilities are in the workforce compared to 72% of individuals without disabilities. Research indicates that the level of employment, the quality of jobs, and the degree of access to those jobs are crucial determinants of poverty reduction;
- The economic impact of unemployment and pay disparities between people with disabilities and those without results in forgone state tax revenue while increasing job opportunities for people with disabilities saves the federal and state government money by reducing dependency on cash and medical and disability benefits;
- The state has a vested interest in reducing discrimination against people living with a disability, eliminating barriers to meaningful employment, and attracting the highest quality candidates into state employment opportunities;
- When the workforce that directs and provides essential services to residents of the state reflects the diversity of the population, those services are more likely to be responsive to and respectful of that diversity;
- To be competitive in the global economy, the State of Louisiana must use the talents and important contributions of all workers, including individuals with disabilities;
- Progress towards serving and employing people with disabilities requires both the commitment and participation of executive leaders throughout state government.

2. Need for Accurate Data

Effective State policy and implementation requires data that enables the State to measure the effectiveness of strategies based on progress starting from a baseline that is as accurate as possible. There is a significant need for data regarding the number of persons with disabilities employed with the State. In order to track the State's progress in meeting its goals for employment of people with disabilities, there needs to be a reliable, accessible means of reporting the disability status of state employees.

Currently, the LaGov HCM (Human Capital Management) system contains a field where state agencies can record the disability status of employees; however, this is not a required reporting field. Furthermore, even when used, we are not sure if this data is based upon self-reporting by the employee or upon observation by agency staff. In addition, this system will not contain employees for higher education, elected officials, or other entities that do not pay their employees in the LaGov system.

As of this spring, there were approximately 71 employees coded as having a disability in LaGov HCM. It is unlikely that this figure is accurate. Therefore, we have no comprehensive way to determine how many disabled individuals make up the workforce of the approximately 70,000 classified and unclassified employees in the State of Louisiana.

In order to establish a baseline for this initiative, the Task Force has drafted and the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs will be sending a survey to state employees asking them to self-report their disability status. This survey can be used on an ongoing basis to track progress compared to this baseline data.

3. Effective Use of Louisiana's Fast Track Mechanism is Likely to Increase Hiring of Individuals with Disabilities

Recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities can be enhanced by fast track mechanisms that ease the employment of individuals living with a disability by easing the impact of civil service requirements in appropriate circumstances.

Louisiana civil service has a fast track mechanism upon which it can build to support increased hiring of individuals with disabilities into state government positions. Under the provisions of Civil Service Rule 22.8(a), an appointing authority may fill a vacancy

by probational appointment, job appointment, or promotion of a State Vocational Rehabilitation Services or State Blind Services program client without the appointee's attainment of any test scores normally required, provided the appointee meets the Minimum Qualifications of the job, and that the appointing authority documents that the appointee is a bona fide client of a State Vocational Rehabilitation Services or State Blind Services Program, is disabled to such an extent as to prohibit participation in the usual required tests, and is able to perform the duties of the position without hazard to self or others.

With better recruitment and increased collaboration with agencies serving people with disabilities, the State can expand the effectiveness of this fast track mechanism. The rule was cited as the authority for hire five times within the past two fiscal years (7/1/16-6/30/18). Individuals with disabilities may have been hired under other rule authorities, so this number likely does not reflect the total number of disabled candidates hired during this time-period. However, the number does indicate that individuals with disabilities have not had the wherewithal to take advantage of the rule.
The Task Force has concluded that ongoing partnerships with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) can increase the use of the tool. Through ongoing communication, agencies will be able to determine if qualified Individuals with disabilities are available for vacancies as well as be able to obtain information about resources available for making needed accommodations. The designation of an LRS point-of-contact liaison will assist in this effort so that agencies will have a readily available person to whom questions may be directed.

The Task Force also concludes that the use of the rule may be restricted by the limited capacity for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services to serve all of the individuals with disabilities who are eligible for services. LRS follows an order of selection (designated by Groups 1 through 5) to make sure that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected to receive services before individuals with less significant disabilities. At this time, only individuals designated in Groups 1 and 2 are being served as LRS clients. Those in Groups 3-5 are eligible but unable to receive any services at this time from LRS. Instead, they are referred to other agencies for possible assistance. Thus, only those people in Groups 1 and 2 are considered "clients" to be eligible for appointment under the provisions of CS Rule 22.8(a). Under Section III of this report, Five-Year Plan and Statewide Strategies and Recommendations, the Task Force will recommend the revision of the rule to include any person who is found eligible for LRS services.

4. Learning About and Applying for Job Openings Should be Easier and More Accessible to Job Seekers with Disabilities

The Task Force recognizes that individuals with disabilities, many of whom have not seen employment as an option, will need information, guidance, and resources to encourage and support them to locate appropriate employment opportunities in state government. Louisiana Rehabilitation Services is one resource that can support people. However, as a result of limited resources, LRS operates under an order of selection and is not able to offer services to all individuals with disabilities seeking employment. The State needs to look at multiple mechanisms for expanding knowledge and access to State employment opportunities including the business and career solution centers operated by the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, and outreach to a variety of agencies that serve individuals with disabilities including independent living centers, disability advocacy organizations, and veterans advocacy organizations.

5. Retention of Jobs and Promotion for Employees with Disabilities Requires Comprehensive Training for Staff and Managers on State and Federal Workplace Rights, Accommodations, and Disability Etiquette.

While there are trainings available on the Louisiana Employees Online platform that include information about ADA and workplace rights, there is need for a comprehensive and recommended set of trainings to advance the goal of increased hiring and retention. Training will highlight the goal of employment of individuals with disabilities. Staff should receive training in recruitment and hiring strategies, the right to reasonable accommodation, the right to a discrimination free environment, protections against retaliation, responding to requests for accommodation, and creation and maintenance of an inclusive work environment. The Task Force finds that a comprehensive training curriculum will encourage hiring, retention, and promotion of employees with disabilities in the State workforce.

6. People with Significant Disabilities Will Bring Skills to Agencies but May Not Match Already Existing Job Descriptions

Individuals with significant disabilities offer skills and value to the workplace but may not match specific job descriptions. The Task Force finds that there are hiring strategies that state agencies can use and adapt to promote employment of individuals with significant disabilities including job carving, customizing positions, and job sharing.

7. Internships are an Effective Pathway to Employment

Internships are pathways that can lead to successful and meaningful employment. The purpose of internships is to help individuals gain experience and sharpen their skills for the career/job they want to pursue.

Recent internship development in the Governor's Office illustrates the effective use of internships. The span of internships has varied in the Governor's office, but typically, the internships have ranged from five to six months. The Governor's Office provided internships to two people with disabilities who are now employed in the Office-- one part-time and the other full-time. Before the individuals began their internships, gubernatorial staff discussed with them the type of employment they were interested in as well as their strengths and experiences. Each individual discussed their long-term employment goals and what they would they like to do in the future. Additionally staff talked with them about the skills they were hoping to acquire while interning, any need for accommodations, and how staff could best help each reach his or her goals.

As with most government offices, there are many tasks to be accomplished in the Governor's office, so once staff were able to identify the strengths of interns, they were able to utilize them to perform tasks which were a best fit for the intern and for the office. For example, one intern had experience as an advocate, knowledge of the legislative process, and data entry skills. As a direct result of learning these skills, she was assigned to prepare reports on disability issues during legislative sessions, track legislation, assist with the setup and sign-in/check-in for council/board meetings within the Governor's office, and update the calendar in a timely fashion.

Internships that lead to employment within an office allow employers to think outside the box to fill the needs within their office and provide meaningful successful employment which will benefit both the employee and the employer. These internships help not only the individual with a disability but also give the employer more experience and understanding about employing individuals with disabilities within their state agency/office.

8. Concerted Outreach and Recruitment Efforts Result in Employment for Individuals with Disabilities

The Task Force emphasizes the success that results from a concerted effort to focus on recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. A recent initiative of the Lieutenant Governor's office can serve as a model for our state agencies.

In 2018, Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser began a new employment and customer service initiative within the Office of State Parks. Louisiana State Parks partnered with the Louisiana Workforce Commission, to participate in the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services program. In advance of Louisiana State Parks' summer season – the busiest time of the year – positions such as front desk staff, custodians, and groundskeepers were available. Out of approximately 80 summer positions, 15 to 17 of these positions were filled with qualified individuals with disabilities through this outreach initiative.

The Louisiana Rehabilitation Services program "assists persons with disabilities in their desire to obtain or maintain employment and/or achieve independence in their communities by providing rehabilitation services and working cooperatively with business and other community resources." With 21 State Parks located throughout Louisiana, the Office of State Parks was in a position to provide employment opportunities, specifically in the more rural areas, to individuals across the state.

The initiative used a three-prong recruiting process: 1) a press release was issued by the Lt. Governor's office announcing the LaWorks partnership and a flyer with additional information was posted to the LaWorks website; 2) all targeted positions were posted to the Civil Service Website and advertised at the State Civil Service Testing and Recruiting Center in Baton Rouge; and 3) all targeted positions were emailed by Department of Cultural Recreation and Tourism (DCRT) Human Resources to contacts with the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services program, the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, and La. Department of Health-Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD). DCRT as a whole now continues to send all available positions (classified full-time and part-time) to the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services program, the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, and La. Department of Health OCDD. All staff benefited from aspects of the initiative. In addition to the new hires, all existing staff underwent a series of customer service trainings, per the new initiative from the Lt. Governor's Office. Training consisted of a presentation, exercises, discussions, and role-playing scenarios. The goal of the training is to understand the importance of providing a quality guest experience at State Parks and State Historic Sites, understanding guests' needs and expectations during their visit, and finding new ways to implement improved customer service.

III. Five-Year Plan with Recommended Statewide Policies and Strategies

After review of the current landscape and the goals for the State as a Model Employer, this Task Force recommends adopting the following policies and strategies to advance the Executive Order goal that at least 7% of the state workforce be comprised of people living with disabilities and to enable the state workforce to reach parity with the percentage of individuals with disabilities in the adult working age population.

1. Establish Statewide Annual Goals and Recommend Agency Specific Annual Goals Based on Data Collected through Survey of State Workforce

The Task Force has approved the format and content of a survey to be distributed to state employees in order to encourage self-reporting by individuals as to whether they have a disability. The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs will work with state agencies, higher education, and other governmental entities as necessary to distribute a survey to all state employees asking them to self-report if they have a disability. This data will be anonymous and voluntary, identifiable only by the employee's agency. An addendum to this report will be provided to incorporate the baseline data once the survey process is complete.

Once the survey data has been collected, a baseline can be established for each agency as well as for all state government. This baseline should be used by each agency to determine the appropriate annual and long-term goals to include in their agency plan describing the strategies and policies they will adopt to meet the overall goal of 7% of their workforce being comprised of persons living with disability.

As part of the support provided to agencies as they develop their agency plans, the SAME Task Force will make recommendations regarding reasonable annual goals based on the individual agency's benchmark data from the employee survey. These recommendations will include consideration of the following factors:

- Total number of employees in the agency
- Agency's starting percentage of employees with a disability. Those with a low current employment percentage may need to set higher annual goals than those already approaching the 7% overall goal
- Agency barriers to increasing employment of individuals with a disability such as physical demands of a large number of their positions
- Measure retention of employees with a disability

2. Facilitate and Encourage Productive Partnerships Between State Agencies and Agencies that Provide Employment Services to Individuals with Disabilities

The SAME Task Force recommends a comprehensive Point of Contact (POC) system that will increase hiring of people with disabilities by supporting the development of effective partnerships between state agencies and agencies that provide employment services to individuals with disabilities.
A comprehensive Point of Contact (POC) system is intended to facilitate the accomplishment of several key strategies to:

(1) increase the access that job applicants with disabilities have to hiring managers in state government,
(2) provide for an effective and efficient means to exchange information relative to job applicants with disabilities,
(3) provide for consistency and uniformity in regards to hiring protocols,
(4) serve as an initial contact for state agencies seeking to hire persons with disabilities, and
(5) serve as a resource to coordinate training and capacity building for American Job Centers (AJCs) in regards to serving persons with disabilities, and most especially those assigned to an Order of Selection Group not being served by the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The Task Force believes that increased interactions between persons with disabilities and hiring managers in state government will help to dispel myths, stereotypes, biases, and the negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities. This will result in an increase in positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities, and consequently, result in an increase of persons hired.

(1) The Point of Contact (POC) system will increase the access for job applicants with disabilities to hiring managers in state government.
The primary purpose of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services' (LRS) POC is to facilitate the process by which people get interviewed and increase their employment in Louisiana State Government. Persons with disabilities apply for state government job openings, however, there is no way for hiring managers to determine who they are, which presents a barrier for those departments seeking a more inclusive and diverse workforce. The SAME Task Force recommends that one point of contact will be designated by LRS to act as a conduit of information between LRS and state agency designees relative to persons who are applicants or who have been determined eligible for LRS' vocational rehabilitation program.

One person will be designated in each state department by the department head who will be responsible for communicating with the POC regarding job opening(s) for which they are requesting to be filled by a qualified individual with a disability. The POC will share this information with LRS Counselors and other agencies that serve individuals with disabilities, i.e. Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities and Office of Behavioral Health.

The following represent some of the related tasks and activities that would be assigned to the LRS POC in regards to receiving requests from designated staff at state agencies:

- Receive requests from state departments and agencies specifically desiring to hire a person with a disability
- Disseminate requests to LRS counselors and other agencies, as appropriate
- Assist with requesting Civil Service test waivers, as appropriate
- Advocate for applicants with disabilities who meet minimum qualifications in order to increase the number of interviews with hiring managers
- Assist rehabilitation counselors with coordinating interviews, as appropriate

The following represents some of the related tasks and activities that would be assigned to the LRS POC in regards to sharing job applicant information with designated staff at state agencies:

- Receive from rehabilitation counselors the names of persons who have applied for state government employment and job application information
- Disseminate the names and job information to the identified agencies, as appropriate
- Assist with requesting Civil Service test waivers, as appropriate
- Advocate for applicants with disabilities who meet minimum qualifications in order to increase the number of interviews with hiring managers
- Assist rehabilitation counselors with coordinating interviews, as appropriate
- Receive feedback from hiring agency regarding actions taken (interviewed, hired, not hired) to be relayed to the rehabilitation counselor

The POC will be expected to collect and maintain data to evaluate the effectiveness of the system; the data might include such information as numbers referred, interviewed, and employed by department or agency.

(2) The POC system will provide an effective and efficient means to exchange information relative to qualified job applicants with disabilities.
The above process will ensure seamless communication regarding job applicants with disabilities and allow for hiring manager considerations.

(3) The POC system will provide consistency and uniformity in regards to hiring protocols.
The above process will ensure consistency and uniformity of communication regarding job applicants with disabilities and allow for hiring manager considerations.

(4) The POC system will serve as a resource and initial contact for state agencies seeking to hire persons with disabilities.
The POC will be available to disseminate resources relative to the vocational rehabilitation program to state agencies. The POC will research, identify, and share best practices to inform and assist state departments in their hiring initiatives, such as the availability of situational assessments, internships, customized employment, supported employment, and work-based learning experiences. The POC will also assist with identifying resources related to diversity, attitudinal, and sensitivity training.

(5) The POC system will serve as a resource to coordinate training and capacity building for American Job Centers (AJCs) in regards to serving persons with disabilities.
The POC will coordinate efforts to provide training to staff in the American Job Centers (AJCs). An Office of Workforce Development (OWD) staff person will be designated to work collaboratively with the POC to determine training needs in AJCs, identify training resources, provide information about vocational rehabilitation services, and encourage appropriate referral of persons with disabilities for co-enrollment in AJC/VR programs.

Staffing Recommendation:
The SAME Task Force recommends funding a position at OWD specifically for this work. By funding a position through OWD, there would not be the restrictions of populations to service as there are for LRS Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

3. Expansion of Scope of Civil Service Fast Track Rule, Civil Service Rule 22.8(a)

The Task Force recommends that State Civil Service expand the use of Rule 22.8(a) by changing the requirement of being a client of LRS to being "an individual deemed eligible for services from a State Vocational Rehabilitation Services or State Blind Services program." This would expand the pool of candidates under CS Rule 22.8(a) to include all individuals in Groups 1 through 5.

4. Develop Comprehensive Three-Tiered LEO Training for Employees, Hiring Managers, and HR Managers

The SAME Task Force recommends a comprehensive, multi-tiered training program that educates and equips all state government employees with the requisite knowledge and skills that would help to create an environment that values individuals with disabilities. The comprehensive approach would utilize existing methods to deliver the training, to include Louisiana Employees Online (LEO), the Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP) administered by Louisiana State Civil Service, training programs available through colleges, universities, and community organizations, and available web-based opportunities. State Civil Service's CPTP Program provides online training to all state employees through the Louisiana State Employees Online (LEO) system. Both online and instructor led classes may be booked through LEO, and employees can see the full range of course offerings there. Some of the current general offerings include the following topics; Customer Service, Stress Management, Dealing with Change, Time Management, Conflict Management, etc. The only current training in LEO briefly referencing disability topics is a Diversity web-based course. State Civil Service plans to have an ADA web-based course go into development at the end of 2018 with an anticipated release in the spring of 2019.

Additional training resources will also be explored/developed, to include instructor led train-the-trainer formats, seminars/workshops, and virtual resources. The various formats will be used to deliver training on a broad range of disability-related topics, such as disability employment etiquette, sensitivity and awareness, requirements related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), disability communication, etc.

Training on disability related topics will have a positive impact on organizational, cultural, behavioral, and attitudinal change by addressing the negative attitudes, myths, stereotypes, and biases that prevail about the disability population.

5. The SAME Task Force Has Developed Recommendations for the Training State Agencies Should Offer to Employees, Hiring Managers, and HR Managers

The SAME Task Force recognizes that it will take time to develop the comprehensive training described in item 4 above. The Task Force has therefore developed a recommendation for the types of training state agencies will want to offer staff and managers until a comprehensive training can be developed and made available. This recommendation is included in Section IV, Recommended Strategies and Guidelines for Agencies, item 7.

6. Develop proactive, targeted recruitment and outreach efforts to better inform the disability community of state positions for which applications are being accepted

The SAME Task Force recommends that the State Point of Contact and the Task Force work with individual state agencies to find avenues for informing individuals of state openings and this initiative. Avenues for outreach might include independent living centers, Families Helping Families, school transition events, as well as advocacy and service organizations.

7. Call for Early Adopter Agencies to Pilot Best Practices to Provide Concrete Guidance for All State Agencies

The SAME Task Force recommends implementing a workforce pilot comprised of Early Adopter State Agencies committed to prioritizing the hiring of individuals with disabilities.. The results of these pilots can assist other agencies as they implement and revise their agency plans.

The Task Force would look for three to five Early Adopter agencies. Early Adopters are those state agencies that commit to generating immediate opportunities for citizens with disabilities to compete and gain meaningful employment in actual positions within state government through proactive strategies. These strategies might include: working with LRS, OCDD, and the AJC to identify and place at least five individuals over a nine month period;, training staff in cutting edge strategies for placing individuals with significant disabilities including customized employment, job carving and job sharing;

providing training to managers in workplace accommodations and disability etiquette; developing at least one partnership with a community provider of employment services to support recruitment efforts; developing partnerships to provide internship opportunities: and developing a mechanism to track hires achieved through the pilot efforts. The results of these pilots would be highlighted at the SAME summit with special recognition of agency efforts and presentation of their strategies and best practices.

8. Host a SAME Summit to Publicize the State as Model Employer and "roll-out" SAME hiring initiatives.

The Task Force recommends that the State host a SAME summit on or before November 2019 that will further publicize state hiring initiatives and provide additional outreach to individuals with disabilities, the community of providers that support them, and the business community. The Summit will be scheduled for a time after agency plans have been completed, the survey results have been compiled, annual goals have been established, and agencies have begun to implement their plans.

9. Continuation of SAME Task Force Work

The Task Force recommends that it continue to convene on an ongoing basis to provide continued guidance to State agencies, to oversee the collection, analysis, and monitoring of outcome measurements, and to recommend additional statewide strategies to achieve goals of the Executive Order. Areas in which the Task Force will continue to offer guidance and recommendations include but will not be limited to:

- Oversee the completion of the survey of state employees to obtain a baseline measurement of numbers of individuals with disabilities employed by State agencies and State affiliated agencies;

- Upon review of baseline data and in accordance with the Governor's Executive order, recommend annual goals that will enable the state workforce to reach parity with the percentage of working age people with disabilities in Louisiana;

- Oversee development of three-tiered Louisiana Employment Online (LEO) training on disability related workforce issues including training for state employees, state agency hiring managers, and HR staff and managers;

- Monitor and evaluate civil service fast-track mechanisms including suggested revisions of the test exemption rule and increased agency use of test exemption rule and test accommodation by applicants;

- Sponsor and encourage public events highlighting SAME work and state agency collaboration in outreach targeted to effective recruitment of individuals with disabilities;

- Ongoing reporting to Governor and state agencies describing and evaluating ongoing strategies and progress under the SAME initiative including submission of state agency plans mandated by the Executive Order, utility and effectiveness of point of contact system, implementation of state agency training initiatives, outcomes of early adopter initiatives, implementation of internship initiatives, exemplary partnerships with LRS, OCDD, LWC and other state agencies supporting hiring of individuals with disabilities, revisions of Civil Service rules, utilization of WAE (When Actually Employed) temporary part-time opportunities within Civil Service guidelines, and promising results achieved through best practices implemented by state agencies;

- Suggest additional recommendations and strategies based on review of strategies implemented and outcomes achieved;

- Develop partnership with a variety of consumer-driven organizations to help spread the word of the SAME initiative.

IV. Recommended Strategies and Guideline for Agencies

Under the State as Model Employer Executive Order, each agency is required to submit an agency plan designed to expand the recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of individuals with disabilities by October 31, 2018. The Task Force has developed recommended strategies and policies that state agencies are encouraged to review and consider as they are developing and implementing these agency plans. The Task Force also encourages each agency to develop their own innovative and agency-specific goals and strategies and to share them with the Task Force and colleagues at other agencies.

1. Agency Point of Contacts Should Be Expected to Communicate Regularly with LRS Single Point of Contact

The Task Force emphasizes that the effectiveness of the ongoing work between the agency single point of contact and the LRS single point of contact will be important to the success of this SAME initiative. The Task Force recommends that each state agency plan set expectations for how often the agency single point of contact should meet or talk by phone with the LRS single point of contact.

2. Create a Specific Process for Agency to Work with LRS Single Point of Contact

Each agency will want to provide guidelines for its point of contact that will encourage those designated individuals to take a proactive approach to recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. These guidelines should include an expectation that points of contacts will review the skills and qualifications of individuals served by LRS and then review and highlight job openings that would be good opportunities for particular individuals or specific subsets of LRS candidates. Agencies should expect points of contacts to be familiar with customized employment strategies, job carving, and job sharing strategies so that they can work with hiring managers to match department needs with qualified candidates with disabilities. Agencies will also want points of contacts to understand supported employment job coaching and serve as a liaison with hiring managers to encourage them to work closely with job coaches to help individuals learn and adapt to their jobs. Finally, agencies may want points of contact to work with department heads to determine where there is a need for a WAE (see recommendation 4 below) position and to match that need with a candidate with a disability served by LRS or another agency that supports individuals with disabilities.

3. Train Staff in Hiring Strategies that Can Expand Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities Including Customized Employment Strategies.

Customized Employment is a flexible process based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. Customized Employment utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development and considers the unique needs of the job seeker and the employer.

4. Consider Use of WAE Part-time Jobs for People Who Are Not Seeking Full Time Employment.

The Task Force recommends that agencies utilize available WAE (When Actually Employed) part-time positions as opportunities to employ individuals with disabilities in those instances when these applicants are not looking for full-time employment. Such temporary, part-time positions can serve as a means to further develop skills in these candidates as well as evaluate how they perform the duties assigned. Ideally, such part-time positions will allow the individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their value to the organization and eventually lead to a more permanent appointment with the agency. Hiring should not be limited to such part-time work though, and the Task Force encourages agencies to hire candidates with disabilities into full-time jobs filled through traditional as well as targeted recruitment strategies.

5. Create Program to Work with LRS, and Secondary and Post-Secondary Programs to Develop Meaningful Paid Internships.

Consistent with the Task Force finding that paid internships can lead to state employment, the Task Force recommends the development of a comprehensive internship program that can utilize already available pre-employment transition funding to support paid internships at state agencies. As a result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, state VRs, including LRS, are required to provide five Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students ages 16 - 21 with disabilities. Pre-ETS services promote movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education and competitive, integrated employment. One of the required services is Work Based Learning Experiences (WBLE). WBLE's are short-term employment, apprenticeships, internships, job shadowing, mentoring opportunities, and work-site tours to learn about necessary job skills in the community and to prepare students with disabilities for employment opportunities, including supported employment. This recommended initiative can capitalize on several current successful collaborations between LRS and secondary and post-secondary programs.

6. Encourage Agency HR staff to Attend Disability Job Fairs.

The Task Force recommends that agencies include in their plans an expectation that HR staff attend disability job fairs to recruit and educate job seekers with disabilities about opportunities at their agency. Job Fairs are an opportunity for employers to recruit qualified employees who are seeking employment. October is National Disability Employment Awareness month and diversity job fairs are held during October throughout the state. Job fairs are hosted by the American Job Center in Lake Charles every quarter. Recruiters who attend job fairs, whether these are disability specific or general, should be trained on how to engage with people with disabilities at these events.

7. Include in the Agency Plans a Requirement that the Following Types of Training Be Provided to Staff

The SAME Task Force recommends the following types of training for certain specified levels of staff.

All Employees:

- Training in disability awareness and disability etiquette

Hiring Managers and Supervisors:

- Training in disability awareness and disability etiquette.
- Training in accommodations, workplace rights, interviewing

HR Managers:

- Training in disability awareness and disability etiquette
- Training in accommodations, workplace rights, interviewing
- Training in recruitment and hiring strategies including customized employment.

The chart in Addendum 1 includes training resources that can help state agencies in their selection of trainings.

Since knowledge on the part of supervisors, hiring managers, and HR managers in workplace rights and recruiting is essential to hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities, this report also includes specific recommendations for agencies regarding training in these areas.

8. Include in Agency Plans a Requirement that HR managers, Hiring Managers, and Supervisors Receive Trainings in Reasonable Accommodations and Other Workplace Rights Topics

The SAME Task Force strongly recommends that each state agency plan include the requirement that all HR managers, hiring managers, and supervisors receive training in reasonable accommodations and the workplace rights of individuals with disabilities. Appended to this report is a listing of trainings and educational materials, among which are a selection of trainings on these topics.

9. Publicize to All Staff the Availability of Information, Education, and Training on the Right to Reasonable Accommodation and Workplace Rights for Individuals with Disabilities.

The SAME Task Force urges state agencies to include in their plans a requirement that agencies publicize to all employees on at least an annual basis the availability of free trainings and educational materials regarding the right to reasonable accommodations in the workplace for individuals with disabilities and designate a particular department or staff person to be responsible for publicizing this information. Making this information available is key to maintaining a disability inclusive work environment.

10. Designate a Resource Person within the Agency for Supervisors to Receive Guidance on Workplace Accommodation Issues

Each agency should designate a person for supervisors to contact regarding workplace accommodations. This designee should be required to have continued training and education in ADA requirements and processes. Supervisors should be aware that there is such a designee. The designee should have contacts with state agencies, such as LRS or OCDD, as well as external agencies that can be a resource regarding workplace accommodations.

11. Include in Job Postings Statements that Highlight the Commitment to Employ Individuals with Disabilities.

The Task Force recommends that agencies include verbiage on their websites and in job postings encouraging candidates with disabilities to apply to advertise their support of the Employment First philosophy and initiative, such as "Louisiana is a State as a Model Employer for individuals with disabilities."

Addendum 1: Training Resources Chart

Training Programs (3)

Source	Training Topic	Format	Cost
Great Plains ADA Center while policy and programming is overseen by the University of Missouri- College of Human and Environmental Sciences, School of Architectural Studies https://www.adacoordinator.org/	**ADA Coordinator Training Certification Program (ACTCP) -** developed in response to a need for both quality training on the Americans with Disabilities Act and a mechanism to verify completed training and depth of knowledge base on ADA issues. ACTCP Certification shows employers they have the knowledge base necessary to be an effective ADA Coordinator.	In-person & Online Training	$300
Milt Wright & Associates, Inc. http://www.miltwright.com/	***WINDMILLS*** – Leveling the Playing Field **CHANGING THE PERCEPTION OF ABILITIES TRAINING PROGRAM**	11 – 1 hr. training modules	**Guide** $550 **Training CD** $50
Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) National Certification http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/faq/	The CESP™ national guidelines to validate and support the training currently provided in the field. The certification program falls under the oversight of the Employment Support Professional Certification Council (ESPCC), established by the APSE Board of Directors.	Certification Exam	$199

Webinars (37)

Source	Training Topic
EARN Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion http://www.askearn.org/news-events/webinars/ Free Archived Webinars	Hiring & Keeping the Best: Creating Effective Talent Acquisition & Retention Processes
	Building the Pipeline: Successful Strategies for Recruiting & Hiring People with Disabilities
	Key Steps and Strategies for Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) Students and Graduates
	Intro to Accessibility: What Employers Need to Know to Create a Technology Accessible Workplace
	Tapping the Talents of America's Heroes: Hiring & Retaining Disabled Veterans
	Strategies for Retaining Talent after Injury or Illness
	Ensuring Your Virtual Doors are Open: A Key Component of Disability Inclusion
	NILG – Building a Disability-Inclusive Talent Pipeline
	Tapping the Talents of Veterans with Disabilities Steps to Success
	Disability Diversity in the Higher Education Workforce
	Talent Matters: Leveraging Disability-Inclusive Outreach & Recruitment Strategies
	Do Ask, Do Tell: Tapping the Power of Disability Diversity & Encouraging Self-Identification
	Cultivating Talent for Tomorrow: The Value of Interns With Disabilities
	Accommodating Employees with Mental Health Disabilities in Higher Education
	Opening the Doors to People with Disabilities: Part 1
	Opening the Doors to People with Disabilities: Part 2
	Disclosing Disability: What You Need to Know

	Build the Pipeline: Effective Disability Outreach and Recruitment
	Section 508 Best Practices Webinar: Ten Top Strategies For Implementing Section 508
	Disability Focused Employee Resource Groups: Strategies and Best Practices
	Creating Linkages for Effective Recruitment of Candidates with Disabilities
	EEOC Charge Data: What We can Learn About the Employment of Persons with Disabilities
	The Aging Workforce
	USBLN® Disability Supplier Diversity Program
	Workforce/Veterans – What Can I Do To Welcome Our Veterans Back into the Workforce?

	Customized Employment: Moving Beyond the Basics
Office of Disability Employment Policy https://www.dol.gov/odep/resources/PEAT.htm Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) - monthly PEAT Talks speaker series Free 1Hour On-line	Emerging Workplace Technologies and Vision Loss
	Expanding Accessibility Awareness in Higher Ed
	Creative Recruiting Strategies for the Digital Age
	Making Tech Fields Accessible
	Implementing Accessible Workplace Tech: PDF Accessibility
	Implementing Accessible Workplace Tech: Videos and Accessibility
	Fostering a Culture of Inclusion and Accessibility in the Workplace
	The ADA and Accessible Workplace Technology
	Building Accessible Online Recruiting and Hiring Systems
	Accessibility and the Seven Principles of Universal Design
	GettingHired

Resources/Fact Sheets/Publications (26)

Source	Topic
EARN Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion – Recruitment & Hiring http://www.askearn.org/topics/ Free Flyers and Fact Sheets	Expressing a Commitment to Disability Inclusion
	Finding Candidates with Disabilities
	Job Descriptions
	Interviews
	Disabled Veterans
	Internships
	Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)
	Apprenticeships
	Mentoring
EARN Retention & Advancement http://www.askearn.org/topics/ Free Flyers and Fact Sheets	Workplace Flexibility
	Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
	Stay at Work/Return to Work
	Disability Etiquette
	Older Workers
EARN Creating an Accessible and Welcoming Workplace http://www.askearn.org/topics/ Free Flyers and Fact Sheets	Physical Accessibility
	Technological Accessibility
	Attitudinal Awareness
EARN Laws & Regulations http://www.askearn.org/topics/ Free Flyers and Fact Sheets	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)
	Employer Financial Incentives
	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
	Learn about National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)
EARN State Government Employment http://www.askearn.org/topics/ Free Flyers and Fact Sheets	State Government Employment
US DOL Employment and Training Administration https://doleta.gov/disability/resources/ Free Flyers and Fact Sheets	Disability and Employment Community of Practice https://disability.workforcegps.org/
	Workforce GPS Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) page https://dei.workforcegps.org/
	Section 188 Disability Reference Guide https://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/188Guide.htm
	Disability Employment Policy Resources https://www.dol.gov/odep/resources/

Training Video Series

Source
ODEP Workforce Recruitment Program Recruiter Training - https://www.dol.gov/odep/wrp/Recruiter-Training-Videos.htm Free Training Video

Multimedia Training Microsite (10)

Source	Topic
Job Accommodation Network (JAN) https://askjan.org/training/library.htm Free Just-in-Time Modules	JAN's All About JAN Module.
	JAN's Understanding and Applying the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act and Its Regulations
	JAN's Interactive Process
	JAN's The Value Proposition for Engaging People with Disabilities
	JAN's Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence
	JAN's Assistive Technology in the Workplace
	JAN's Ergonomics in the Workplace
	JAN's Providing Reasonable Accommodations to Employees with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
	JAN's Accommodations for Brain Injury in the Workplace
	JAN's Bridging the Gap Across Transition

Resources (5)

Source	Topic
Office of Disability Employment Policy **https://www.dol.gov/odep/resources/PEAT.htm** Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) Free Resource	TalentWorks, a resource that helps employers and human resources (HR) professionals make their e-recruiting technologies accessible to all job seekers, including those with disabilities.
	Policy Matters, a feature that provides plain language policy briefs and analyses on the federal laws that affect accessible ICT and how they apply to businesses.
	TechCheck, a tool to help employers assess their technology accessibility practices and find tools to help improve them. *TechCheck* is intended for U.S. employers of all types — public or private, large or small.
	PEATWorks.org, a central hub for accessible technology-related tools and resources, including the latest PEAT research on the accessibility of online job applications and other eRecruiting technologies.

Other state's Employment First webpage resources (8)

Source
State of Ohio https://ohioemploymentfirst.org/
State of Oregon https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/employment/employment-first/Pages/index.aspx
State of Texas https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/employment/employment-first
State of Florida http://www.employmentfirstfl.org/
Commonwealth of Massachusetts https://employmentfirstma.org/
State of Maine http://employmentfirstmaine.org/
Commonwealth of Virginia https://standup-inc.com/employmentfirst/
State of Arkansas https://dhs.arkansas.gov/dds/employment1stweb/#emp1-about-us