

**U.S. AbilityOne Commission
Minutes – Quarterly Public Meeting**

**Thursday, July 24, 2025
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. ET**

I. Call to Order

U.S. AbilityOne Commission Chairperson Robert Hogue called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and greeted the over 260 participants attending via Zoom.

II. Administrative Remarks and Introductions

Commission Executive Officer Angela Phifer gave administrative remarks. She noted that two American Sign Language interpreters would interpret and that the meeting was being live captioned.

Commission members introduced themselves.

Executive Director Kim Zeich and Acting Inspector Carla Smith introduced themselves and certain staff members.

III. Made in America Office Remarks

Michael Stumo spoke. He is Associate Director, Economic Policy and Made in America, in the Office of Management and Budget.

He said President Trump is serious about bringing manufacturing and the industrial base back to the U.S. The pandemic made clear that domestic manufacturing is part of national security.

While buying and hiring American is a key priority for the Administration, Federal agencies have been uneven in their compliance with buy-American mandates. Stumo said he knows that current AbilityOne leadership is dedicated to coming into full compliance with requirements and providing Made in America goods to the Federal Government.

A high-quality industrial base drives good wages and averts job losses, leading to strong families, strong communities, and a strong country where children have a chance to be better off than their parents, Stumo said.

IV. Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Overview

G. Nagesh Rao spoke. He is Director (Acting) and Deputy Director, Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP), National Institute of Standards and Technology, in the U.S. Dept. of Commerce. He gave an [overview](#) of MEP, which helps small and medium-sized manufacturers grow, make operational improvements, and reduce risk.

He has been pushing to get the manufacturing community to recognize that people with disabilities can be part of the workforce, especially given current technology. He knows from his

own personal experience that people with disabilities are eager to work and eager to show their skill sets and capabilities.

Vice Chairperson Christina Brandt said Rao's presentation had been inspiring. She particularly appreciated the attention to workforce development.

Hogue said he was hopeful and optimistic that the Commission would be able to identify synergies working with MEP.

V. Consideration of Minutes

Minutes from the April 24, 2025, quarterly public meeting were approved.

VI. Chairperson Remarks

Hogue said Stumo and Rao had addressed topics that are some of the Commission's top priorities, namely Made in America and the domestic industrial base. Made in America will be essential to increasing AbilityOne's support and ability to accomplish its mission, Hogue said.

FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Hogue said the Commission is on schedule for developing its next Strategic Plan. On July 17, 2025, the agency posted the [initial draft of its FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Components](#). The agency hopes to issue a subsequent draft for public comment (timing to be determined). The Commission welcomes feedback.

Changes in the Office of Inspector General

In May the Commission said farewell to Stefania Pozzi Porter, who left the Inspector General position and is retiring. Carla Smith was appointed Acting Inspector General. Hogue said the Commission looks forward to Smith's leadership and that the Office of Inspector General can make the agency better in performing its mission.

President's Budget

Hogue said the President's Budget maintained the Commission's current funding level, which the agency views as a positive sign that reflects the Administration's priorities and support for the AbilityOne Program.

That said, Hogue went on, the Commission continues to seek ways to drive value, efficiency, and accountability.

Anniversaries

Hogue mentioned some important anniversaries that occur during the summer months, including the anniversaries of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Wagner-O'Day Act, and the rule ending 14(c) in the AbilityOne Program.

July is also the anniversary of the signing of Commission Policy 51.542, which requires AbilityOne nonprofit agencies to purchase and use AbilityOne products when performing AbilityOne service contracts. Hogue said that since the signing of Policy 51.542 on July 20, 2022, there has been a nearly 500% increase in those purchases, which now total over \$6 million.

VII. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Kim Zeich gave a [report](#).

She said the meeting marked the very beginning of conversation about the Commission's next strategic plan and about the companion guidance for the AbilityOne section of the FAR. The Commission's goal is to illuminate these important topics early, she said.

VIII. Acting Inspector General Presentation

Acting Inspector General Carla Smith gave an [update](#).

IX. Public Engagement Session

The Commission [had announced](#) that the public engagement session would discuss 1) the Commission's draft Strategic Plan for FY 2026-2030, and 2) to the extent it relates to the AbilityOne Program, the initiative to streamline and simplify the Federal Acquisition Regulation – i.e., the “Revolutionary FAR Overhaul.” The Commission invited public comments and suggestions on the engagement topics.

Deputy Executive Director Amy Jensen moderated the [session](#).

Jensen began by noting that the Commission had initiated strategic planning to prepare for its FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

In advance of the meeting, the Commission had posted the [initial draft of its FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Components](#). Jensen emphasized that the posted material was not a full plan but initial draft components. She said the Commission planned to engage further with stakeholders to obtain feedback while continuing to develop and refine the Strategic Plan.

Jensen said the focus for the Commission's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan is to have objectives, outcome goals, and performance measures that support the priorities of the new Administration while maintaining and reinforcing the changes the AbilityOne Program has undergone over the past three years and creating a sustainable way forward.

After Jensen's presentation, Vice Chairperson Brandt spoke. She is on the Commission's Performance Management Subcommittee, whose duties include developing the strategic plan,

measuring the agency's progress against the plan, identifying any challenges that may be getting in the way of achieving the plan's objectives, and looking at ways to address those challenges.

Brandt said the subcommittee looked at progress made on the Commission's FY 2022-2026 strategic plan and moved forward key objectives in the area of helping the Program create more good jobs to align with the current Administration and create opportunities for growth.

Jeffrey E. Mittman, President and CEO, Bosma Enterprises; President, National Association for the Employment of People Who Are Blind (NAEPB)

Mittman said he appreciates that the initial draft of the Commission's FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Components discusses employment growth, expanded opportunities, and new lines of business.

He said it will be important to use metrics that measure results. The success of a new line of business isn't just the existence of that new line, but the number of people employed. He's also interested in tracking any growth in the number of NPAs in the Program and any movement into geographic areas not currently served by the Program.

He also recommends tracking opportunities recommended by AbilityOne Representatives (ABORs), including tracking them by the number of jobs and hours those opportunities generate.

He said the Program should strive for efficiencies at every level. Out of that will come growth.

John Bogasky, Secretary, SourceAmerica Board of Directors

Bogasky, a retired Federal contractor, is an independent Board member on the SourceAmerica Board. He chairs the Board's strategic planning committee. He emphasized that he was speaking for himself, not SourceAmerica or its board.

A core part of the AbilityOne value proposition is that it delivers competitive products and services, he said. That idea is present in the strategic plan components the Commission released, but it should be more prominent. Sustaining the competitiveness of AbilityOne products and services should be a goal or strategic objective.

A mission statement should be short and punchy and talk about outcome.

He had some recommendations for streamlining, restructuring, and removing redundancies from the Strategic Plan components. He said he'd submit these recommendations in writing.

When SourceAmerica was working on its 2021 strategic plan, it made a point of including Federal contractors in an advisory capacity. That participation made the plan better, he said. An important factor in creating a strategic plan is that stakeholders buy into it.

Brandt and Zeich thanked both speakers for their comments.

The [next part of the session](#) addressed the second public engagement topic, titled for purposes of the meeting "Suggestions for Practitioners Guidance, Revolutionary FAR Overhaul of Part 8 (Specific to AbilityOne)."

Jensen spoke briefly about the FAR overhaul and referred to the [Revolutionary FAR Overhaul webpage](#) on Acquisition.gov. She said the Commission would be looking to build practitioners guidance that includes helpful tools, work aids, best practices, and other information.

Soraya Correa, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

Correa said she likes where the strategic plan is going and thinks its emphasis on business process improvement is important. The Program needs to be more efficient and effective, including getting things on the Procurement List faster, she said.

Correa spoke about what she sees as the fragmentation of the FAR. She hopes the FAR might be restructured to better reflect the acquisition lifecycle.

She is excited by the Revolutionary FAR Overhaul and is also thinking about how to train the workforce on the use of the new FAR.

Luis Ambroggio, Vice President of Contracting and Compliance at PCSI

Ambroggio mentioned some concerns he had about portions of the FAR not clearly referencing AbilityOne. It's vital that contracting officers be reminded to look at AbilityOne as a first source, not just as an alternate source, he said.

Hogue thanked the speakers. He said there was a need to be effective in educating Federal offices about what their responsibilities are relative to AbilityOne.

Commission Member Matthew R. Beebe, who is Director of Acquisition, Defense Logistics Agency, in the Department of Defense, said the Commission must focus on the value proposition that AbilityOne represents – that it is a quality program with quality products – rather than focusing on rules that require people to buy AbilityOne regardless of quality.

Since there were no more comments, Jensen closed the public engagement portion of the meeting and opened the conversation up for general comments and questions.

In response to a comment in the chat, Zeich said the Commission wants to make it easy for people to remember to do business with AbilityOne, and then to report and track that business. These are issues that have been discussed with the ABORs, she said.

A question in the chat asked if there was news about new Commission members. Hogue said there was no confirmed news as yet. Zeich said there were 8 vacancies on the Commission.

X. Concluding Remarks

Vice Chair Chris Brandt offered some concluding remarks. She serves on the Commission's Performance Management Subcommittee, which is responsible for drafting, gathering input on, and monitoring the strategic plan. She thanked the speakers who had offered input on the

strategic plan components, and she urged people to continue providing perspectives. She mentioned the thoughtful feedback received from the Compliance Council.

Change is a reality that the AbilityOne Program is facing, she said. Change can be hard and risky, but also inspiring. She said the speakers had emphasized that change can bring opportunity to the Program, the NPAs, and employees who are blind or have significant disabilities.

After navigating significant challenges and implementing important changes, the Program is now consolidating lessons learned to establish a sustainable path ahead, Brandt said. This process involves careful review of successes and failures. The Program needs more data, faster, and needs to talk about what the data means. Decision-making must be data-driven. Input from all stakeholders is essential to ensure comprehensive understanding and effective progress.

The Commission continues to look at modernization and stakeholder engagement. There is a renewed expectation for accountability and efficiency. There's a need to engage the CNAs and NPAs to create more job opportunities, and there's also a need to reexamine the Program's work and align it with the evolving nature of employment and government contracting.

The approach moving forward will be to adopt best practices and methodologies that are efficient and effective in achieving desired outcomes and performance measures. Examining results together, and learning from data and statistics, will also be key.

Brandt referred to the 8 Steps for Leading Change methodology of John Kotter, a well-known thinker and speaker on the topics of leadership and change.

Following Brandt's remarks, Hogue said the Program is more than regulations, or the Procurement List, or the Procurement List Information Management System (PLIMS): It is the human energy and interaction that accomplish the mission. He thanked all speakers and participants and adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Attendees

Over 260 people attended, including:

Commission Members

Robert D. Hogue, Chairperson	Department of the Navy
Chris Brandt, Vice Chairperson	Private Citizen
Matthew R. Beebe	Department of Defense
Jeffrey Koses	General Services Administration
Jennifer Sheehy	Department of Labor
Virna Winters	Department of Commerce

Scheduled Speakers

G. Nagesh Rao	National Institute of Standards and
Michael Stumo	Office of Management and Budget