



U.S. AbilityOne Commission Quarterly Public Meeting

October 28, 2026



Administrative Remarks

- This official meeting of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission is open to the public and is being recorded
- ASL interpreters are viewable by clicking the Interpreter button – live captioning is viewable by clicking the CC icon – both buttons are located at the bottom of the Zoom window
- The Zoom setting for public attendees today is listen-only
- The Chat Box is enabled for comments or questions
- Screen reading software users can silence Zoom alerts (including chats), if desired, by muting your computer audio and joining the meeting by phone
- Meeting materials can be found on www.abilityone.gov





Agenda

- Introductions
- Opening Remarks
- Recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)
- Executive Director Report
- Acting Inspector General Presentation
- CNA Presentations
- Public Engagement Session: “Strategies to Reduce Employment Barriers Faced by Americans Who Are Blind or Have Disabilities”
- Closing Remarks





Recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month



Executive Director Report



Recently Issued Commission Guidance

- [Program Fee Ceilings](#) for FY 2027 announced Sept. 29, 2026; new 2-tier structure lowers cost to Federal customers for largest AbilityOne service contracts
- [Commission Policy 51.103, Contract Performance Accountability for Quality Complaints](#) became effective Oct. 1, 2026
- [Commission Directive 27-01, Transparency, Accuracy, and Accountability in Country-of-Origin Documentation](#) issued Oct. 8, 2026
- [Commission Directive 27-02, Clarifying the Process for Competitive Distributions in the Program](#) issued Oct. 13, 2026
- Final rulemaking underway: “Revising Central Nonprofit Agencies' Requirements to Charge Fees and Clarifying the Permissibility of Subcontracting Within the AbilityOne Program”





Continued Emphasis on Domestic Sourcing

The Commission provided leadership and oversight of AbilityOne domestic manufacturing in FY 2026, including

- Required all new AbilityOne products and price changes to include Country-of-Origin (COO) certification beginning July 1, 2026, per Commission Directive 26-02 (May 1, 2026)
- Launched *AbilityOne American Manufacturing Steering Group* to identify barriers and solutions
- Launched *Made in America by AbilityOne* page on www.abilityone.gov to highlight successes
- Participated in Governmentwide initiatives to consolidate purchases of key domestic products
- Conducted site visits to multiple AbilityOne manufacturers and industry partners
- Published RFI to identify independent sources for product-origin validation and supply chain intelligence; seeking to pilot test best available solution





GSA Engagement re: Domestic Sourcing

- GSA Administrator letter dated Aug. 14, 2026, to Commission Chairperson
 - Requested a comprehensive COO review of GSA-managed products on the Procurement List and updates to be made in GSA's Verified Products Portal by Nov. 12, 2026
 - Raised some issues beyond or tangential to COO focus
- GSA Class Deviation CD-2026-03 (TAA Deviation) dated Aug. 14, 2026
 - Effectively changed COO standards for GSA-managed AbilityOne products from meeting Buy American Act (BAA) requirements to meeting TAA requirements
- Chairperson's response, Sept. 4, 2026, emphasized shared objectives, committed to providing requested information, and clarified other issues raised
- Active coordination underway – senior leader meetings held; working group being established to drive alignment and advance shared goals in FY 2027





Key FY 2026 Initiatives – Ongoing

- Strategic Plan for FY 2026–2030 has been published, inclusive of stakeholder feedback; seamless transition that builds upon prior plan's implementation
- Frequent communication and engagement with Executive Branch, Congressional staff, AbilityOne Federal contractors, and disability advocacy organizations, supporting transparency and sustaining strong working relationships
- Compliance modernization implementation, including new front-line qualification assessments and new data collection forms, maximizes Program resources for oversight and accountability
- Efficiency Working Group identified and implemented 7 business process improvements to increase efficiency and reduce paperwork; will kick off the next round of improvements in FY 2027





U.S. AbilityOne Commission

Office of Inspector General



Carla Smith, Acting Inspector General
October 28, 2026





OIG Communications

Semiannual Report to Congress

Provides information on all OIG activity during a 6-month period. The reporting period April 1, 2026 through September 30, 2026 has closed. The SAR for this period will be posted on the OIG website in November.

OIG Oversight Plan for 2027

The plan is in development and will be issued by the end of the calendar year.

Completed Assignments

FY26 FISMA was issued in September 2026. No new findings were made.





OIG Oversight – Audit & Evaluation

Office of Audit and Evaluation

Mandatory Audits

FY26 FSA Financial Statement audit is in progress, and the report will be issued by the end of this calendar year.

Discretionary

The OIG OAE has begun its audit of CNA use of program fees. The audit focuses on how program fees are utilized.





OIG Oversight – Investigations

Investigations

Two investigative reports were issued during the FY26. The summary of these reports are posted on the OIG website.





OIG Contact Information

AbilityOne Office of Inspector General

<https://abilityone.oversight.gov>

To submit a complaint to the OIG:

Please submit complaints using our Portal

<https://abilityone.oversight.gov/hotline>

You may also submit a complaint via our:

Toll Free Hotline Number: **1-844-496-1536** or

Email: **hotline@oig.abilityone.gov**





CNA Presentations

National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

Compliance Program Overview
October 28, 2026



Overview

- **FY 2026 Compliance Summary**
- **NIB Compliance Staffing**
- **Qualification Assessment Reviews (QARs)**
- **AbilityOne Compliance Data**
- **NPA Training & Assistance**
- **Looking Ahead: FY 2027**

FY 2026 – Year of Transition

- **New Data Reporting Requirements Implemented**
 - Disability Qualification Determination Form (DQD)
 - Participating Employee Information Form (PEI)
 - Updated Annual Reps & Certs Form (ARC)
- **Updated NPA Compliance Review Process**
 - Qualification Assessment Reviews (QARs)
- **Compliance Data Dashboards**
- **Ongoing Engagement from the Compliance Council**

NIB Compliance Resources

- **Primary Compliance Team:**

- Six staff dedicated to NPA Compliance, led by our Senior Director, Risk & Compliance

- **Technology Support:**

- Information Technology
- Data Visualization Analytics

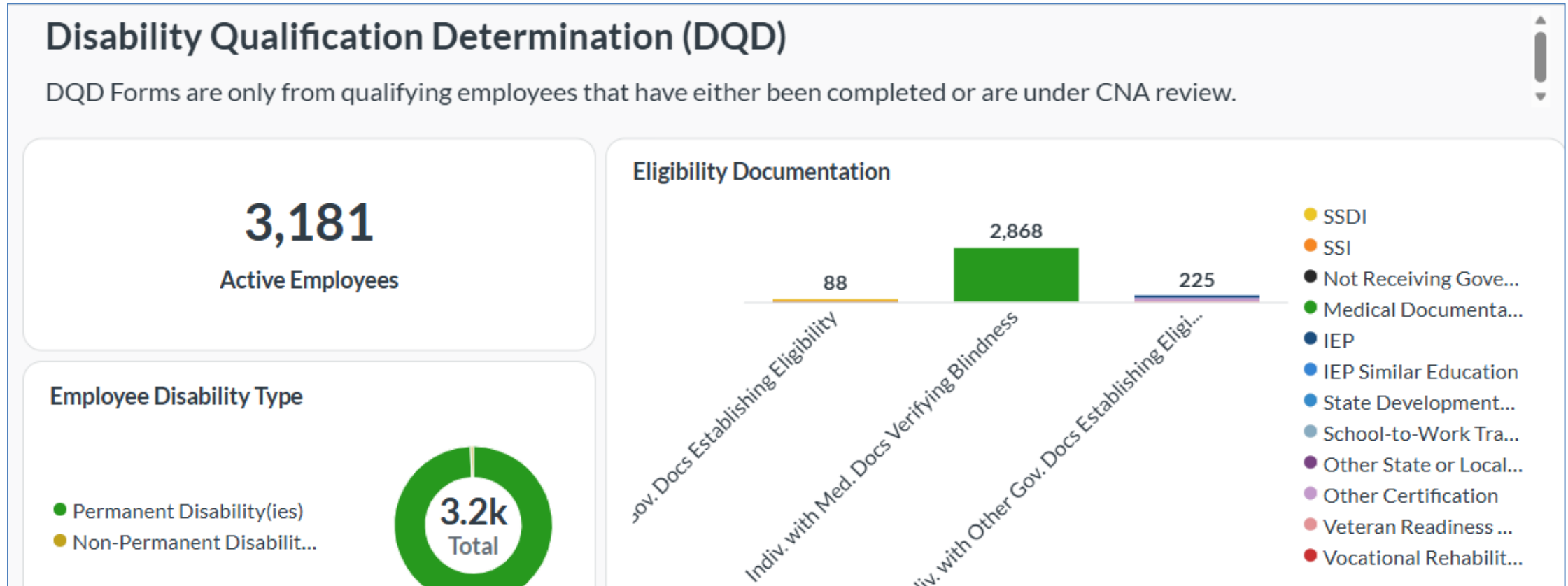
Qualification Assessment Reviews (QARs)

- **QARs Evolved from NPA Technical Assistance Visits**
- **In FY 2026, NIB's QARs:**
 - Standardized Across the Program
 - Incorporated Updated Policy Requirements
- **Ongoing Process Automation**
- **100% NIB NPA Reviews Completed in FY 2026 (58 NPAs)**

Program Compliance Data Collection

- **New Data Systems: DQD / PEI**
- **Updated Quarterly Data Reporting (QDR) reporting platform for new Annual Reps and Certs**
- **Mynib.org Online Portal for Comprehensive Commission Access to Compliance Data**

Sample DQD Dashboard



NPA Training & Assistance

- **Extensive NPA Training Provided Throughout FY 2026**
- **Compliance Grant Funding Available**
- **NPA Involvement Critical Throughout this Year of Transition**

Looking Ahead

- **Objectives for FY 2027**

- Ongoing Review of NPA-submitted DQD and PEI forms
- Track QAR Trend Data
- Continuous Process Improvement
- Conduct QARs at 100% of NIB's AbilityOne-authorized NPAs
- Finalize and Fine-tune Dashboards

SourceAmerica NPA Program Oversight and Compliance

Fiscal Year 2026



Agenda

- **SourceAmerica Program Oversight and Compliance approach overview**
- **Qualification Assessment Reviews and Corrective Action Plans**
- **Program oversight and compliance Systems and Data**
- **Compliance assistance and training**
- **FY26 accomplishments**
- **Looking ahead to FY27**

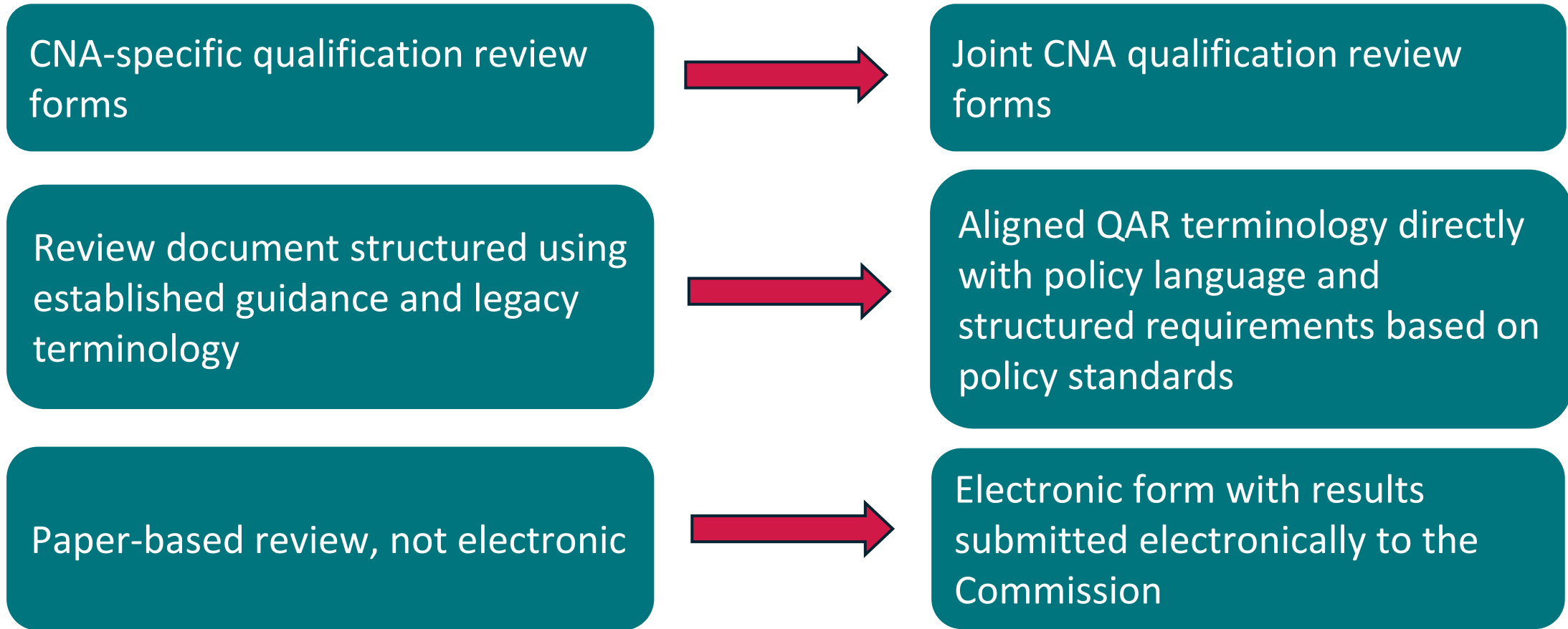
NPA AbilityOne Program Oversight and Compliance Functions

- **Qualification assessments**
 - Qualification Assessment Reviews (QARs) and Corrective Action Plans (CAPs)
- **General Program oversight and compliance**
 - NPA qualification
 - Program reporting
 - Ratio management and Overall Direct Labor Ratio (ODLH) CAPs
 - Data management
- **Compliance assistance and training**
 - Technical assistance
 - Training
 - Network Hub resources
 - Special projects

Qualification Assessment Reviews (QARs)

- QARs contain 15 sections and review all Commission requirements for NPA qualification
- Schedule is submitted for Commission approval every year on Sept. 15
- Assess 100% of 25 largest agencies every year
- All NPAs assessed every 18 to 24 months

QAR Evolution (Before → After)



QARs (Cont.)

The Qualification Assessment Review contains 15 sections:

- Corporate Structure/Information
- Qualified Medical Professionals
- Qualifying Direct Labor Eligibility (Policy 51.403)
- Placement Program
- Direct Labor (Policy 51.404)
- AbilityOne Project Ratios
- Fair Labor Standards Act
- McNamara-O'Hara Service Contract Act
- Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Davis Bacon and Related Acts
- Subcontracting
- Federal Contractor Requirements
- Contractor Code of Business Ethics and Conduct
- Employee Legal Protections and Rights (Policy 51.406)
- Other Maintaining Qualification Requirements

QAR Corrective Actions per Policy 51.400 Policy Series

- Findings are identified during the Qualification Assessment Review
- NPAs are provided a 10-business-day grace period to correct findings (except for fraud, waste, abuse)
- Unresolved findings become violations and move into formal corrective action
- 30 business days to correct violations; NPAs may request a single extension of time not to exceed 60 business days
- Corrective action outcomes are submitted for Commission final determination

**Processes and
Outcomes**

General Program Oversight and Compliance Functions

- **NPA Qualification** – Initial NPA qualification, mergers/acquisitions, name changes, related entities, NPA maintenance updates, NPAs entering and leaving the Program
- **Program Reporting** – Quarterly Employee Reporting (QER), Annual Representations and Certifications (ARC), Disability Qualification Determination (DQD), Participating Employee Information (PEI), Commission Executive Dashboards

General Program Oversight and Compliance Functions

- **Ratio Management** – Overall Direct Labor Hour Ratio (ODLH), phase-ins, surge protection, subcontracting, Estimated Direct Labor Hour (EDLH) updates
- **Data Management/Systems** – Develop, implement, manage all Program reporting systems; track/trend all data collected

Program Compliance Data Collection (Before → After)

Annual Individual Eligibility
Evaluation (IEE) requirement –
paper file



Disability Qualification
Determination (DQD) and
Participating Employee
Information (PEI) data collection
system

Quarterly Employment
Report (QER)



QER: Significantly streamlined
requirements

Annual Representations and
Certifications (ARC)



ARC: Streamlined
requirements; more meaningful
workforce data

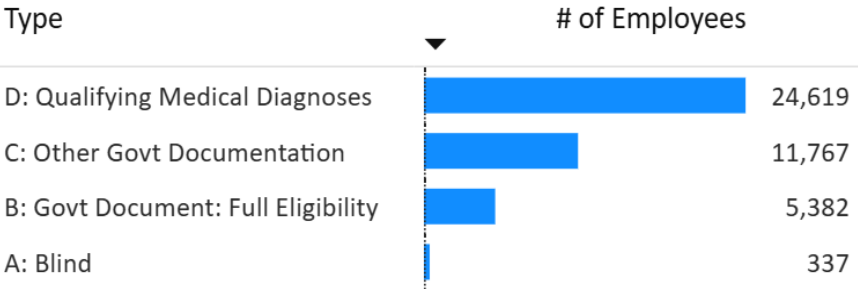
Disability Qualification Determination (DQD) and Participating Employee Information (PEI) Forms

- Developed and implemented data collection system in under 6 months
- NPAs submitted DQDs in FY2026 for Qualifying Direct Labor employees
- NPAS submitted PEIs in FY2026 for AbilityOne Participating employees
- Developed and implemented Executive Dashboard for the Commission for real-time reporting of data

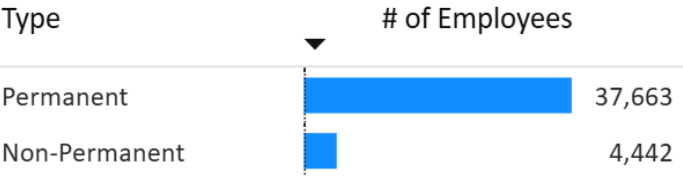
of Active Employees Submitted

42,105

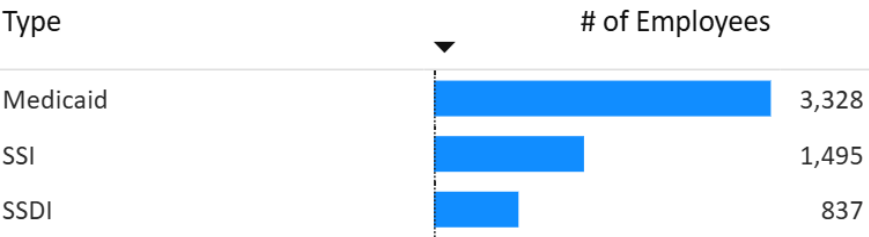
Eligibility Documentation Type



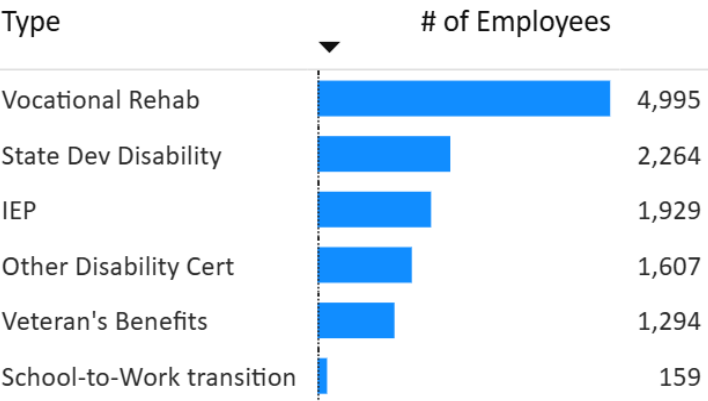
Type of Disability Review



Govt Document: Full Eligibility (5,382 Employees)



Other Govt Documentation (11,767 Employees)



Submission Status: Counts include only Submitted or Approved records, as specified.

Active Employees (QEM Link): Counts reflect Active QEM records for the selected period only.

DQD Section Logic: Sections A (Blind), B (Gov't Documentation incl. benefit breakouts), C (Other Gov't Documentation), and D (Medical Documentation), per DWG KPI definitions.

PEI Job Supports: Counts are based on "Check all that apply"; "Other" reflects typed entries.

PEI Disability Types: Counts reflect "Check all that apply" selections.

DQD Reconciliation Note: Active employee counts should reconcile to the sum of Sections A–D, where applicable.

Quarterly Employee Reporting (QER) and Annual Representations and Certifications (ARC)

- Significantly streamlined reporting requirements to reduce administrative burden for NPAs
- Simplified submissions, review, and tracking in the SourceAmerica Portal through automated workflows, notifications, and digital certifications
- Strengthened Program oversight with more meaningful workforce information while providing better insight into employment trends and NPA operations
- Incorporated DocuSign into the ARC process, eliminating the need to print, manually sign, and upload the executed document
- Implemented a quarterly anomaly review allowing efficiencies in the ARC reporting process

Compliance Assistance and Training

- Types of technical assistance provided and/or coordinated:
 - General Program guidance
 - Policy clarification
 - DQD/PEI assistance
 - One-on-one or group consultations
 - Ratio analysis/management assistance
 - Workforce management – provided by Mission Services
- How do we use the collected data?
 - Inform guidance provided to NPAs
 - Training content generation
 - Webinar development

FY26 Accomplishments

Qualification Assessment Reviews & Corrective Action Plans

- Developed and implemented the Qualification Assessment Reviews (QAR) system
- Completed 194 QARs in three quarters due to extended government shutdown
- Over 47,000 Disability Qualification Determination forms submitted during this implementation year
- Successfully achieved zero nonconformances in our ISO 9001:2015 Surveillance Audit

FY26 Accomplishments

Program Oversight and Compliance

- SourceAmerica developed and implemented:
 - Five new data collection systems
 - Two Commission Executive Dashboards
- Developed a Commission landing page to access our DQD and PEI systems
- Updated our Overall Direct Labor Hour (ODLH) ratio data collection system to accommodate reporting for ODLH Corrective Actions, Provisional Enforcement Actions (PEAs), and suspensions

FY26 Accomplishments

Compliance Assistance and Training

- Produced and posted supplemental guidance resources on the SourceAmerica Network Hub for NPAs
- Provided over 300 consultations and on-demand technical assistance engagements
- Facilitated over 70 training events, seminars, and Q&A sessions with over 5,600 attendees
- Implemented the Compliance Roadshow for NPAs to attend in person or virtually

Looking Ahead to FY27

- **Focus on education/training**
 - Multiple modalities
- **Continual improvements of systems and processes**
 - Streamlining tools for NPAs and SourceAmerica
- **Continued collaboration with the Compliance Council, NIB, and the Commission**
 - Provide policy clarification to the network
 - Further strengthen Commission policy
- **Quarterly communication with Network**



SourceAmerica®



Break



Public Engagement Session

Strategies to Reduce Employment Barriers Faced by Americans Who Are Blind or Have Disabilities



Speakers

- Vanessa Ferguson – SVP, Workforce Development
Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PCSI), Austin, TX
- Paul Gravley – CEO
Didlake, Manassas, VA
- Cindy Watson – President and CEO
Vibrant Works, San Antonio, TX
- Kathy West-Evans – Consultant and Co-founder
Abilities United Consulting, Woodinville, WA



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Removing Barriers to Employment

Issues and solutions focused on transportation, public benefits, and internal supports

A practical employer framework for sustainable employment



The employment journey: issues and solutions

Everyone experiences employment barriers.

ISSUES

What can interrupt employment

- Transportation may not reach the worksite or shift.
- Accessible options may be limited or unreliable.
- The effect of earnings on benefits may be unclear.
- Fear of losing health coverage can limit hours or advancement.

SOLUTIONS

What makes employment sustainable

- Assess transportation and benefits questions before the start date.
- Where possible, utilize public transportation.
- Create an individualized commute plan with backup options.
- Refer employees to qualified benefits counseling.
- Revisit the plan when pay, hours, location or transportation changes.

Transportation: from access gaps to a reliable commute

Treat transportation as an employment support rather than a personal issue outside the workplace.

ISSUES

Transportation barriers

- Routes may not serve the job location or work hours.
- Long trips, transfers and reservations can create attendance risk.
- Vehicles, stops, information or booking may not meet individual access needs.
- A single cancellation or route change can disrupt employment.

SOLUTIONS

Transportation planning

- Map the home-to-work route, entrance, shift and mobility needs.
- Compare fixed-route transit, ADA paratransit, VR and community providers.
- Practice the route and document booking steps before the first day of work.
- Name a backup ride, escalation contact and late-arrival communication plan.

Plan • Practice • Backup

Public benefits: from uncertainty to informed choice

Benefits questions can arise when starting work, increasing hours, accepting a raise or changing jobs.

ISSUES

Benefits concerns

- Employees may not know how earnings affect SSI, SSDI, Medicaid or Medicare.
- Reporting requirements may be confusing.
- Fear of losing cash or health benefits can discourage work or advancement.
- Changes in wages or hours can require a new analysis.

SOLUTIONS

Qualified benefits counseling

- Define the employee's work, hours, pay and career goals.
- Identify the current benefits and health-coverage baseline.
- Compare scenarios for starting work, adding hours or advancing.
- Document reporting responsibilities, follow-up and decision points.

Employer and PCSI and Didlake levers

Use the tools within organizational control while connecting employees to qualified external resources.

ISSUES

Organizational gaps

- Transportation may be discussed only after attendance problems occur.
- Employees may not know where to take benefits questions.
- Ownership may be unclear across Workforce Development, HR, supervisors and partners.
- Plans may not be reviewed after a major change.

SOLUTIONS

PCSI and Didlake operating practices

- Add transportation and benefits checkpoints to referral and onboarding.
- Use schedule flexibility, alternate locations or remote work when the role permits.
- Establish clear referral pathways to WIPA/CWIC, Ticket to Work, VR and transit partners.
- Assign follow-up ownership and protect employee privacy.

Internal and External Supports

Connect people to resources both within and outside your organization

ISSUES

No one can do it all

- Various jurisdictions (cities, states, counties, etc) have different requirements and funding available for supports.
- Work begins at home. There are activities of daily living that require preparation for work.
- Each person's support is different.

SOLUTIONS

PCSI and Didlake operating practices

- Have local connection in every place you employ people.
- Focus on employee choice.
- Focus on both general and specific needs of the workforce.
- Evaluate internal supports that go beyond traditional accommodations.
- Share the success so others will model.

When to act

Build issue identification and solution planning into the employment lifecycle.

Before referral or offer Issue: requirements are unknown

Solution: ask about transportation needs, interest in benefits counseling, and other possible supports without making assumptions.

Before start date Issue: the work plan is untested

Solution: complete the commute plan, confirm arrival details and make qualified referrals.

First 30 days Issue: early barriers can become attendance or retention problems

Solution: check reliability, schedule fit, reporting questions and support effectiveness. Focus on the individual.

At any major change Issue: pay, hours, location or transportation may alter the plan

Solution: reassess the work plan and clarify next actions.

Discussion and next decisions

Where should employers act first?

- 1 Which sites or shifts have the greatest transportation risk?
- 2 Where should benefits-counseling referrals enter the employment process?
- 3 Who owns follow-up when transportation, hours or earnings change?
- 4 What connections, both internally and externally, do you need to strengthen?



Expanding Opportunities for People with Vision Loss

AbilityOne Commission Public Meeting
Cindy Watson | Vibrant Works President & CEO



Vibrant Works at a Glance

Empowering people with vision loss through employment and independence

~325

EMPLOYEES

\$90M

FY26 ANNUAL REVENUE

2,500+

PEOPLE SERVED

13

BASE SUPPLY CENTERS

WHAT WE DO

MANUFACTURING

Military textiles, office supplies, aircraft floorboards and mission-essential products.

BASE SUPPLY CENTERS

13 AbilityOne-authorized stores serving military installations in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

MISSION SERVICES

Independent living, orientation and mobility, assistive technology and workforce development

Employment Barriers & Recommendations

BARRIER	RECOMMENDATION
Foundational blindness skills	Expand independent living, orientation and mobility, and assistive technology training.
Transportation	Support transportation solutions and flexible work arrangements.
Digital accessibility	Improve the accessibility of digital platforms, technology and online services for people with vision loss.
Navigating disability benefits	Expand access to benefits counseling and employment support.
Employer misconceptions	Educate employers about the capabilities of people who are blind and promote opportunities for career advancement.

My Journey: From Opportunity to Leadership

1997–2003

BEGINNING MY CAREER

Helping Texans who are blind develop skills and pursue employment.

2006 –2007

NIB LEADERSHIP FELLOWSHIP

Gaining leadership experience and a deeper understanding of AbilityOne.

2008 –2021

ADVANCING INTO LEADERSHIP

Leading programs and organizations that expand employment opportunities.

2021–PRESENT

PRESIDENT & CEO

Expanding employment opportunities and supporting career advancement at Vibrant Works.



STAY CONNECTED

Learn more about Vibrant Works

vibrantworks.org

Explore ways to engage:





Closing Remarks