Best Practices
Creating an Inclusive Workforce

- **Centralized Accommodation System** – Centralized accommodation systems are a best practice in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. With centralized accommodation systems, contractors can improve and streamline the accommodation process making it more efficient for employees with disabilities. A centralized accommodation system also helps ensure that contractors have sufficient expertise and funds in place to ensure accommodations requests are being appropriately reviewed and accommodations appropriately provided throughout the company. This is an efficient, high-impact approach for contractors to better serve their employees.

- **Accessible Online Recruiting Tools** – In today's technology-centric business environment, online application systems are commonplace. Contractors and individuals with disabilities lose when barriers to accessibility exist. Contractors are encouraged to utilize all avenues, including those provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), to make their systems accessible to individuals with disabilities.

- **CEO Leadership through Correspondence and Video** – Support from senior leadership is crucial for workforce programs to be effective. Contractors are encouraged to support their disability inclusion programs via various internal and external communications.

- **Coordinate with State or Local Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies** – Vocational rehabilitation agencies are available to individuals with disabilities to help find and retain jobs. These organizations have relationships with individuals and their qualifications and are an invaluable resource for matching an individual's skills with jobs.

- **Comprehensive and Welcoming Self-Id Program** – Persons who self-identify as an individual with a disability often feel as though they are stigmatized. It is critical that employers create an environment in which applicants and employees are comfortable identifying that they have a disability even when it is not apparent.

- **Disability Inclusion Programs** – Disability inclusion programs help establish a pipeline of skilled applicants with disabilities for companies. They also ensure that employees with disabilities are fully included in all aspects of employment, and let employees and potential employees know that the contractor is a welcoming place for individuals with disabilities.

- **EARN's Mental Health Toolkit** – Resources for fostering a mental health-friendly workplace.

  - **Build Awareness and a Supportive Culture** – (e.g., Promising practices include offering employees stress management training to develop relaxation, mindfulness and resiliency skills to manage workplace stressors and enhance mental well-being, involving employees in decision-making and problem-solving processes, to the extent possible, creating a work environment that connects with the outside world through natural light, plants, etc., developing and implementing anti-bullying policies.)

- **Provide Accommodations to Employees** – (e.g., Accommodations that have proved effective in helping employees with psychiatric disabilities more effectively perform their jobs include:
  - Flexible Workplaces
  - Scheduling
  - Leave
  - Breaks
  - Other Policies)
- **Offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)** – (i.e., Research conducted over the years has affirmed the effectiveness of EAPs for both employers and employees on multiple levels. In addition to increased employee productivity, these benefits include reduced medical costs, turnover, and absences.)
- **Ensure Access to Treatment** – (e.g., Ensuring your healthcare plan covers effective prescription medications for mental health conditions at a level that encourages their appropriate regular use.)

Employee Resource Groups – Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) offer employees an opportunity to network, address shared issues and concerns and receive support from similarly situated individuals.

Chief Accessibility Officer – Chief Accessibility Officers (CAOs) are key leaders who guide contractors' policies and practices to ensure accessible work environments and full engagement and utilization of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of employment. CAOs facilitate Section 503 compliance and ensure the use of accessible practices and technologies in the workforce.

Evaluate Personnel Data – Proactively evaluate personnel data of individuals with disabilities – including, hiring, promotions, and compensation data – to determine if any unlawful disparities exist.

Stakeholder Resources

- [U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) – The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promotes policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities.

- [Workforce Recruitment Program](#) – The Workforce Recruitment Program is a recruitment and referral program that connects federal and private sector employers nationwide with highly-motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities who are eager to prove their abilities in the workplace through summer or permanent jobs.

- ["Who I AM" Public Service Announcement](#) – Produced by the Campaign for Disability Employment which is funded by ODEP.

- [National Organization on Disability](#) – The National Organization on Disability (NOD) focuses on increasing employment opportunities for the 80% of working-age Americans with disabilities who are not employed. NOD works with employers and partners to develop a more disability-inclusive workforce, helping them to comply with all applicable regulations including Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

- [Disability:IN](#) – This is a worldwide nonprofit organization that helps businesses meet and exceed their goals through disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. Contact your local affiliate for more information.

- [State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies](#) – These agencies provide a wide range of services to help people with disabilities train for, find, and keep jobs that fit their skills and interests. Vocational rehabilitation agencies can also connect businesses with skilled workers with disabilities in their area.

- [American Job Centers](#) – These centers located in communities across the country can help employers by connecting them with a Business Services Representative. You'll get help with recruiting, hiring, or training employees, including people with disabilities who are ready and willing to work.

- [Centers for Independent Living](#) – Centers for Independent Living promote independent living and equal access for people of all ages with all types of disabilities. They often work with local employers interested in hiring qualified workers with disabilities.

- [Inclusion@Work](#) – Identifies promising employment policies and practices for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing qualified individuals with disabilities.

- [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)](#) – ODEP-funded service that helps employers hire and retain workers with disabilities.

- [EARN's Mental Health Toolkit](#) – This is a gateway to background, tools, and resources that can help employers learn more about mental health issues and cultivate a welcoming and supportive work environment for employees who may be facing mental health issues. It also presents an easy-to-follow framework for fostering a mental health-friendly workplace, all built around the "4 A's": Awareness, Accommodations, Assistance, and Access.

- [Increasing Disability Inclusion: Centralized Accommodation Programs as a Best Practice](#) – The purpose of this program is to consolidate in a single office or location subject matter expertise necessary to assess, evaluate, and select effective and meaningful accommodations.

- [Reasonable Accommodations](#) – They are adjustments or modifications that enable people with disabilities to perform the essential functions of a job efficiently and productively.

- [Inclusion@Work Framework under "Ensure Productivity: Reasonable Accommodations"](#) – Examples of effective and efficient implementation of reasonable accommodations.

- [Job Accommodation Network](#) – ODEP-funded service that provides free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and other disability employment issues.

- [Workplace Resources for Autism Spectrum Disorder by WorkforceGPS](#) – WorkforceGPS is an online technical assistance website sponsored by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor. They created Workplace Resources for Autism Spectrum Disorder to increase awareness on how providing the proper support, people with autism spectrum disorder can find meaningful work while employers also benefit from their unique skills in the workplace.

- **Comprehensive and Welcoming Self-Id Programs**

    EARN Networks Expert Tips