

Disability Employment Task Force: Background

The Charge

Even before taking office as Governor of the State of Washington, Jay Inslee understood the need to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Governor Elect Inslee recruited a leader in disability employment, Kirk Adams, to serve as a member of his transition team. When he discovered that representation of people with disabilities working for the state was lower than in the private sector, and declining, Governor Inslee was determined to turn that around. Consultation and collaboration with Representative Cyrus Habib led to a challenge by the freshman legislator for the Governor to embrace a more ambitious initiative, to measurably increase the overall employment of people with disabilities in Washington State.

A centerpiece of the Governor's initiative is a creation of the Task Force on Employment of People with Disabilities. For his Task Force the Governor recruited leaders from the business, labor, disability and policy communities, and directed them to challenge themselves and to challenge him to "swing for the fences."

Appointed Task Force Members

- **Kirk Adams:** President & CEO, The Lighthouse for the Blind
- **Jenny Lay Flurrie:** Senior Director, Accessibility, Online Safety and Privacy, Microsoft
- **Colleen Fukui-Sketchley:** Corporate Center Diversity Affairs Director, Nordstrom
- **Cyrus Habib:** Washington State Representative, 48th Legislative District
- **Effenus Henderson:** Retired, Chief Diversity Officer, Weyerhaeuser Corporation
- **Sue Henricksen:** President, Washington Federation of State Employees
- **Mike Hudson:** Project Manager, Association of Washington Business Institute
- **Jim Helling:** Administrator, WorkSource Lakewood, Employment Security Department
- **Eleni Papadakis:** Executive Director, Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board
- **Evelyn Perez:** Assistant Secretary for Developmental Disabilities Administration, Department of Social and Health Services

Getting Grounded In Research and Best Practices

- The members of the Task Force begin by working to deepen their knowledge of the state of the State and the state of the art in employment of people with disabilities.
- They reviewed, evaluated and discussed the insights provided by the relevant sources of data describing the employment related characteristics of people with disabilities, within the state and within state government.
- They compared and consolidated the findings of hundreds of studies researching both the barriers to improving employment opportunities encountered by people with disabilities, employers and service providers, and the evidence-based best practices that have been demonstrated to mitigate those barriers and achieve measurable increases in hiring, retention and career advancement for people who have disabilities.

Two Focus-Areas Emerged

- One area focuses on building that combination of consistent leadership, continuing education and inclusive policies that create and sustain an organization in which the talents and abilities

of people who have disabilities are sought out, effectively applied to achieve organizational goals, and fairly compensate for the contributions they make.

- The other focuses on developing an inclusive talent pipeline that affords people with disabilities opportunities to develop their abilities and market them to employers, while giving employers the means to search broadly among job seekers with disabilities to find the best matches for their business needs.

An Initial “Roadmap” of Short and Mid-Term Priorities

- The Task Force had a long list of good ideas and strategies to sort. Using a criteria tool they took the initial slate of ideas through a feasibility process turning a long list of ideas into an actionable list or “roadmap” of short and mid-term strategies for stakeholders to review.
- The Task Force sought a mix of strategies that would be beneficial across the broad spectrum of people with disabilities.
- It also evaluated the strategies for their responsiveness to the identified needs, the significance of the benefits produced and the strength of the evidence supporting those benefits. Practical and strategic considerations were also evaluated to identify possible barriers that might impede the successful implementation of the strategy or diminish the outcomes achieved by that strategy.

Getting Stakeholder Engagement

Exploration of strategies to engage stakeholders directly will be completed in the following ways:

- Stakeholders Review and Update May 9, 2014 – 1 to 2:30 PM
- Open public working sessions engaging interested stakeholders in writing implementation plans for each of the Phase 1 strategies, and
- An open task force meeting to solicit broader input on the strategies and other issues related to improving employment for people with disabilities.