Making it Happen:
Increasing Awareness on Accessible Workplace Technology

May 10 – June 10, 2016
Final Report

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Introduction

The following report outlines the results of the ePolicyWorks' online dialogue, "[Making it Happen: Increasing Awareness on Accessible Workplace Technology](#)." Hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT), this virtual event was held from Tuesday, May 10, 2016 through Friday, June 10, 2016. The online dialogue invited leading technologists and accessibility experts who participated in the 2016 CSUN Conference PEAT Roundtable discussion hosted by Deputy Secretary of Labor Chris Lu to continue the conversation on the need to increase awareness around issues regarding the development, use and promotion of accessible technologies in all aspects of employment. Participants were encouraged to post new and innovative ideas and comment and vote on those posted by others.

To promote the sharing of ideas, the dialogue posed the following question to participants:

> **In what ways can the U.S. Department of Labor help to increase awareness of the need for accessible workplace technology?**

As part of continuing engagement efforts, an introductory video featuring Deputy Secretary Lu was posted to the dialogue homepage. In addition, the Deputy Secretary actively participated in the dialogue by responding to ideas and contributing several of his own.

Included in this report are the top posts contributed by and voted on by participants. An archive of the complete dialogue is available for viewing http://PEAT.ePolicyWorks.org/. The multitude of ideas gathered from the dialogue illustrate that collaboration and crowdsourcing are imperative for the advancement and development of policies and best practices that DOL can implement to increase awareness of the need for accessible workplace technology.

Dialogue Key Words

The following is a word cloud containing the words most commonly used by participants throughout the dialogue. Main key words that illustrate the ideas discussed during the dialogue include: accessible, technology, training, action, teach, HR, users, model, working, services, policy, tools, and academia.

Outreach Efforts

In order to engage participants in our online dialogues, ePolicyWorks conducts strategic outreach by sending a series of targeted emails. Initial outreach emails were sent to all CSUN Roundtable discussion participants announcing the dialogue and inviting them to contribute.

Throughout every dialogue, ePolicyWorks sends follow-up reminder emails to ensure that everyone who wants to participate in the online dialogue has the chance to do so before the dialogue closes. At the conclusion of the dialogue, we send a thank you email to all participants with an invitation to stay tuned for future dialogues. Our email outreach strategy is critical to informing and shaping the conversation in every online dialogue andensures that the right people are brought to the table to contribute.

Dialogue Outreach Emails

Save-the-Date Announcement Email – 5/3/16

- Emails Delivered – 84
- Emails Opened – 44
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 6

Participation Reminder Email – 5/26/16

This email announced a video message from DOL Deputy Secretary Chris Lu.

- Emails Delivered – 81
- Emails Opened – 42
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 11

Dialogue Extension Email – 6/2/16

- Emails Delivered – 79
- Emails Opened – 29
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 6

Last Day Reminder Email – 6/8/16

- Emails Delivered – 78
- Emails Opened – 25
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 10

Dialogue Closing Announcement Email – 6/10/16

- Emails Delivered – 77
- Emails Opened – 28
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 7

Total Dialogue Outreach Emails

- Email Blasts – 8
- Emails Delivered – 399
- Emails Opened – 168 (42.11% open rate)
- Total number of clicks on links in emails (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 40
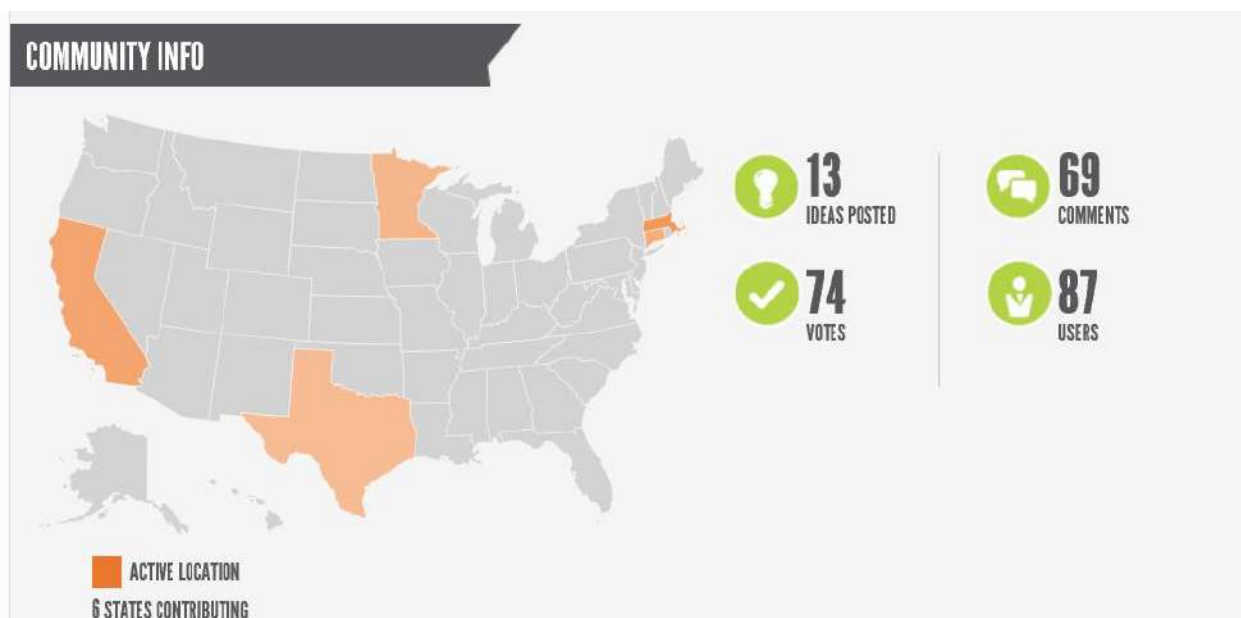
Total Dialogue-Related Emails Opened

168 Emails
(42.11%)
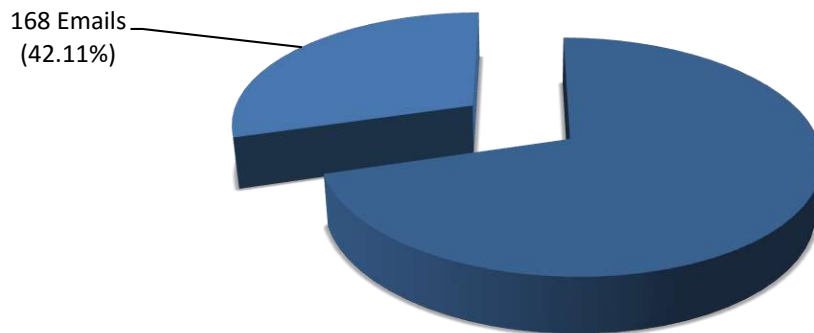
With a combined 168 dialogue-related emails opened, ePolicyWorks had a strong 42.11% open rate, directly impacting the success of the online dialogue. Links included in the emails were clicked a total of 40 times, leading recipients to register and get involved in the dialogue.

Dialogue Participation Summary

- Dialogue opened on Tuesday, May 10, 2016 at 8:00 am ET
- Dialogue closed on Friday, June 10, 2016 at 11:59 pm ET
- Total Ideas: 13
- Total Comments: 69
- Total Votes: 74
- Unique Visitors: 230
- Total Registrants: 87 (37.83% of unique visitors)
  - Active Registrants (submitted ideas, voted or commented): 20 (23% of total registrants)

COMMUNITY INFO

13 IDEAS POSTED
69 COMMENTS
74 VOTES
87 USERS

ACTIVE LOCATION
6 STATES CONTRIBUTING

Visits during the Dialogue (5/19/16 – 5/22/16)

- Total visits: 230
- Unique visitors: 67
- Total page views: 1,232
- Average pages per visit: 5.36
- Average visit duration: 7:22
- Returning visitors: 73%
- Bounce rate (percentage of participants who leave after viewing the first page of the dialogue): 29.96%
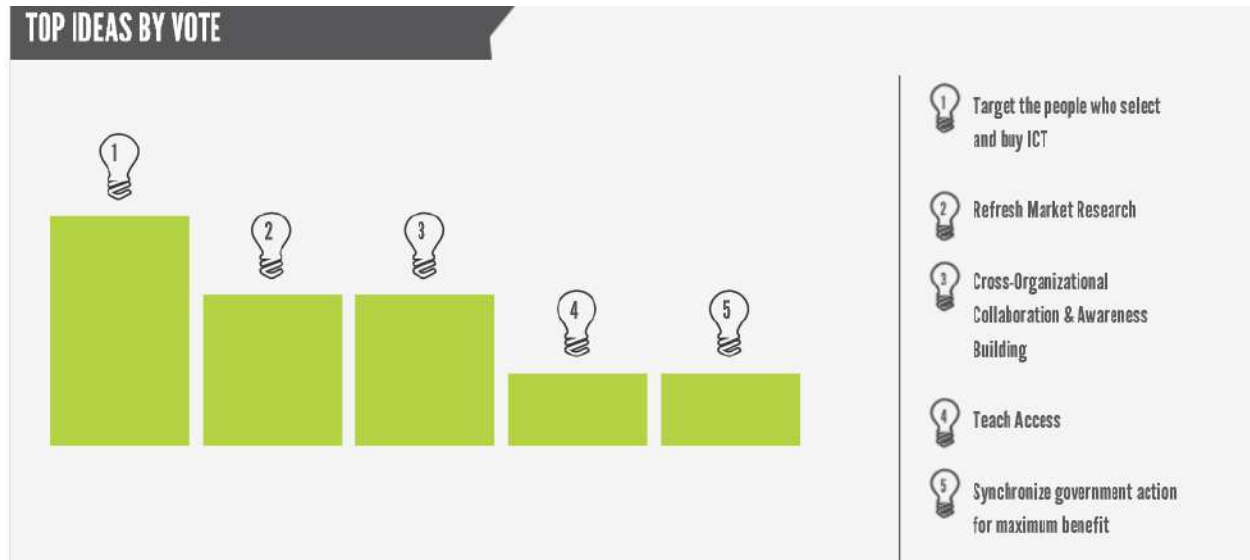
Map of Demographics of United States Visits
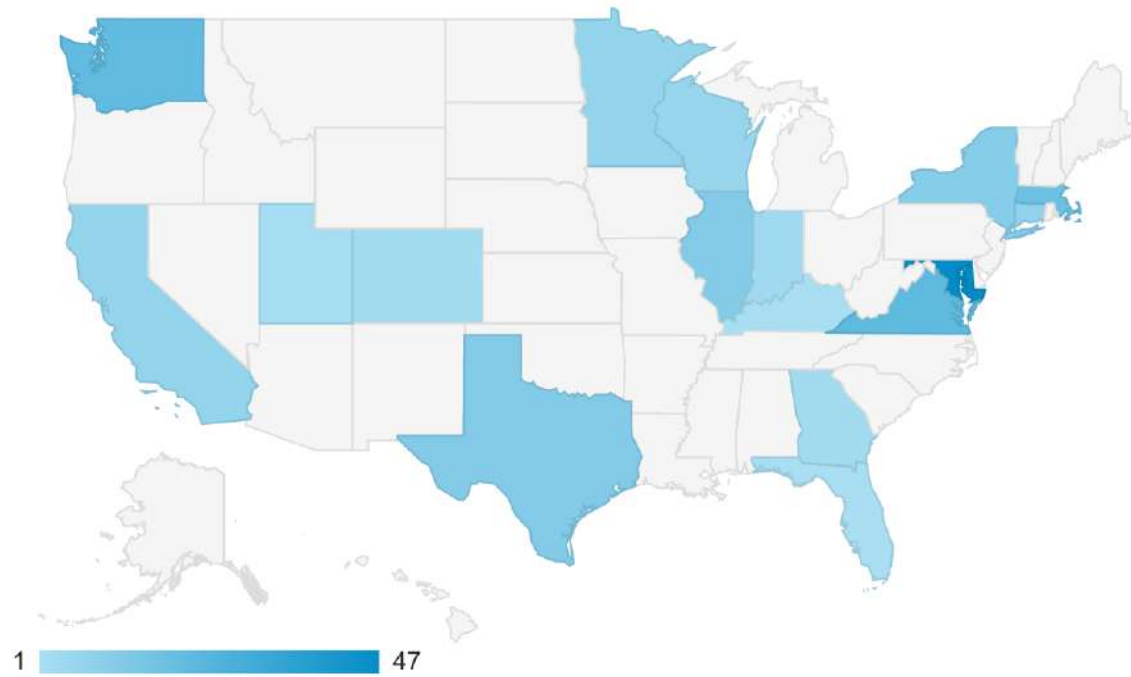
Demographics of Visits

State	Visits
Maryland	47
Washington, D.C.	43
Virginia	22
Washington	21
Massachusetts	18
Illinois	12
Texas	12
New York	11
Connecticut	8
California	7
Minnesota	7
Wisconsin	7
Colorado	3
Georgia	3
Utah	2
Florida	1
Kentucky	1

Infographics Depicting Popular Ideas Contributed by Dialogue Participants
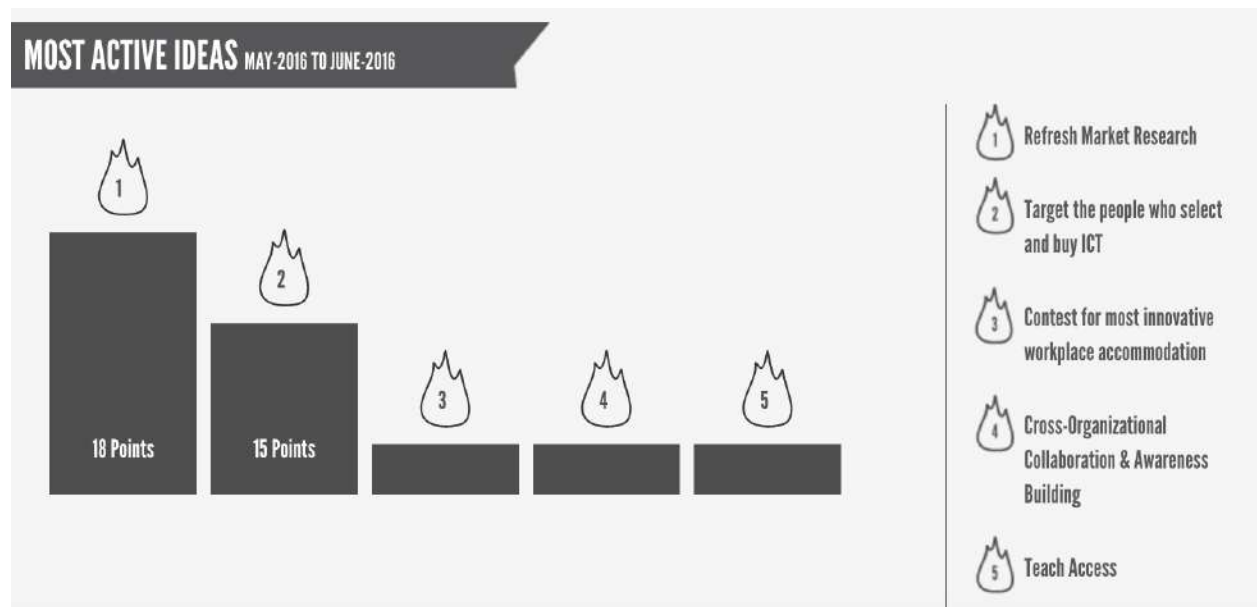
Top Ideas by Vote

The following chart depicts top ideas submitted by participants based on the number of votes the ideas received from other participants.

TOP IDEAS BY VOTE

1. Target the people who select and buy ICT
2. Refresh Market Research
3. Cross-Organizational Collaboration & Awareness Building
4. Teach Access
5. Synchronize government action for maximum benefit

Most Active Ideas

The following chart depicts the ideas submitted by participants that were the most commented on and voted on by other participants.

MOST ACTIVE IDEAS MAY-2016 TO JUNE-2016

18 Points   15 Points

1. Refresh Market Research
2. Target the people who select and buy ICT
3. Contest for most innovative workplace accommodation
4. Cross-Organizational Collaboration & Awareness Building
5. Teach Access

Note: The ideas listed in the following sections include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the revised posts.

Top 5 Overall Ideas

Top Idea #1: Target the people who select and buy ICT
8 up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 8 Comments
Submitted by sarah.bourne on 20th May

If you're trying to get out of a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging. In this case, make sure stakeholders for new ICT know that accessibility applies to employees, too. It's shocking how many people I've come across who think there's a "back office exemption" that applies to every desktop. And the first step is to stop acquiring technology that can't be used by employees with disabilities.

There are two populations that need to have accurate information about accessible tech. in the workplace:

1. Procurement staff. They may know about "508", but they may not have correct information about it, or place sufficient weight on it when reviewing procurement requests or when evaluating bids.

2. Line of business managers. All too often, accessibility information is given to tech. managers. But the impetus for acquiring new or replacement systems usually comes from the business side of the house. Those managers often already have an idea about what products they would like (from sales pitches, demos, seeing it in another department, etc.) They should have knowledge about accessibility requirements to make good preliminary ICT decisions, and ideally be champions for accessibility when they are shopping.

Top Idea #2: Refresh Market Research
7 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 9 Comments
Submitted by Rob.Sinclair on 31st May

Microsoft funded the 2003 Forrester Research study that revealed (among other insights) that 56% of adult computer users benefit from one or more "accessibility" feature ... because those features improve usability for everyone.

Many people have been asking in recent years if Microsoft or anyone else is planning to fund a new study because people are still citing that study from 13 years ago. Perhaps DOL/PEAT would consider funding a refresh? Or, perhaps co-fund it with a couple of other organizations/companies?

Top Idea #3: Cross-Organizational Collaboration & Awareness Building
7 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Comments
Submitted by Rob.Sinclair on 31st May

As we went around the room during the think tank meeting at CSUN, I was struck by how many common problems are still facing the organizations represented. Collectively, we are still facing issues with awareness/understanding, best practices, technical expertise, funding, and coordination of efforts (i.e., no one organization or company can fully solve the problem).

There are a few efforts underway to help increase sharing of ideas or create new opportunities to collaborate between organizations. The W3C is doing this for web standards, and the IAAP is starting to enable sharing of ideas on a number of topics - including organizational development (i.e., how to build accessibility into your organization's DNA).

I'd love to hear what ideas you all have for strengthening cross-org collaboration, sharing of best practices, increasing awareness, etc. What's needed today?

Top Idea #4: Teach Access
7 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 8 Comments
Submitted by Larry Goldberg on 3rd Jun

Posted as a comment elsewhere, but deserving of its own idea space:

I would like to mention the Teach Access project (www.teachaccess.org) which is a collaboration among industry, academia and people with disabilities to bring widespread and ubiquitous learning about accessible technology design and development to higher ed students. Though a long-term goal, if we could start graduating students heading to a career in technology, equipped with at least a fundamental knowledge of accessibility, we may be able to envision a future when all technologies - in school, the workplace and at home - are born accessible. With that ambitious goal accomplished, we could spend more time innovating and less time fixing broken technologies.

Top Idea #5: Synchronize government action for maximum benefit
6 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Comments
Submitted by dsullivan on 2nd Jun

There are numerous efforts that have recently taken place, or are in process, in relation to government action that touch on making accessibility a component of Federal action. The Section 503 refresh of a few years ago is a notable example of this. Within the very successful 503 refresh, related to OFCCP requirements for Federal Contractors, language was included to

assure that reasonable accommodations be made for individuals with disabilities accessing online career content and job applications. Though this entire 503 refresh has had tremendous traction in compelling Federal Contractors to be more proactive and accommodating to the disabled worker population, I feel there was an opportunity to take the concept full circle by also including requirements to make career content fully accessible. I am hopeful that as additional action is taken in these types of cases in the future the aligned goals of various organizations can be rolled into a singular action that maximizes the impact for as many as possible.

Key Idea Summaries

Accessibility education at the higher ed level

One dialogue participant mentioned the Teach Access project (www.teachaccess.org), which is collaboration among industry, academia and people with disabilities to bring widespread and ubiquitous learning about accessible technology design and development to higher education students. The participant thought that as a long-term goal, graduating students heading to a career in technology should be equipped with at least a fundamental knowledge of accessibility.

Awareness and advertising

Several contributors suggested awareness-building and outreach activities, such as a National Disability Employment Awareness Month about accessible technology, or an awareness week or month beyond Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD). Another suggestion, shared by Deputy Secretary Lu, was to create a public service announcement.

Contest for most innovative workplace accommodation

A contributor recommended organizing a national contest to identify and selecting the most innovative accessible solutions implemented by employers—with an attractive incentive for the winners.

Cross-organizational collaboration and awareness building

It was suggested that strengthening cross-organization collaboration and sharing best practices is a key to building awareness of the importance of accessible workplace technology.

Include accessibility in hiring notices

One participant suggested that recruiters and HR managers be encouraged to advertise accessible workplaces in hiring notices. The participant thought this might entice workers to seek out those exemplary workplaces, especially if there was some sort of certification/accountability. Deputy Secretary Lu shared that he is a "big fan of 'badges'" as a form of certification.

Increase understanding of accessibility standards

A contributor noted that common understanding of accessibility standards is still a huge barrier to the provision of accessible workplace technology. While there is some level of understanding of the WCAG standard for web content, there is much less awareness of UAAG and ATAG which provide standards for browsers, assistive technologies, and authoring tools. The accessibility burden therefore falls disproportionately on web designers, developers, and content authors.

Maximizing government regulation

The recent updates to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act were mentioned in the dialogue. The sense is that while the Section 503 refresh has had tremendous traction in compelling federal contractors to be more proactive and inclusive, there was more opportunity to take the concept full circle by also including requirements to make technology content fully accessible. The contributor hopes that as additional action is taken in these types of cases in the future, that the aligned goals of various organizations be rolled into a singular action that maximizes the impact for as many as possible.

Refresh market research

The second most popular idea shared in the dialogue noted that Microsoft funded the 2003 Forrester Research study that revealed (among other insights) that 56% of adult computer users benefit from one or more "accessibility" features, because those features improve usability for everyone. The question was raised as to whether Microsoft or anyone else is planning to fund a new study because people are still citing that study from 13 years ago. Some of the requests for survey questions include:

- How many people require accessibility features due to a disability?
- How many people can or could benefit from those same features?
- How many people are aware of the accessibility features that already exist? If not why?
- Is currently used language (e.g., accessibility) or imagery (e.g., wheel chair icon) creating barriers that prevent some people from using existing solutions?

Target the people who select and buy ICT

The most popular idea shared in the dialogue suggested making sure stakeholders for new ICT know that accessibility applies to employees, too. This means providing better training for procurement staff and line of business managers on accessibility issues and mandates.

Training for users

Another comment contributed to the dialogue addressed the fact that in some cases, progress on this front requires that technology users with disabilities, themselves, need to access better ICT training. It was also suggested that trainers be evaluated on their effectiveness to help ensure users are maximizing all the technology features at their disposal. It was suggested by Deputy Secretary Lu that PEAT could perhaps explore developing more resources for ICT trainers.

Conclusion

Through the Making it Happen: Increasing Awareness on Accessible Workplace Technology online dialogue, ODEP and PEAT successfully leveraged leading-edge crowdsourcing tools to engage experts and thought leaders in discussion on increasing awareness of the importance of accessible workplace technology. In summary, the online event garnered 230 visitors, of which 87 registered posting 13 unique ideas, 69 comments and 74 votes. The dialogue results will help inform DOL's efforts around accessible workplace technology issues, providing the groundwork to strategize short- and longer-term steps toward implementation.