

Advancing Disability Inclusion in Very Small Businesses

March 25 - May 13, 2024



Dialogue Summary

From March 25 to May 13, 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) hosted the *Advancing Disability Inclusion in Very Small Businesses* national online dialogue. The online event gathered insights, experiences, and suggestions from a wide range of small business experts and interested members of the public—all designed to help DOL support small businesses with fewer than 50 employees in employing and retaining workers with disabilities, as well as disabled business owners and entrepreneurs. This report highlights the key themes and takeaways gleaned from the dialogue and summarizes the dialogue metrics.



Key Ideas from the Dialogue

- ✓ **Broadening** and increasing support for small business owners in compliance with disability regulations.
- ✓ **Creating** grant programs specifically for disabled entrepreneurs.
- ✓ **Establishing** state-level entrepreneur centers and incubators.
- ✓ **Improving** support for disabled entrepreneurs, particularly on legal structure, financing, and business plans.
- ✓ **Increasing** and improving access to certifications, particularly from SBA.
- ✓ **Providing** financial assistance to cover initial hiring and onboarding costs such as training, workplace accommodations, insurance, and other associated expenses.
- ✓ **Simplifying** and expanding tax credits and access to support for disabled workers in the gig economy.

Informing Policy in Action

ODEP has used input from this dialogue to support its technical assistance to Congress. This information has also informed resources that bolster small businesses' accessibility for people with disabilities. These initiatives include a series of webinars hosted by ODEP's Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN), outreach to Native American disabled entrepreneurs, and the development of new technical assistance resources for small business owners. In addition, the dialogue guided ODEP's efforts to engage organizations serving the small business and entrepreneur communities.

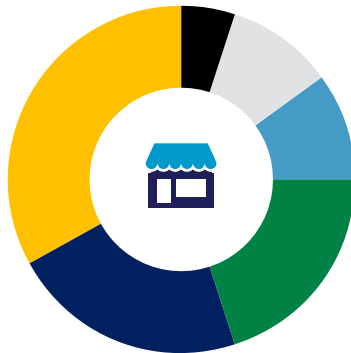
Dialogue Participation Summary

Type of Community



- Rural (23%)
- Suburban (34%)
- Urban (43%)

Breakdown of Industry



- Financial Services (5%)
- Defense/Technology (10%)
- Retail/Manufacturing (10%)
- Construction/Labor/Workforce (20%)
- Arts/Entertainment (22%)
- Education/Health Care (33%)

Are you a person with a disability?



- Yes (51%)
- No (38%)
- Do not wish to disclose (11%)

Dialogue Contributions



55
Ideas



102
Comments



121
Likes



1,153
Visits



[View all ideas and comments submitted in the dialogue](#) →



[View all resources shared in the dialogue](#) →



[View the full X Fireside Chat](#) →

Thank you to all who participated in this important conversation.

A number of leading organizations, agencies, and advocacy groups promoted this dialogue to their networks of key constituents to encourage participation, including but not limited to:

- 2gether International
- ADA Symposium
- America's SBDC
- Campaign for Disability Employment (CDE)
- Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Connect Extension
- ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)
- Extension Connection/Agricultural Extension Services
- FISA Foundation
- Great Lakes ADA Center
- Great Plains ADA Center
- Greenwich Village Chelsea Chamber of Commerce
- Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
- National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD Center)
- National Endowment for the Arts
- National Small Business Association
- Pacific ADA
- Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT)
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation
- Source America
- Southeast ADA Center
- U.S. Black Chambers
- U.S. DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)
- Workforce GPS

Funded by DOL's ODEP, ePolicyWorks leverages the power of crowdsourcing to inform inclusive workforce policymaking. By engaging members of the public and experts in online knowledge sharing, the initiative helps advance the employment of people with disabilities. This innovative approach reflects a change in how constituents connect and collaborate with the Federal Government and each other, thereby increasing the efficiency of a participatory policymaking process.

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