



ACQUISITION  
AND SUSTAINMENT

## THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3010 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

OCT 11 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS  
COMMAND (ATTN: ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE)  
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES TRANSPORTATION  
COMMAND (ATTN: ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE)  
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CYBER  
COMMAND (ATTN: ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE)  
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY  
(PROCUREMENT), ASA (ALT)  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
(ACQUISITION & LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT), ASN (RDA)  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE  
(CONTRACTING), SAF/AQC  
DIRECTORS, DEFENSE AGENCIES  
DIRECTORS, DEFENSE FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the AbilityOne® Program

Each year, the President signs a proclamation in observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This year's Federal NDEAM theme, "The Right Talent, Right Now," emphasizes the talents and skills of workers with disabilities who contribute to America's economic success. Observed each October, NDEAM is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the workers in the AbilityOne Program, which is one of the largest sources of employment for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities. The Department of Defense (DoD) contracting workforce supports the AbilityOne employment mission through the procurement of products and services in compliance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) subpart 8.7.

The Department continues to be the lead customer of the AbilityOne Program, procuring more than \$2.3 billion of products and services in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, a 5 percent increase from FY 2018. AbilityOne employees are a vital segment of our defense workforce and proudly contribute to military readiness in many ways, including: manufacturing office products used Department-wide, producing combat uniforms worn by our Armed Forces serving overseas, operating more than 150 Base Supply Centers, providing award-winning food services at base installation dining facilities, and performing contract closeout services. Today, nearly 35,000 individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities, including over 3,000 service-disabled veterans and wounded warriors, perform work on DoD contracts with approximately 500 community-based nonprofit agencies across the country.

The Section 898 Panel on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability, and Integrity, established by the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2017 (Pub. L. 114-328), has developed recommendations that DoD may implement to

increase employment in the AbilityOne Program. As Chair of the Panel, I encourage contracting professionals to be diligent in complying with existing regulations in awarding contracts to AbilityOne participating nonprofit agencies that will have a direct and positive result of creating job opportunities for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities. Specifically, as part of the market research process and in compliance with FAR subpart 8.7, contracting officials should check the Procurement List at <http://www.abilityone.gov> to determine whether a product or service is on the list. If the required product or service is not on the Procurement List then the DoD customer may work with the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, the Federal agency that administers the AbilityOne Program, to add it to the list.

Additionally, it is critical that the acquisition workforce comply with the accessibility requirements of section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, in order for employees who are blind or visually impaired to work in knowledge-based jobs. Consistent with FAR Subpart 39.2, requirements and contracting officials should review solicitation documents to confirm that the section 508 standards are appropriately considered and clearly stated. Section 508 information and training may be viewed at <https://www.section508.gov/>.

To implement one of the Panel recommendations, the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) deployed a comprehensive update to Continuous Learning Module (CLM) 023, "DAU AbilityOne Training," and in FY 2019, more than 25,000 contracting and purchasing acquisition workforce members successfully completed the training. Including other acquisition workforce members, Federal agencies, and industry partners, a total of 59,037 individuals have taken the training. The CLM 023 training, accessible on the DAU website at [https://icatalog.dau.edu/onlinecatalog/courses.aspx?crs\\_id=418](https://icatalog.dau.edu/onlinecatalog/courses.aspx?crs_id=418), is educating the workforce about the AbilityOne Program and will help ensure that the DoD continues to lead the efforts to create job opportunities for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities.

During NDEAM, we express appreciation to the AbilityOne employees for their contributions to the defense mission throughout the year. I also commend the DoD acquisition professionals for their leadership in facilitating new prime contract opportunities to increase employment with the AbilityOne Program. Through the commitment in action of the acquisition workforce, veterans and individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities will have a greater opportunity to work, lead independent lives, serve in communities, and contribute to the strength of our Nation's economy. My senior staff lead for AbilityOne procurement policy is Ms. Susan Pollack who may be contacted at 703-697-8336.

Sincerely,



Kim Herrington  
Acting Principal Director,  
Defense Pricing and Contracting