



## Disability Program Strategic Project Plan FY 2011 – FY 2016

*For the improvement and increase of employment of individuals with disabilities within the  
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission as required by Executive Order 13548*

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## Introduction

Advances in adaptive technology have given people with disabilities new opportunities to participate and contribute at higher levels on the job. However, statistics show that employment of persons with disabilities within the Federal workplace has steadily declined. On July 26, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order 13548, Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities. This Executive Order requires Federal agencies to improve their efforts to employ individuals with disabilities through the development of a strategic 5 year plan that identifies specific methods to increase recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with disabilities within those agencies. Its aim is to increase the population of persons with disabilities within the Federal workplace to 100,000 over the next 5 years with the focus being on recruitment, hiring, and retention.

Although this Executive Order furthers the initiatives, policies, and practices set forth by previous administrations, it is unique in that it has an added element of accountability. Each agency will be held accountable for the implementation of their plans. Agencies are required to report progress to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), which will then report to the President.

Through the development and implementation of this plan, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) strives to increase the agency population of individuals with targeted and non-targeted disabilities, to remove barriers to employment within our organization for individuals with disabilities, to increase knowledge and awareness related to disability issues, and to lower premature separation from agency rolls. The effectiveness of this plan will be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis. Improvements and adjustments to program goals and action items will be made as necessary. The agency will also track data related to hiring, advancements, accommodations, and retention of individuals with disabilities.

## Background

The NRC has consistently been ranked as the best place to work among Federal agencies. NRC strives to maintain this ranking and looks to include the area of disability employment as one of the cornerstones that continues to set this agency apart from others. NRC is committed to being a model employer of individuals with disabilities.

The NRC has identified five target areas in which to focus attention over the next 5 years in order to develop a robust disability program that will comply with Executive Order 13548 and lead the agency to become a model employer of persons with disabilities. The target areas are recruitment, hiring, retention, development and career progression, and culture change.

Leadership commitment to the support of this initiative within the NRC is crucial for its success. NRC leadership is critically important to the establishment of a sound Disability Program that is intricately woven into the fabric and infrastructure of the agency. In accordance with Executive Order 13548, the Associate Director for Human Resources Operations and Policy is named as the Senior Level Official accountable for this program. The Associate Director will serve as a champion of the Disability Program throughout the organization by communicating program goals, ensuring program accountability, and gaining community support and buy-in from internal and external stakeholders.

Outlined below are specific goals the NRC plans to consider and/or implement in order to achieve, support, and maintain an increase in numbers of persons with disabilities, both targeted and non-targeted, employed within the agency. These goals include the following:

**Recruitment.** *The NRC will develop targeted recruitment strategies to attract qualified applicants with disabilities.*

**Hiring.** *The NRC will increase the population of persons with disabilities employed at the NRC to 2% by fiscal year (FY) 2016.*

**Retention.** *The NRC will improve accommodation efforts to enable employees who become disabled after being hired to continue to make valuable contributions to the Agency.*

**Development and Career Progression.** *The NRC will increase training and developmental activities for persons with disabilities in order to better prepare them for more challenging work and to advance through the organization.*

**Cultural Change.** *The NRC will improve demonstrated commitment to support the needs of disabled employees. This will positively impact the agency through increased employee morale and elimination of workplace barriers within the Agency.*

#### NRC Disability Program Strategic Project Plan Goals Overview for FY 2011 – FY 2016

##### **Target Area #1: Recruitment**

##### **NRC Strategic Disability Program Goal 1: Develop targeted recruitment strategies to attract qualified applicants with disabilities.**

Students, interns, and other potential employees represent substantial recruitment potential for the NRC. The strategic disability program plan will be made public and will affirm the NRC's commitment to promoting all forms of diversity, including persons who have disabilities. Recruitment and selection materials will identify accommodations and other special programs that may set the NRC apart from other employers. They will also depict current individuals with disabilities functioning in their respective positions at NRC.

##### **Action Items:**

##### **√ Recruitment**

- Identify mission critical position that are hard to fill and match candidate skills with Agency needs.

- Continue Agency and management participation in a wide variety of recruitment events, especially those for disabled veterans and college students.
- Increase use and awareness of recruitment tools and programs such as Schedule A, Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), student employment, Wounded Warriors, Operation War Fighter, and resumes from Bender Consultants.
- Revise disability webpage to make it more inviting, user friendly and up-to-date.
- Publish NRC's success stories related to Reasonable Accommodations and/or other NRC specific disability marketing tools through internal and external publications.

## **Area of Focus #2: Hiring**

### ***NRC Strategic Disability Program Goal 2: Increase the population of persons with targeted disabilities employed at NRC to 2% by FY 2016.***

During FY 2010, the NRC hired 412 new employees. Of those 412, six were individuals with targeted disabilities, which averaged a total of 1.5% of new hires. Agency-wide the NRC's population of individuals with targeted disabilities is 38 out of a total of 4,021 permanent employees which averages 0.95% of the permanent workforce with targeted disabilities. These numbers include permanent employees, both veterans and non-veterans.

NRC's agency-wide goal over the next 5 years is to increase the population of individuals with targeted disabilities from 0.95% to 2%. To accomplish this goal the Agency must either hire 9 individuals, have 9 individuals self-identify, or have a combination of both each year for the next 5 years. If this level of hiring and/or self-identification is successful, the NRC would increase the number of permanent employees with targeted disabilities from 38 to 83 employees overall. The NRC will not limit the search to fill positions to a specific grade level or job series, but will look to fill positions at any grade level for any position for which an individual with a disability meets the qualification standards.

#### **Action Items:**

##### **√ Hiring**

- Train hiring managers, supervisors, and HR professionals on Special Hiring Authorities, job applicants with disabilities and the Interviewing process.
- Increase communication between the Agency's Disability Program Coordinator, the Selective Placement Coordinator, the Disability Veteran's Coordinator, hiring managers, and Human Resources (HR) (Staffing/Recruitment) specialists when bringing disabled individuals on-board to ensure that qualified candidates are matched with vacant positions and accommodation needs are known and met during the interview process and when employees report for duty.
- Revise letters offering employment to include information regarding requesting reasonable accommodations so that accommodation needs can be addressed before employees report for duty.
- Improve solicitation of self-identifications (Form SF-256) during New Employee Orientation so that employees entering on duty clearly understand the importance, purpose, and need of self-identifications.
- Re-survey NRC population bi-annually for self-identification (Form SF-256) certifications and

updates.

### **Area of Focus #3: Retention**

#### ***NRC Strategic Disability Program Goal 3: Improve accommodation efforts to enable employees who become disabled to continue to make valuable contributions to the NRC.***

As the NRC seeks to attract and retain talented employees, this plan strives to take into consideration the variety of accommodations that might be necessary for the newly disabled or the aging workforce including those employees with non-targeted disabilities. As a significant portion of the Federal community moves toward retirement eligibility, applies for disability retirement, or is permanently carried on Worker's Compensation (OWCP) rolls, maintaining talented employees beyond their retirement eligibility date is critical to ensure effective knowledge transfer and succession. The NRC will achieve its retention goal through providing effective accommodations where applicable, increasing knowledge and awareness of Worklife Balance programs within the Agency, and following President Obama's seven-step Protecting Our Workers and Ensuring Reemployment (POWER) Initiative. Providing reasonable accommodations and more return-to-work opportunities to these individuals will help to extend careers and also demonstrate NRC's commitment to retaining valuable employees over a lifetime of service.

#### **Action Items:**

##### **√ Retention**

- Increase education and training for NRC employees (including senior leaders, managers and supervisors, HR professionals and employees on Reasonable Accommodations) on the NRC's Reasonable Accommodations Procedures and areas of overlap such as worker's compensation, Family Medical Leave Act, telework, ergonomics, accessibility issues, information technology, and modifications of the physical environment.
- Increase communication and collaboration among key internal stakeholders to ensure that processes are standardized so that accommodations are effectively and expeditiously provided especially when there is a need for installation of new equipment, technology, or other services to ensure timely implementation, and to ensure appropriate security plans and/or waivers are obtained in advance of employee use.
- Increase employee awareness and encourage use of accommodation resources such as the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), the Computer and Electronic Accommodation Program (CAPS), State Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the Interagency Disability Educational Awareness Showcase (IDEAS) to support reasonable accommodations and return to work needs.
- Increase collaboration and communication with HR professionals in charge of the Worklife Wellness and Benefits Programs to include the Disability Program, Telework, Ergonomics, Retirement, and Worker's Compensation Program to coordinate strategies for employee reasonable accommodations, retention, and return to work opportunities.
  - Acquire an automated Worker's Compensation reporting system (SHIMS) in order to increase the effectiveness of case management and reporting to the Department of Labor.
  - Increase education and knowledge of all NRC managers, administrators, and employees in order to more effectively manage the OWCP program.

**Area of Focus #4: Development and Career Progression**

***NRC Strategic Disability Program Goal 4: Increase training and developmental activities for persons with disabilities in order to better prepare them for more challenging work and advancement opportunities throughout the NRC.***

The NRC provides a number of valuable educational and learning opportunities to students and interns that bring them into contact with the NRC facilities and employees. In addition, the NRC offers many career training and development programs for all grade levels throughout the Agency. Out of the 6 newly hired employees with disabilities during FY 2010, 3 are participants in the Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPDP). Increased awareness and access to these programs will allow individuals with disabilities throughout the organization to learn of opportunities for advancement and develop valuable skills for career growth. We plan to continue to encourage and support persons with disabilities to take advantage of all developmental and career advancement opportunities available at the NRC.

**Action Items:**

√ **Development & Career Progression**

- Establish partnership with NRC's Professional Development Center (PDC) to better support and implement training accommodation needs for employees with disabilities.
- Increase awareness and participation of employees with disabilities in NRC's Career Development programs, such as the Leader's Academy, through web links on the Disability Program Page website and increased advertising in internal and external publications.
- Increase awareness and participation of disabled employees in the Agency's mentoring program.

**Area of Focus #5: Cultural Change**

***NRC Strategic Disability Program Goal 5: Improve demonstrated commitment to support the needs of disabled employees at NRC.***

During FY 2010, the NRC made significant gains to demonstrate a commitment to support disabled employees within the Agency. A full-time Disability Program Coordinator to address the needs of the Agency was appointed, and centralized funding for reasonable accommodations not covered through CAPs or other resources was established. In addition, an on-going assessment of NRC's disability initiatives and needs was begun. This assessment has and will continue to determine cultural barriers that impact the recruitment and selection of disabled individuals (i.e., management and employee concerns); evaluate current Agency policies and procedures related to disability employment; evaluate current workplace accessibility to include information, technology, and facility issues; and evaluate the current workplace climate related to disability employment. As a result of this on-going assessment, it has been determined that the following actions will assist the agency to successfully effectuate a cultural change within the NRC that would demonstrate continued commitment to disability employment.

**Action Items:**

√ **Culture Change**

- Ensure compliance to governing rules and statues related to information, technology, and physical accessibility issues.
- Ensure that Emergency procedures specify the needs of disabled individuals.
- Ensure agency policies, practices, and procedures related to disability employment are in compliance with governing laws, executive orders and regulations.
- Continue encouraging staff to participate in external and internal workgroups such as the Intelligence Community Effective Communication Federal Partners' Work Group, the White House Disability Workgroup, the Federal Workers Consortium on Disability, NRC's Advisory Committee for Employees with Disability, and the NRC Disability Workgroup in order to acquire valuable information and identify best practices in the Disability employment arena.
- Improve monitoring and tracking of employees hired with disabilities or who self-identify and related costs associated with accommodations, training, travel, and accessibility issues that support them.