JAN

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>> Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Job Accommodation Network's Monthly Webcast Series. Today's webcast is called "Intentional Inclusion: Increasing Acces and Opportunity". I'm JAN's Associate Director and I will be your moderator today. Our featured speakers are Lou Orslene, director for the -- excuse me; our featured speakers are Lou Orslene, director for the employer and workplace policy team at the Office of Disability Employment Policy, Leslie Wilson, Senior Vice President workplace initiatives at Disability:IN. Leslie also includes the Inclusion Works program and our next speaker is Deb Dagit of Deb Dagit Diversity LLC who works on the Inclusion Works program. Before we start today's program I need to go over a few housekeeping items first if any of you experience technical difficulties during the webcast use the chat feature at the bottom of the screen or send a question to question@askJAN.org. Second you may submit questions during this presentation in the question and answer chat pod located at the bottom of your screen to use the pod just type in your question and submit to the question queue also send questions at any time to our email account time permitting questions will be answered at the end of the presentation on the bottom of your screen you'll notice a FileShare pod if you have difficulty viewing the slides or would like to download them click on the button that says download file.

And finally, at the end of the webcast, an evaluation form will automatically pop up on your screen in another window. We really appreciate your feedback so stay logged onto fill out that evaluation form. And now let me introduce our wonderful speakers. Some of you may remember Lou. It is so good to be working with him again. As I said, Lou Orslene works for the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor. As a director for the employer and workplace policy team. The employer team examines the policies and barriers facing employers as they seek to recruit, hire, retain and advance individuals with disabilities in the workplace. The team fulfills its mission by encouraging adoption and implementation of disability employment policies and practices that meets the needs of private and public employs employing individuals with disabilities prior to working at ODEP he was at the Department of Defense. Lou you may recall he served as JAN co-director here at JAN. He has extensive knowledge of workplace accommodations, Title I of the ADA as amended in 2018 and Rehab Act of 1973 years he has many years of experience in providing customized training to private industry public agencies and nonprofit agencies he's committed to increasing the employability of individuals with disabilities and having worked with him so many years it's continuously deepened the exploration of the nexus between the needs of employers and abilities of individuals with disabilities.

Welcome, Lou. After Lou we will hear from Leslie Wilson and Deb Dagit as the disability and Senior Vice President of the workplace initiatives, Leslie leads the Inclusion Works program, the first program of its type in the world Inclusion Works is an unlimited disability inclusion consulting services with facilitative sharing of best and evolving practices among 52 participating companies.

Leslie leads a team of 8 experts who assist the participating Inclusion Works companies to spread disability inclusion across their enterprises and around the world. Participating companies have hired 62,000 new individuals with disabilities from 2014 through June 2020. Representing an over 18,000 increase in the employment of people with disabilities. This program has grown from 6 companies in 2014 to 52 in 2020 with 100% retention rate. That is so awesome.

Leslie is currently facilitating the development of Disability:IN's global strategy with corporate representatives serving on the global roundtable and three regional subcommittees she's an ATD certified trainer, was certified as a mental health aide instructor expert on 503 regulations impacting Federal contractors and a Tampa Chamber of Commerce leadership Tampa alumna. In 2014 she was awarded the Georgetown Junior Award by East Stroudsburg University for exceptional accomplishment in the area of community and human relations and multicultural and diverse values and recently joined the ESU foundation Board of Directors. Welcome Leslie.

Now Deb. Deb Dagit is a sought after consultant and speaker on the topics of disability inclusion. She started Deb Dagit Diversity LLC in 2016 to deliver the practical justice services and products she -- justice in time services and products she wished she would have had when she was a VP and Diversity Officer for 22 years during 11 plus years at Merck she was responsible for employment relations equal opportunity recruiting and disability inclusion. Under her leadership the company was recognized for its exemplary work in disability inclusion by a wide range of business publications, Government agencies and professional organizations. Prior to joining Merck Deb was a leader of diversity at Silicon Graphics and Sun Microsystems she's been a corporate consultant for Disability:IN Inclusion Works since the inception in 2014 and I have worked with all three of these great people. A pleasure to work with and we have a lot of good things to hear from them. Again, welcome, all, and Lou, let me turn it on over to you.

>> LOU ORSLENE: All right. Great. Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you very much, Anne, for that wonderful introduction. I so appreciate working with the JAN team again and continuing this ongoing conversation about moving beyond compliance and being really much more intentional about working workplaces inclusive of people with disabilities.

I also want to express my appreciation to presenting today with the Inclusion Works team. Leslie and Deb are extraordinary and I really I was -- I was waiting for that number but waiting for the presentation to hear it but 62,000 people have gotten jobs with the Inclusion Works company. It's just absolutely extraordinary. And today I'm here, too, really to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the 30th anniversary of the ADA and the inaugural year of the excellence in disability award.

So in celebration of these great events, let's talk a bit about today's topic. "Intentional Inclusion: Increasing Acces and Opportunity".

Which is the theme of this year's NDEAM. If we could go to the next slide.

So what exactly is intentional inclusion? So on the screen there's a quote from Dr. Lipp-Hendricks, the head of executive talent management for JPMorgan Chase. Let me read that to you.

Inclusion doesn't happen by chance. Inclusion happens when we're intentional, in the daily, small interactions as employees collaborate, live or virtually, with their teams, with their clients, with our customers and with our suppliers.

Dr. Lipp-Hendricks quote is really a great reminder I think to all of us that inclusion doesn't happen because of a video, a program or a single training. Inclusion happens when there's a cultural shift and when organizations actively commit to reexamine their hiring processes, their performance processes, their meeting pools, their learning management systems, among other tools. In order to consciously ensure all of these are accessible and usable by all people, by all employees, including employees with disabilities.

Inclusion is intentional when we all commit to accept the responsibility to continuously identify and remove barriers so that everyone can participate. Organizations who are intentional in their inclusion efforts continuously reexamine the internal processes for the employee life cycle, identify barriers to accessibility and opportunity and then work to overcome these barriers. And I will note in my experience the best approach towards intentional inclusion is really to have a number of initiatives, taking various approaches, using various collaborators at the same time.

If we could go to the next slide.

So let's talk a couple of minutes about two companies that for years if not decades have been intentional in their efforts to recruit and hire, employ and advance people with disabilities. In 2019 the Office of Disability Employment Policy and Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs sought out companies for the excellence in disability or as we call it. EDI award. This award Federal contractors to exemplify a spirit of disability inclusion. CVS Health and PepsiCo received the Gold Award which is the logo we see on the right-hand side of the slide they received the Gold Award in an inaugural program year they were recognized for developing and implementing creative policies and programs that fostered a culture of disability inclusion. These companies not only meet their compliance requirements as many of you need to but they have also developed an infrastructure that normalizes disability to again ensure people with disabilities are integral to the company's success.

CVS and PepsiCo are great examples of intentional inclusion.

If we could go to the next slide, please.

So let's first talk about PepsiCo.

Over the past five years, PepsiCo has developed what's called the Pepsi ACT program, Achieving Change Together. And more recently the you belong initiative that you'll see featured here on the slide.

Graphic depictions of the four elements of this program are --

>> ANNE HIRSH: Lou, this is Anne Lou?

>> LOU ORSLENE: Yes, Anne.

>> ANNE HIRSH: I'm sorry; Lou, to interrupt we're hearing a little bit of static wondering if you might be able to move a little bit back from your microphone.

>> LOU ORSLENE: Okay, sure. I sure can. Okay does that sound better.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Sorry for the interruption.

>> LOU ORSLENE: Does that sound better.

>> ANNE HIRSH: That's a little bit better, yeah.

>> LOU ORSLENE: Okay.

Graphic depictions of the four elements of this program are featured on this slide. These include high-level sustained support from the CEO and Executive Team. An active employee resources group. A robust voluntary self-ID campaign and a centralized/responsive accommodations process. PepsiCo has a partnership between the disability inclusion team and their Employee Resource Group focusing on three major components, targeted, local outreach, training for managers and employees, enabling the Applicant Tracking System to address needs of jobseekers with disabilities. The first strategy entails identifying local and national disability related programs and groups and working intensely in a sustained way to understand what value they bring to the company and what their processes are for collaborating in PepsiCo. Their next strategy is the fear and stigma training disability awareness programs. This prepares managers for a workforce that is broadly embracing of the Disability Community. Each company location is dedicated -- has dedicated training for all managers and employees ensuring managers and employees are better prepared for working side by side with an individual with a disability.

Next, a collaboration of Pepsi advertising company, their ERG, and their Applicant Tracking System vendor working through each step of the selection process to see where any barriers exist that may slow the ability for a person with a disability to complete and to compete with other Pepsi candidates.

Embedded within the PepsiCo ACT program is their successful disability awareness You Belong Here video strategy and voluntary self-identification campaign.

Next slide.

Another example of intentional inclusion is CVS Health's Abilities in Abundance program led by CVS Health's workforce initiatives team, Abilities in Abundance offers skilled development -- skills development programs, job training and placement opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as those with a visual impairment.

To fuel this program, CVS Health's workforce initiatives team has spent the last two decades developing relationships with vocational rehabilitation agencies, nonprofit organizations and skills to provide job coaching, mentoring, training and follow-up support. Through CVS Health's ongoing work with partners from governmental organizations, community organizations and educational organizations, they are able to find strong candidates who are often untapped sources of talent and who are committed to learning the skills necessary to grow their careers. The program collaborates with state and local agencies, the national consortium of state operated comprehensive rehabilitation centers and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

For example, in collaboration with NSOCR, CVS Health operates eight mock CVS pharmacy locations where people with disabilities receive classroom and hands-on life experience and training and job skills. Such as providing customer service, stocking shelves and working the cash register.

Each center is installed with modern equipment and participants work closely with trained staff to learn their roles and responsibilities of the front store and pharmacy technician positions. Many of the individuals who participate in this program transition to positions within CVS Health or leverage their experience to obtain work elsewhere. Additionally retention rates among CVS Health colleagues who participate in the program are higher than those of other colleagues.

Next slide, please.

And as I said at the beginning, being intentionally inclusive also means knowing your resources. So where do you find successful stories and models that can help your organization leapfrog ahead in creating an inclusive workforce? There are many such stories posted at askEARN.org or the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion.

On the slide there's a graphic of the EARN website with the website's address, askEARN.org along with program logo featured on the website's homepage is the National Disability Employment Awareness Month theme of Increasing Access and Opportunity. Celebrating 30 years of the ADA and 75 years of NDEAM. Then there's a banner stating, don't know where to start, we will guide you. And that's exactly what EARN does. EARN will guide you through the resources. And finally at the bottom of the website graphic we see six informational portals with topics such as recruiting, mentions, laws and regulations, creating an accessible website, Federal contractor requirements and Federal and state employment EARN's self-service tools include ideas for how to counter what research has shown to be main barriers to disability inclusion.

The next slide, please.

On this slide are EARN's two self-service tools. The seven steps of the Inclusion Works framework and the four A's of the mentally -- mental health friendly workplace with the mental health toolkit the Inclusion Works framework is a multimedia policy tool developed with employers that outlines seven core components of a disability inclusive workplace along with a menu of strategies for achieving them. The Inclusion Works framework assists employers with building their inclusion Strategic Partnerships and prioritizing their initiatives. The other great resource at EARN is the Mental Health Toolkit while this was rolled out a few years ago with the mental health impacts of COVID-19, it's more relevant than ever. The mental health toolkit is an easy-to-follow framework for fostering a mental health friendly workplace all built around the four A's. Awareness. Accommodations. Assistance. And access.

The website address for this tool is askEARN.org/mentalhealth. The toolkit serves as a gateway to background, tools and resources that can help employers learn more about mental health issues. As well as cultivate a welcoming and supportive work environment for employees who may be facing mental health issues.

The next slide, please.

Depicted on this slide is one of our most recent resources available at askEARN.org. And that's the COVID-19 emerge practices to employ and protect workers. Silverstein the architect of the ADA concisely examines the intersectionality of the ADA and COVID in this publication and details some of the best practices for understanding employers' obligations to accommodate workers during the COVID pandemic. As well as returning to work from the COVID pandemic, also depicted is the cover for EARN's guide, engaging employees to manage success, this guide provides ideas for how to counter what research has shown to be the barriers for self-identification of disability. It includes examples of innovative approaches some businesses have taken to increase self-identification rates and track results and progress. The guide was published by EARN and ODEP in collaboration with ODEP alliance partner the National Industry Liaison Group NILG. Next slide, please.

In addition to JAN and EARN resources for building an inclusive workplace please be reminded of ODEP's PEATworks.org assistance center. PEAT Works is a -- makes technology accessible and supports workplaces in using inclusive technologies that engages the skills of employees with disabilities on the screen we see the graphic representing their website resources in the center of the screen we see the accessibility playbook for emerging technology innovations. Across the top we see the header containing categories of tools including the future of work, Digital Accessibility Toolkit and the policy and workforce development. In this time of COVID, many employers and employees have recently shifted to telework. PEAT's self-service tools can help with that transition to ensure your digital communications and platforms are as accessible as possible including people with disabilities with tools such as tips for accessing digital communications, resources for employees with disabilities, resources for recruiting and hiring professionals and tips for communicating your commitment to accessibility. All of these tools can be found at PEATworks.com. And being the 75th anniversary of NDEAM provides organizations with the opportunity to showcase their efforts at intentional inclusion for Increasing Access and Opportunity. Employers are highly encouraged to recognize the 75th anniversary of NDEAM this month and throughout the year and ODEP has a list of ideas for ways that you can celebrate NDEAM at the website at dol.gov/NDEAM.

Next slide, please.

Depicted on this slide is a graphic of the NDEAM resources. Again found at dol.gov/NDEAM. If you're looking for videos, posters and other supporting materials to support your inclusion journey that supports your NDEAM efforts, please access this link to see all of the ODEP funded outreach efforts to promote the hiring, retention and advancement of people with disabilities through the Campaign for Disability Employment. And I would also like to extend an invitation to all of you to attend ODEP's virtual celebration of the 75th anniversary of NDEAM. And the 30th anniversary of the passage of the ADA. And this program is going to be called: Building a Future that Works. It will be held on October 20th from 2 to 3 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The event will explore the crucial role of accessible technology in relation to this year's NDEAM theme of Increasing Access and Opportunity. The Labor Department is working to ensure that emerging technologies are accessible to all in the workplace. They will also feature insightful dialogues with thought leaders and a video showcase of the latest innovations in communication, artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles and more. Can we go to the next slide, please?

To circle back to this year's important anniversary, the ADA ushered in a new area of opportunity for Americans with disabilities. It's provided us with 30 years to build our intention inclusionary efforts. I would like to close today by thanking each of you to unlock the potential of people with disabilities for fostering inclusion and advancing the spirit of NDEAM in your workplaces, your clients' workplaces and beyond.

And we now know inclusion is not without challenges, particularly at first. However, providing equal opportunity to people with disabilities is a win-win-win for the individual, the employer and society. On the slide I have my contact information. If you have any policy ideas or have any questions after the webcast, please feel free to email me at Orslene.Louis.e@dol.gov. Thank you very much again for the opportunity and I look forward to hearing more about Inclusion Works.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Well, thanks --

>> LESLIE WILSON: Thanks, Lou this is Leslie Wilson I am the team leader of the Inclusion Works program and the Senior Vice President at Disability:IN I am joined by my colleague Deb Dagit. Deb, do you want to introduce yourself again in.

>> DEB DAGIT: Hi, everybody. Looking forward to the conversation and your questions. Back over to you, Leslie.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Thank you. So can we go to the next slide, please. So many of you are probably familiar with Disability:IN we are the leading nonprofit for business disability inclusion worldwide. We have more than 220 corporate partners all committed to expanding opportunities for people with disabilities. We also have 31 affiliates around the country. And we are a collective voice of positive change for people with disabilities in business. If you go to our website, www.disabilityin.org that is a link you can see all kinds of materials but one of the sections I really love is the section we have called resources. If you click on that, you'll see a little bit. If you click on the library, you can see a host of Open Source materials and information to assist you in your goal to include more people with disabilities in your workplaces. Highly recommend it. Lou, I heard some great ideas from you of some resources I need to look up on the EARN site so I hope this is also helpful to those of you who are participating. Next slide, please.

This is research called: Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage it was done by Accenture based on the 2019 Disability Equality Index that is a benchmarking tools that companies use to self-assess from the Disability:IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities, AAPD. In reviewing that research, Accenture discovered that there were 45 companies that really had leading edge disability programs and initiatives things that could be implemented by others but they also found that these 45 companies had greater financial returns as compared to other companies. So this was very exciting to us. This is the first time we have been able to say to companies, look, there truly is a real advantage not just because why wouldn't you include people with disabilities in your workplaces but there also is that financial piece to it, as well.

Next slide, please.

In quantifying that, they found that these companies had 28% higher revenue, 2 times the net income, 30% stronger profits and 2 times stronger shareholder returns. Next slide, please.

And in addition, those DEI improvers were companies that really did better over time were 4 times more likely to have total shareholder returns that outperformed their peers when compared to non-improves. So excellent data. I recommend that all of you take a look at the report that's the link to the Accenture report you can see right there on the screen. There's a lot more information in that report but I've just kind of hit the highlights. So great information to share with you today.

Next slide, please.

So Inclusion Works is a really interesting program. It's the first program of its type in the world. I know of no other organization that's providing this kind of a service. And basically what we do is companies voluntarily join us, it's a three-year commitment. It's virtual. It used to be onsite. No longer onsite unfortunately because of the pandemic but we customize everything we do around disability inclusion for the companies we work with. And it's not going to surprise you that every company has a different culture just like every person has a unique personality if there's one thing I've learned in the past almost seven years, Deb, that we have been doing this is that each company is extremely different and that means that we at Inclusion Works have to really vary our approach to what they are doing. Meet them where they are. And sometimes gently move them along or maybe even a little more than gently move them along to move them in the direction of disability inclusion. We now have -- this slide says 52 participating companies we jumped to 53 participating companies this past week. So we are growing. We started with 6 companies in 2014 and we've been adding companies all along to now be at 52 participating companies.

The companies have access to multiple disability inclusion experts. We have eight people on our team who do then take the lead. Each company has a Lead Consultant which is a really nice way to do this. There's a single Point of Contact. But they also have the opportunity to meet with any and all of us at any time.

As I mentioned it's in-person and virtual training. Deb and I would tell you this month being National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the 75th anniversary, the 30th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act, we are really busy and we are doing a lot of training, including outside of the U.S. We're doing -- I just did mental health training for a company in Malaysia and we have other trainings going on all around the world but we are still very much -- we are still focused on the U.S. and do a lot of training in the U.S. Mental health and COVID-19 has been a big -- there's been a lot of demand for that. The only good thing that I can find, and there aren't many, about the pandemic is that it has raised awareness of mental health issues in the workplace, more companies are paying attention and that's a very good thing. We also have a community of corporations so when the companies join, they become a part of that community of corporations and she share practices with each other and we have learned in Disability:IN that companies do best when they learn from each other, when they can look at what one person has done, the problems they have had, the successes they have had. And they can emulate that, that really makes a difference. The companies meet twice a year. We used to be in-person. We're now doing it virtually. But it is their opportunity to share and to learn. Most -- almost all of the speakers are from the Inclusion Works companies. And then also we help with talent sourcing we do a lot of work around helping companies to find talent with disabilities. We've done virtual Career Connections which is sort of like a virtual job fair.

We're looking at doing some work around cohorts of companies, tech companies, to do some recruiting together.

So we try different things to make sure that the companies have opportunities to connect with people with disabilities, especially those candidates with disabilities in our next -- and our next gen leaders as well. Then I track that. I'm the only one who sees what the company's report on a quarterly basis in terms of the new hires of people with disabilities. We protect that data but we do report it in the aggregate. So that we can all see how we're doing and how the project is really having an impact on the employment of people with disabilities. Next slide, please.

So this is maybe my favorite slide in the whole deck. This is 52 companies. There's a hole there on the right side for Liberty Mutual which just joined this week. But you can see we do have some of the finest corporations in America and outside of the U.S. belonging to Inclusion Works. There's a lot of tech. But there's a lot of other things, as well, manufacturing, banking, finance, you name it, we do have it inside of Inclusion Works. Next slide, please.

And that I'm going to turn over to Deb.

>> DEB DAGIT: Thank you, Leslie. So the way we get started when a new company joins us is first we get a lay of the land. And we provide an assessment and typically we suggest unless they already have some burning issues that they have already identified through their Employee Resource Group or other avenues that a super good place to start is with the Disability Equality Index, the benchmarking tool that was designed collaboratively between the American Association for People with Disabilities and the business community. And that is updated and modernized each year. And so that's often where our companies start.

Then based on that assessment, we help them to create a customized plan that looks at each area where they were not able to say yes to one of the questions. And this is what -- the question was -- whether the question was weighted or non-weighted. Whether their score was 30, 50 or 100. There's always things that they can work onto help them become more disability inclusive.

And when our companies come in, they are at all levels. Some have already gotten well down the path on their disability inclusion and access journey. And others are in the very earliest stages. So as Leslie said, we always meet them where they are at. And then we source the resources that they need. The majority of what they need, we are able to provide through Disability:IN and Inclusion Works. But sometimes there are also external resources such as encouraging them to use the Job Accommodation Network, which is a strategic partner for Disability:IN.

Next slide.

So as far as sourcing talent, we do all kinds of different and creative things, as Leslie mentioned. We may have a formal briefing session where we bring people in either remotely or in-person with local service providers. So that the company can share information about what a great place to work they are. And how intentional they are about including people with disabilities as part of their talent. And the organizations that can provide that talent share how they source talent and then there's an agreement reached around how they will work together going forward.

We have also done college campus visits to meet with disability student services. And other campus organizations. Where we've had an opportunity for either one or multiple companies to meet talent at the college level that are interested in interns or internships or new grad opportunities. We also make sure that they take advantage of our mentoring programs. We have a next gen mentoring program with college talent that we are so pleased that even with some of the business challenges that many companies are facing due to the pandemic, we are seeing broad participation in our next gen leaders and mentoring program. We've done virtual Career Connections, which are various ways we are able to connect. And we have gotten very (inaudible). A big component of that is beefing up the social media presence of our companies to drive people to the virtual Career Connection event. And that social media presence can live on and continue to help drive talent with disabilities to these companies.

And we have also in-person career events and we also have a resume database of both experienced talent as well as early career professionals. Next slide.

So the opportunity to interact virtually with college students and early career experience candidates has come through these Career Connections and Emily Mulsh on our team is our Subject Matter Expert in this area and companies like the ones you see the logos of on the side of the screen, Accenture, BAE, which is a defense contractor, Bayer, which is a pharmaceutical company, Facebook, PG & E, which is a power firm, they create opportunities for people to get what they need and Qualcomm which is a technology company all of these companies have footprints that are throughout the United States and multicultural locations around the world. And we help them to make sure that they are able to connect with qualified talent with disabilities at all levels in their professional career. Next slide.

So in terms of the Disability:IN programs, I talked a little bit about the DEI. I'm happy to say I'm on the DEI Advisory Council and had an opportunity to work with many others in the business and Disability Community to pilot the DEI back in 2014 and to continue to improve it each year and this is really a great tool for all of our companies and we are so happy to see that more companies are joining every year. By the way, if your company is interested in participating in the DEI, registration is open right now. And that will take us through January 21st. And then we will open up the tool February 1st and people will have I believe until April 19th to complete the questions. And then we announce the scores for anyone who scores 80 or above during the annual conference in July. So if you do not score at least 80, no one will know that you participated in the benchmark. It is a carrot, not a stick. And we celebrate all of our organizations that participate in fact we have an Are You In campaign right now and we have I believe it's now 32 CEOs who have committed to their participation in the Disability Equality Index and other ways of demonstrating their commitment to disability inclusion. The NextGen Leaders Initiatives which I mentioned before is focused on college talent with disabilities. And then the Supplier Diversity program that we haven't touched upon yet is another important program for all of our Inclusion Works companies and corporate partners. Disability:IN is the only organization that certifies disability-owned business enterprises including Veterans with disabilities owned businesses and through the supplier program we encourage companies to tap into these great companies owned by individuals with disabilities.

Next slide? So some additional programs that we participate in include Neurodiversity in the Workplace.

We have expertise in helping organizations to connect to talent, including people who are on the autism spectrum. And help our companies to launch a pilot to participate in alternative ways of finding this talent and selecting them and seeing what they are capable of. Training hiring managers to be able to more effectively manage individuals who are neurodiverse. And helping this talent to be successful once they are hired. One of the things that we find that is really rewarding about this is that so often our managers who participate in these neurodiversity programs is, A, say it makes them better managers for everyone. And B, they have always had neurodiverse employees in the workplace. They just didn't realize that that was the name for individuals who have this type of talent and this type of a disability.

We have our Annual Conference. Where we're able to have our Inclusion Works companies showcase the great work that they are doing through Inclusion Works. So many of our companies as they get stronger and more robust in their inclusion and access programs are featured in our conference both in the plenary and Breakout Sessions. We also have our Inclusion Works in-person meeting when it's not the COVID crisis as part of our adjacent to the conference is the in-person meeting. But last year I have to say that doing it remotely, while it posed challenges, we had really high participation with 3,000 attendees at the conference from 19 countries and our Inclusion Works meeting we were able to include 924 I believe participants in our remote meeting the day before the conference started.

We also offer Inclusion Webinars for our companies. And the topics of those webinars are driven by what our companies are looking for for more in-depth details. Then we have a Global Directory that we're constantly updating that has some amazing details of how companies that have a global footprint can tap into resources, understand local regulations and get connected with service providers to help them recruit, retain and develop talent with disabilities.

Next slide.

I'm going to turn it back over to Leslie.

>> LESLIE WILSON: So OFCCP, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs is ensuring the compliance of Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act. This affects Federal contractors nearly all of Inclusion Works companies are Federal contractors. So we do -- you know, it's funny when they first come into the program some of them have a real focus on the compliance piece but after they get involved, compliance becomes -- they are still complying but they go way beyond compliance in ensuring that people with disabilities are fully included in their workplaces. So there's an established 7% utilization goal for employment of qualified individuals with disabilities across job groups. Contractors have to invite applicants and existing employees to self-ID we spend a lot of time working with the companies on self-identification. One of the things that I think all of us have learned through this is those companies that have organized, well communicated self-identification campaigns are those companies that do the best in getting people to self-ID. It also helps to announce these companies as employers of choice for people with disabilities because they are really putting a lot of information and resources into communicating the importance of inclusion to their -- all of their employees and applicants. It also invites that contractors have to maintain quantitative measures and comparisons so they can decide whether or not their recruitment efforts are working and that's another very important piece of this. Next slide, please.

So this is our dashboard. It's all of our great things we have done. 18,000% increase in hires since 2014. We have grown from 6 now to 53 we have 100% of the companies no one has left it's a three year program but we have retained all of the companies and the DEI marked improvement up 37% from 68% in 2015 which is the first year of the DEI up to 93% in 2020 all really good news and the next slide if you would is total new hires starting with a baseline in 339 in 2015. So I want to pause here. Because oftentimes companies will say to me when we're talking about Inclusion Works, well, this is just about hiring. And nothing can be further from the truth. The hiring is the positive outcome of all of the things that the companies ever doing to create inclusive workplaces. I wrote a paper a couple of years ago but it still holds which identified 14 things that companies that we see that are most successful in creating inclusive workplaces and that is No. 1, and I know that you talked about this, too, Lou, visible Executive Leadership Team sponsorship and commitment. Cross-functional teams led by empowered project managers who really are champions and push things forward. Benchmarking tools. Use of them like the Disability Equality Index to see where a company is. Benchmark across their peers. Enterprise wide disability hiring goals. Very important. Disability specific Business Resource Groups or Employee Resource Groups.

We are seeing ERGs and BRGs really push the needle on inclusion all over the world. In locations around the world where companies have very strong ERGs, BRGs we really see things changing within that culture no matter where that company is based. The self-ID cam paints pains which I mentioned military or Veteran disability strategists a terrible thing I'm working with one right now and she has more ideas than I can keep up with. Lots of training. Lots of training. Publicized effective accommodations policies and practices. Accessibility. Physical and digital, not just for customers but also for employees. Extremely important. Diversity talent advisors. Outreach and recruitment very active flexibility and recruiting candidates with disabilities not everyone has to have excellent communication skills. This is something we really push with recruiters you know through their talent acquisition programs when we do training to see it a little different way. Otherwise you're missing out on a lot of great talent and then connections to the other companies through that community of corporations and we do a lot of that. Almost every day. Companies are asking can you connect me to so-and-so? Or can you connect me to one of the companies that is doing something really great in this area. And we have learned who is doing well where. And we always do that.

So just 14 different things that we are seeing that really do make a difference. And then create that 62,000 hires outcome. Next slide, please.

Deb, I'm going to turn it to you.

>> DEB DAGIT: So here is just a summary of all of the different things that Leslie and I have been talking about that are available to our Inclusion Works companies and I'm not going to read what's in each bubble to you but I did want to offer a perspective. So we're not together in-person so you didn't see me roll into the room. And you can't see that I also have non-apparent disabilities. I'm a wheelchair user. A little person. At 4 feet tall. I use hearing aids. And I have a service dog due to post-traumatic stress. And sometimes people wonder why did I leave my role as a Chief Diversity Officer. And the reason was I was present at the signing of the Americans With Disabilities Act after lobbying for it with 3,000 other people with disabilities on the south lawn of the White House 30 years ago. And I left my corporate role at the end of 2012 because at that time the unemployment rate for people with disabilities had not improved at all. I was horrified. And I wanted to focus the lion's share of my remaining work years on making sure that people with disabilities are fully included and have the opportunity to work. And so I'm so happy that I get to be part of the team with Leslie and the other consultants on the Inclusion Works team and work with the 53 companies that we have the privilege of getting to collaborate with. And learn from them as they learn from us.

So if you have any questions -- next slide.

Both Leslie and I are more than happy to answer them. You can see our contact information there. It's really easy to find us it's just our first name and then @disabilityin.org and we now have time for questions. And we look forward to hearing any questions that you might have. Thank you.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Well thank you so very much, Lou, Deb and Leslie, thank you for sharing all of that great information. And now let's take a look at some of the questions we have from our audience. As a reminder to use the question pod just put your cursor on the line next to the word question, type your question and then click on the arrow to submit the question.

Before we get to the questions, I would just like to apologize for the -- for anyone who had experienced sound issues in testing this all went much better for sound. And we're all still grappling and learning about this remote world we're all in as well as I would also like to let you know that the slide deck, we do have an updated slide deck that will be posted with the archive. And it will have the hyperlinks to the resources that are learning disability, as well.

Okay. And with that, let's get to our first question.

One of our participants is asking, what can be done for State Government agencies? They seem to struggle and not be real proactive. Lou are you able to talk a little bit about the seed project that ODEP has been working on.

>> LOU ORSLENE: Right. You know what, I'm new to my position. So I'm not sure I know all of the ins and outs of SEED. But it certainly is a major initiative of ODEP to work with state and local governments really to realize too the talents of people with disabilities. So there's certainly an infrastructure there. And there's certainly a Community of Practice there that is sharing practices. On the EARN side there is in terms of the Federal sector there is the inclusion@works framework but it's specific to the Federal sector. So you may want to ask -- go to the askEARN.org website and search for the Federal framework because I believe there really is quite a lot of sharing going on. I know there's also sharing going on, too, again new and new to ODEP and just learning, I am, but within the Retain project as well there's a lot of sharing of best practices in terms of getting people back to work or keeping people engaged after an injury or a chronic health condition.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Thank you, Lou, Leslie or Deb do you have anything to add to that.

>> DEB DAGIT: I'm not as familiar with state and local governments.

>> LESLIE WILSON: I'm sorry; I'm not, either.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Okay Leslie we have a participant who is asking if you can share the 14 things paper that you mentioned, what's the best way to get them to email you.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Sure. I can put that in the chat box, how would that be? Would that help?

>> ANNE HIRSH: As long as you're putting it in the --

>> LESLIE WILSON: I see, I'm only --

>> ANNE HIRSH: Leslie can put a link in.

>> LESLIE WILSON: I'll put it in the chat box.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Yeah go ahead and put it in. Okay. While they are working on that I have a question someone would like to hear Deb talk more about how the rates of employment since the ADA -- you had mentioned things have not increased or did we mishear you on that, hear Deb talk about how rates of employment.

>> DEB DAGIT: Thanks Anne when I left my last employer, things had not improved. We did see improvement although it wasn't tremendous, it was measurable. After that period of time ones Inclusion Works started, partially contributed to Inclusion Works, but other factors, as well. And unfortunately with COVID-19, you know that old maxim last-in, first-out for furloughs and layoffs, we have seen a degradation once again in the employment rate. But we are confident that it will tick back up. Given all of the CEOs who are in, all of the efforts of the our Inclusion Works companies and all of the great work that Disability:IN does with our corporate partners. And I'm sure many of you who decided to be on today's call have been very involved in working towards improving the employment of meaningful work that is at a competitive pay. And that's what we're really looking for is good paying jobs for qualified employees that -- and we are seeing progress now. So I feel like my time has been well spent. And as the country and the economy recover from COVID, I expect to see the employment rate continue to go back up as we saw in the 60,000 that found employment that Leslie talked about.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Thank you, Deb. Another one for Leslie and Deb. How can colleges get involved with the college student mentoring activities that Disability:IN does.

>> LESLIE WILSON: That's a great question. So if you go to our website and you look at what we do, click on it, you'll see a drop-down menu. You'll see the Next Gen Leader Initiatives. You click on that and it will take you into that program. Applications have opened for that program. I think it opened today. We are looking for recent graduates. And college students who would be interested in joining the program. In the past it was in-person. We selected last year up to 200 students and recent graduates with disabilities. And typically they would attend our conference, we pay all their experiences and they get to go through some training and informational sessions but then they also connect with the disability and corporate partners which has led to internships and employment, it's very exciting to see that happen among young people. But this year of course we had to do it virtually but we got very clever and a lot of our companies got very clever. I was just talking to one of the companies we work with, they have six interns. And they all are remote. They are all working virtually. Some place that was a problem for interns but since the companies we work with have figured it out and we're proud of that but if you're interested go to the Next Gen Leaders on our website take a look I believe the application opened today.

>> ANNE HIRSH: Okay. Thank you. One more question I think we have time for maybe one more and this is for all three of you, whoever wants to chime in. You may have talked about this and the person things they maybe missed it but what is out there for smaller organizations? It seems like all of the Inclusion Works companies look big and national what about a small rural nonprofit of about 15 that wants to increase it's DEI what would you recommend for them.

>> LESLIE WILSON: I'm going to let Lou take that one because EARN does have resources for the smaller companies, correct, Lou.

>> LOU ORSLENE: We do; we do. But I just think that really -- and I talk about this all the time. I think it's still really important to hear what the larger corporations are doing and then very much like the large corporations do with each other and tailor them to what kind of resources and what culture that you have. Of the culture assessment that you need to do, much of the training that you need to do, is similar, whether you're small, medium sized or a large corporation. So I think the challenge really is just finding out how you can replicate that in your culture with the resources that you have.

But I think all of these best practices are -- you know, are dynamite and are just very supportive of your efforts. I also want to point people to JAN's resource, the Workplace Accommodation Toolkit because very much there, too, if you have a very small organization and you have not put the infrastructure in place and you want to look at forms and you want to look at policies and practices to adapt, that's really the tool to look at, as well. So it's true that many people will say, oh, you know what, everything that you talk about is for large organizations. But what I would challenge you to do is really open your mind and think about how these things can be adapted or replicated within your context. There's just so many great ideas and so many of these organizations. And even with Disability:IN you're talking globally. So there's a lot of culture things that need to be thought of and taken into consideration. And it's the same kind of assessment and the same kind of adapting that one would do with a small organization.

>> LESLIE WILSON: I want to mention Disability Equality Index all of the questions on the Disability Equality Index are on the Disability:IN website under what we do they are in Word, Excel or PDF file so you can go in and even if you don't want to formally take or don't meet the criteria to take the DEI you can take those questions and that can help you to draw what you do internally those 14 things I love what Lou said that I put up remember Corporate America are things that any company can adapt and they can always drive change maybe not all 14 but you can get started and do a couple of them and finally I want to say we really push the companies we work with to go to the Job Accommodation Network website there are so many fantastic resources I happen to love SOAR I use it all the time that's another great resource I'm glad that Lou brought it up.

>> ANNE HIRSH: And thank you for adding all of that Leslie and thank you both -- or all three of you for the information about sending people to JAN. Well that is all the time we have. We hope -- thank you for attending. Lou, Deb and Leslie, a special thanks for you for joining us and sharing all of this great information. Our next webcast will be at the usual time of 2 p.m. Eastern Time on the topic of the Ten Veterans Related Accommodations Questions and Answers. Be sure to check out the archive of this webcast because we will have the additional links and we'll try to get some additional answers to -- get some answers to the questions we did not get to. I also want to thank Alternative Communication Services for providing the net captioning. If you need additional information about anything we talked about today please let us know and if you want to discuss an accommodation, please feel free to contact us at JAN.

We really hope this program was useful. As mentioned earlier, an evaluation form will automatically pop up on your screen in another window. As soon as we finish. We appreciate your feedback. So we hope you'll take a minute to complete the form.

Again, thanks for attending. And be well.