

# SEED

State Exchange on Employment & Disability

*Advancing Policy for a More Inclusive Workforce*



## Why should workforce inclusion be a priority for state legislators?

In today's increasingly complex global economy, workforce development is a critical issue that has direct implications on a state's degree of economic success. In that spirit, many states are recognizing that *inclusion* is a crucial building block in fostering a strong, productive workforce—one that leverages the skills and abilities of diverse populations and untapped talent pools.

## What is SEED?

As states strive to promote workforce inclusion, people with disabilities—including veterans with service connected disabilities—are a key part of the solution. Recognizing this, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) launched the State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED). SEED is a collaborative effort with state intermediary organizations, including the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the Council of State Governments (CSG), and the Women in Government (WIG) to help state legislators effectively address policy barriers that may hinder the employment of people with disabilities. Through these partnerships, the SEED collaborative is dedicated to ensuring that state policymakers have the tools and resources they need to develop and disseminate meaningful policies related to disability-inclusive workforce development.

## What types of resources and assistance does SEED offer?

- Disability employment policy and subject-matter expertise at no cost. Policymakers have information and resources at their fingertips, as our experts remain ready to help our state intermediary partners quickly respond to inquiries and requests.
- Knowledge sharing on policies both *directly* and *indirectly* related to employment, such as transportation, technology, health care, housing, and more.
- Tools and resources designed to assist legislators in crafting and sponsoring effective policies.
- Sample policy options that states can customize then advance within their own legislatures.
- Access to meaningful data on disability employment and related issues.
- Connections to federal agencies, as well as national community, advocacy, and business organizations.

## How does SEED deliver this assistance?

Through a collaborative working relationship between ODEP and state intermediary groups, like NCSL, CSG, and WIG SEED provides a two-way communication channel, standing ready to co-develop and disseminate resources, and route questions and requests to subject matter experts.

At SEED, we believe that building an inclusive workforce can only happen with a paradigm shift, or seed change. And this will require the Federal Government and states working together to effectively address policy challenges around inclusive workforces.

## Why is SEED a model for federal-state collaboration?

In the past, states and the Federal Government have not always worked in tandem. Innovations at the state level have not always found their way to the federal level and vice versa. However, ODEP has always recognized the value and power of states, and the important role they play in moving policy forward. In addition, ODEP understands that states are often innovative in addressing long-standing challenges, but those efforts are not always translated into larger, systemic solutions.

SEED is an opportunity for states to play a direct role in influencing and changing the way states and the Federal Government work together. It's also an opportunity for states to showcase their innovative approaches to workforce inclusion, and allow those solutions to translate into broader policy recommendations.

## What's the next step?

In order to aid in the establishment of SEED as a proven, effective model for federal-state collaboration, DOL is sponsoring a formative evaluation of such collaboration in action. Over a two year-engagement, DOL will be examining SEED's efforts to inform state-level policy around workforce disability inclusion. In addition to assessing what works, the process will identify ways to strengthen the collaborative process, and feed this information back to DOL to enhance policymaking practices that can be further replicated.

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### ***A note from Nadia Ibrahim, SEED Federal Manager:***

*Thank you for your willingness to participate in this unique opportunity that has the potential to not only shift the way that ODEP develops and disseminates policy, but also change how other DOL agencies conduct their policy efforts. The work you are doing bringing about change at the state level will have impact at the federal level, helping us take a closer look at what the Federal Government does and how we can do it better. Rest assured that this effort is not meant to criticize state-level efforts or any of the insights shared during our meetings. Rather, it is intended to inspire collaboration, because together we can alter the employment landscape for people with disabilities. Don't miss this opportunity to make a difference.*

*For more information about SEED, and to join the conversation, please contact:*

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