



Skils'kin

Empower People. Enhance Opportunities. Enrich Communities.

Skils'kin is proud to be an AbilityOne producing NPA. We employ approximately 350 people in three states. All of our jobs, AbilityOne or otherwise, are at minimum wage or higher. Our companywide average is currently \$16.60+ an hour with some states minimum wage currently at \$10.95. We believe in the power of employment and realize that a job is so much more than a paycheck. We believe in the AbilityOne program's power to change lives and we also see the opportunities that modernizing the program presents. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the Commission's robust Strategic Plan.

In order to more closely align with current disability policy, we see it as time for the program be updated. To this end, Skils'kin believes that the ratio should be lowered to allow for more integration and as well as align with WIOA's FAQ's as it relates to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). While this will most likely entail amending JWOD, along with opening the door to reframing language such as "severely disabled" and "unable to work in normal, competitive employment". Skils'kin believes in reviewing and updating this language to be more inclusive to a wider disability community. We actively assist our staff with growth and development that will benefit them within Skils'kin as well as with another employer in the community. However, some employees prefer to remain working as an AbilityOne employee instead of moving onto another organization. These jobs should be recognized as opportunities for growth and development and a successful employment outcome. At Skils'kin, success is not only limited to positions inside of our agency but outward growth as well. Creation of intern positions or tracks would be extremely beneficial in allowing for growth, learning, and advancement and we would like to be a partner in this endeavor.

Skils'kin completely supports the elimination of 14c certificates. Minimum wage is just that, the minimum any employee can legally be paid. Whether providing a good or service, we believe there is no place that a person should be paid sub-minimum wage.

It is time to create more opportunities, best practices, and be the group that sets the standards for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. We are supportive of the majority of the recommendations and are eager to work together to bring the program forward.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the AbilityOne Commission's proposed strategic plan. We welcome site visits at any of our contracts to better understand how we do business. Please feel free to contact Vice President of Operations, Steve McBride, at smcbride@skils-kin.org or (509) 844-5889.