

The Recruitment and  
Hiring of Individuals  
with Disabilities and  
Targeted Disabilities  
FY 2011 - 2016

# National Science Foundation



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Recruit. Hire. Retain.

## Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

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***“As the Nation’s largest employer, the Federal Government must become a model for the employment of individuals with disabilities.”***

—President Obama, Executive Order 13548, *Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities*

### **Introduction**

On July 26, 2010, President Obama issued Executive Order 13548, which directs Executive departments and agencies to improve their efforts to employ federal workers with disabilities and targeted disabilities through increased recruitment, hiring, and retention. This Order requires agencies to submit plans for increasing employment of people with disabilities to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) by March 8, 2011.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Disability Hiring Plan demonstrates how the agency will focus on recruiting, hiring and retaining people with disabilities and targeted disabilities through strategic recruitment and retention efforts and training for all key staff involved in hiring decisions.

### **NSF Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion**

*Empowering the Nation through Discovery and Innovation*, NSF’s 2011-2016 Strategic Plan, begins with core values, highlighting NSF’s commitment to being visionary, dedicated to excellence, learning and growing, broadly inclusive, and accountable. Through its programs and its operations, NSF strives to ensure that individuals and ideas have the opportunity to flourish. This plan for recruiting, hiring and retaining persons with disabilities within the agency staff is one of many approaches to enhancing the role of persons with disabilities in the larger U. S. science and engineering enterprise. The strategies of the plan draw on NSF’s core strategy to broaden participation and are closely linked to NSF activities in pursuit of status as a model EEO agency as defined by the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission.

### **Agency Leadership**

NSF designates the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) as the senior level official within the agency who will be responsible for overseeing the agency’s plan to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The CHCO will provide leadership, support and guidance on behalf of the Director of NSF and will be the principal communicator of the opportunities that exist for hiring persons with disabilities at the NSF leadership-level. In supporting the plan to encourage, enhance and promote the recruitment, hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities throughout NSF, the CHCO will also work closely with NSF’s Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), who has oversight of diversity issues within the agency. It is critical that NSF leadership commits to accomplishing NSF’s disability program goals and enthusiastically communicates the importance of the

program to garner necessary support. Agency leadership will demonstrate that NSF is a community that values the skills and talents that individuals with disabilities bring to the workforce in all grade levels and occupational series.

## **Current State**

As of the end of Fiscal Year 2010, NSF employed a total of 1,213 permanent full-time employees, which includes 778 permanent General Schedule (GS) employees, 362 permanent Administratively Determined (AD) employees, and 73 permanent Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, including the Office of Inspector General and the National Science Board. Of the 1,213 full-time permanent NSF employees, 123 employees (10.1% of NSF's total permanent workforce) claim a disability. The federal average of individuals with disabilities is just over five percent (5%), thus NSF has already made great strides to include individuals with disabilities in its workforce across all grade levels and occupational series. NSF currently employs 19 full-time permanent employees with targeted disabilities, which include: Hearing (Total deafness in both ears), Vision (Blind), Missing Extremities, Partial Paralysis, Complete Paralysis, Epilepsy, Severe Intellectual Disability, Psychiatric Disability, and Dwarfism.

## **Targets**

For the purpose of this plan, targets will be identified in two areas, general disabilities and targeted disabilities. As stated above, NSF's current population of individuals with disabilities is 10.1% of its total full-time permanent workforce. NSF's goal is to increase the population of individuals with disabilities to 12.5% of the full-time permanent workforce over the next five years, increasing by approximately 0.5% per year. This would increase NSF's total complement of permanent employees with disabilities by 30 over 5 years, or approximately 6 per year. In Fiscal Year 2010 (FY10), NSF made 81 full-time permanent hires. Using the FY 2010 hiring statistics as a baseline and assuming no turnover of employees with disabilities, approximately 7.4% of all hires would be persons with disabilities. Turnover rates of permanent employees with disabilities at levels similar to the overall population of permanent employees would likely mean between 10 and 15 percent of all new permanent employees would be persons with disabilities.

NSF currently employs 19 full-time permanent employees with targeted disabilities. This is approximately 15.4% of NSF's total disability workforce population. NSF's goal is to increase the percentage of persons with targeted disabilities to approximately 20% of the total of full-time permanent employees with disabilities. This would require an increase of 10-11 persons with targeted disabilities over five years to a total of approximately 30 persons with targeted disabilities. NSF feels that this is a realistic goal on which NSF could continue to build in the future.

NSF recognizes that it faces challenges due to the uniqueness of its workforce, including the rigorous scientific and engineering (S&E) qualifications required of a substantial portion of its workforce, the small number of permanent hires made on a yearly basis, and the anticipated constraints (i.e., pay/hiring freezes) of the next several years, which may result in reductions in

overall hiring statistics. However, NSF believes these goals are attainable and will work diligently to reach targets identified.

## Target Rationale

***"Individuals with disabilities currently represent just over 5 percent of the nearly 2.5 million people in the Federal workforce, and individuals with targeted disabilities currently represent less than 1 percent of that workforce."***

~ President Obama, Executive Order 13548, *Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities*

In developing agency targets, NSF analyzed agency workforce data, as well as data on the national and federal workforces. Such data analysis and evaluation allowed NSF to understand its current workforce demographic profile and then compare it to the national average and the federal sector. The targets above stretch NSF beyond its current profile of permanent employees with disabilities, keep NSF somewhat above the overall percentage in the federal workforce, and provide a reasonable approach to NSF's specialized science and engineering workforce.

In calculating the numeric targets, NSF did not include temporary employees, persons under Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignments, experts or consultants. Additionally, NSF did not include temporary students in the target calculations. Due to the short-term nature of such appointments, NSF determined that including these employees in the base or target figures would cause potentially large fluctuations from year-to-year. NSF will strive to hire persons with disabilities in these categories as well, using similar strategies for recruitment of permanent employees.

## Strategies

Consistent with Executive Order 13548, this Operational Plan aligns with NSF's Strategic Human Capital Plan and other workforce planning strategies and merit system principles. Strategies that will be used to meet NSF's targeted goals are outlined in Figure 1.

### **Figure 1 - NSF Strategies for Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities**

- Strategy 1: Increase agency presence at job and career fairs for persons with disabilities.
- Strategy 2: Utilize OPM Shared Register of Candidates with Disabilities and the Workforce Recruitment Program Database (WRP) to locate potential applicants with desired skills for vacancies at the agency.
- Strategy 3: Maintain and further develop partnerships with rehabilitation offices in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.
- Strategy 4: Update and distribute NSF's Hiring Manager Toolkit and other resources to provide additional information to hiring managers about the recruiting flexibilities available for persons with disabilities.

### **Strategy 1: Increase agency presence at job and career fairs targeted at individuals with disabilities.**

NSF's Team to Invigorate Marketing and Outreach (TIMO) representatives attended a number of career fairs in FY 2010 directed at individuals with disabilities and will be attending numerous career fairs in FY 2011. These recurring events include: the Equal Opportunity Publications, Inc. (EOP) *Career Expo for People with Disabilities and its STEM Diversity Career Expo*; Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind events; and various programs sponsored by the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Wounded Warriors Program. Also, in FY 2010, ODI partnered with the Division of Human Resource Management (HRM) in attending two disability events, including one that specialized in STEM, in which ODI made one Schedule A hire. Also, In May 2010, an NSF Program Director was recognized by the magazine ***Careers and the disABLED*** for his "tremendous influence on including scientists and engineers with disabilities in NSF's competitive review and award process."

### **Strategy 2: Utilize OPM Shared Register of Candidates with Disabilities, and the Workforce Recruitment Program Database (WRP) to locate potential applicants with desired skills for vacancies at the agency.**

NSF currently receives the Shared Register of candidates with disabilities from OPM. The Selective Placement Coordinator reviews this list and distributes it to selecting officials and HR representatives as requested. During the upcoming years, NSF plans to promote the use of this standing register by encouraging selecting officials to consult the list prior to posting positions to the general public. Since this list provides information on applicant skills and experience, it will be more useful to selecting officials who have positions with specific skill and qualification requirements. By utilizing this list, NSF hopes to increase its number of Schedule A hires in the upcoming years.

Students are a key component of the agency's workforce for both seasonal and year-round employment. Once the parameters of the Pathways Program become clearer, NSF anticipates utilizing the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) database to target local students with disabilities to fill both short-term and long-term needs, including those that have potential for conversion to permanent positions. In the interim, hiring managers will be urged to review the WRP database to hire Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) participants and to meet temporary needs under the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).

### **Strategy 3: Maintain and further develop partnerships with rehabilitation offices in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.**

NSF is currently partnered with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services and regularly attends their outreach events. In October 2009, the NSF Selective Placement Coordinator was recognized by the Fairfax County Office of the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services at its annual Champions Luncheon for "going above and beyond to help individuals with disabilities in Northern Virginia to obtain, maintain, and retain employment."

NSF plans to expand its partnerships to include the Maryland and the District of Columbia Departments of Rehabilitation Services in FY 2011. Additionally, NSF attends events targeted at disabled Veterans. This past year, NSF's Veterans Employment Program Manager has been increasing NSF representation at career and job fairs for disabled veterans including: Corporate Immersion for Wounded Warriors, M4Life/Wounded Warrior Program, Marine Corps Career Fair, Quantico Career Fair, and VA Employment Commission (VEC) Job Fair.

**Strategy 4: Update and distribute NSF's Hiring Manager Toolkit and other resources to provide additional information to hiring managers about the recruiting flexibilities for individuals with disabilities.**

NSF has recently updated its Hiring Manager Toolkit, which is an internal website providing information to hiring managers about the various recruitment methods. Highlighted within this Toolkit is a plethora of information about Schedule A and Disabled Veterans appointing authorities. Additionally, NSF provides informational fact sheets to selecting officials such as "The ABCs of SCHEDULE A for the Hiring Manager," which was created by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The Division of Human Resource Management is in the process of developing a presentation on Schedule A hiring, which will be presented at the bi-monthly Human Resource Management/ Administrative Officer (HRM/AO) Exchange, tentatively scheduled for April 2011. Finally, NSF Customer Account Representatives (CARs) will continue to raise awareness about hiring opportunities for individuals and will provide this information to their designated selecting officials and managers and encourage participation. This exchange will include the promotion of hiring individuals with disabilities into all grade levels and occupational series throughout NSF, with emphasis on two-graded interval positions, such as: Contract Specialist, GS-1102 positions. Furthermore, NSF wants to encourage hiring into positions that allow job portability including positions that allow for telework, and which also develop career skills that can transfer across agencies within the federal government.

**Figure 2 - NSF Strategies for Retention of Persons with Disabilities**

- Strategy 1: Work in conjunction with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) to create a disability working group to increase retention and address the needs of persons with disabilities within NSF.
- Strategy 2: Foster disability awareness across NSF throughout the year.
- Strategy 3: Increase awareness of and provide training opportunities for NSF employees with disabilities.

**Strategy 1: Work in conjunction with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) to create a disability working group to increase retention and address the needs of persons with disabilities within the agency.**

NSF will support the Office of Diversity and Inclusion's efforts to establish a disability working group. Such a group will provide support to employees with disabilities and advocate for them on various disability related issues. The group will be comprised of employees with disabilities, applicable staff from ODI and HRM, and other NSF employees interested in disability related issues and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

In addition to providing support to NSF employees with disabilities and serving as a disability recruitment resource for the agency, the disability working group will play a key role in: addressing concerns and issues (i.e. career development and upward mobility) pertaining to employees with disabilities; identifying access and workplace barrier problems; sponsoring disability awareness agency-wide through various outreach activities and forums; assisting with the implementation of Executive Order 13548; and furthering NSF's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce.

### **Strategy 2: Foster disability awareness across the agency throughout the year.**

Disability Awareness Month is commemorated during the month of October each year. However, NSF would like to foster the idea that "every month should be disability awareness month." Therefore, HRM, in collaboration with ODI and the disability working group, will gather ideas and develop various events that will occur throughout the year to foster disability awareness. Some recent events that have taken place are as follow: In May 2010, ODI, in partnership with the Selective Placement Coordinator, sponsored NSF's first Disability Forum, which brought together experts in disability law, reasonable accommodation, and special hiring authorities. The targeted audience was NSF's managers and supervisors. Additionally, a PowerPoint presentation on reasonable accommodation was disseminated as a resource to managers and supervisors via NSF's supervisor's alias. In December 2010, ODI sponsored NSF's first Accessibility and Accommodations Awareness Technology Expo and Webinar, where several companies and organizations presented the most up-and-coming technological advances in assistive technology. The Expo also provided information on assistive technology available free through the Computer/Electronic and Accommodations Program (CAP) to support federal employees with disabilities. The event, which was held in NSF's atrium and open to the public, not only increased awareness within NSF but also increased disability awareness in the surrounding community. The Expo was preceded by a Webinar that was hosted by a recognized expert in the field and which included real-time captioning for participants. Some future ideas include additional presentations on reasonable accommodations for selecting officials where they can learn about accessible solutions and accommodations to increase communication and productivity for people with disabilities and a panel discussion about recruitment and retention including individuals with disabilities. Such informational sessions are crucial since in FY 2010, ODI processed more than 376 requests for reasonable accommodations within NSF.

### **Strategy 3: Increase awareness of and provide training opportunities for NSF employees with disabilities**

NSF will increase awareness of existing training opportunities through effective usage of internal communication vehicles, such as NSF Announce, Weekly Wire, and other mechanisms. Employees with disabilities will be encouraged to take advantage of existing employee development programs. These programs include the After Hours Program, Avenues for Career Enhancement, Career Planning Showcase opportunities, and the use of Individual Development Plans and LearnNSF. In addition, NSF intends to solicit input from members of the newly created disability working group and the NSF Academy on new training initiatives and developmental opportunities for NSF employees with disabilities.

### **Communicating, Training, and Educating**

There will be general communication to all NSF employees from the CHCO and the ODI Director to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities and to convey NSF's commitment to meeting the letter and spirit of the Executive Order and its commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Additionally, NSF will create a partnership between ODI and the NSF Academy to incorporate the OPM training "Using Schedule A to Hire People with Disabilities" into all required EEO training initiatives sponsored by ODI for managers and supervisors within NSF. In addition to the Schedule A module, all ODI training for managers and supervisors focuses on equal employment opportunity (EEO), reasonable accommodations, diversity and harassment. LearnNSF, NSF's online learning management system, allows us to notify, deliver, and track participation of the training. Additional offerings will include ODI's "Diversity Dialogue Speakers Series" and OPM and Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program training and webinars.

NSF will focus on providing information and training programs to ensure that HR professionals and supervisors are provided with accurate and consistent information. It is critical that all HR professionals and supervisors are well informed in the use and application of both special non-competitive hiring authorities and available reasonable accommodations that support employees throughout their NSF career. NSF will actively seek innovative ways to inform and engage all employees and supervisors in this important initiative. In NSF's New Employee Orientation, NSF will place more emphasis on the importance of completing the SF256 form. Although the completion of this form is optional, NSF will provide information regarding how the form is used and the benefits to NSF in obtaining this information. Customer Account Representatives (CARs) will facilitate the education and training of supervisors and Directorate leadership as part of their ongoing recruitment, workforce planning, and annual staffing planning efforts. The agency will also ensure that supervisors and HR staff attend mandatory training developed by OPM. Furthermore, NSF participates in the monthly White House Conference Call on Disability Issues. These discussions provide NSF with updates on various



disability issues, and provide access to senior government personnel who work on disability issues.

NSF intends to re-survey the NSF workforce using the revised SF 256, Self Identification of Disability, to assist NSF in compiling its disability demographic data. Capturing this data will allow NSF to gather a more accurate picture of the workforce, help to determine if we are meeting our disability hiring goals, and to measure the agency's progress in meeting the requirements of the Executive Order.

In collaboration with the CARs, NSF will improve internal outreach efforts with supervisors to include discussions on Schedule A and other hiring flexibilities during the recruitment process.

### **Return to Work**

Currently NSF does not have any active Workers' Compensation cases. However, the Selective Placement Coordinator will monitor this quarterly; and NSF will create individual, customized plans, when necessary.

### **Conclusion**

NSF is strongly committed to the tenets of President Obama's Executive Order and will strive to increase the representation of persons with disabilities and targeted disabilities in all occupations and grade levels throughout NSF. It clearly understands the value of accessing the talents of the disability community through the use of effective hiring, retention, and training strategies. As it has successfully done in the past, NSF will continue to advocate for the employment, retention, and training of persons with disabilities, as outlined in this Operational Plan.

## Appendix A – Current NSF Disability Initiatives

<b>NSF Current Disability Initiatives by Category and Alignment with Operational Strategies</b>	<b>Leadership:</b> <i>Ensure a sound foundation for building &amp; accomplishing program initiatives for individuals with disabilities</i>	<b>Marketing:</b> <i>Market NSF’s support for employment of individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities</i>	<b>Skills Development &amp; Employment:</b> <i>Increase the representation of persons with disabilities in candidate pool for NSF careers</i>	<b>Information Gateway:</b> <i>Engage and educate HR professionals and hiring managers</i>
<b>Job and Career Expos</b> (e.g., Northern VA Job Expo, Career Expo and the Disabled, STEM Diversity Career Expo, Marine Corps Career Fair, Quantico Career Fair)		•	•	
<b>College Career Fairs</b> (e.g., George Mason University, James Madison University, Howard University Professional Development Day)		•	•	
<b>Veterans Programs</b> (e.g., Corporate Immersion for Wounded Warriors, M4Life/Wounded Warrior Program, NSF Non-Paid Work Experience Program)		•	•	
<b>Disability Programs and Outreach</b> (e.g., Perspective on Employment of Persons with Disabilities Conference, Schedule A Recruitment, Placement services provided by EARN, NSF HRM Selective Placement Program Coordinator, Use of Braille in marketing and outreach materials )		•	•	•
<b>Other Outreach Programs</b> (e.g., VA Employment Commission (VEC) Job Fair, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers)		•	•	
<b>Special Recruitment Programs</b> (e.g., Program Officer Recruitment, OPM/ODEP Hire the Disabled)		•	•	
<b>Special Hiring Authorities</b> (e.g., Schedule A, Disabled Veterans , Presidential Management Fellows Program, STEP, SCEP, Future Pathways Program)	•	•	•	•

<b>NSF Current Disability Initiatives by Category and Alignment with Operational Strategies</b>	<b>Leadership:</b> <i>Ensure a sound foundation for building &amp; accomplishing program initiatives for individuals with disabilities</i>	<b>Marketing:</b> <i>Market NSF's support for employment of individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities</i>	<b>Skills Development &amp; Employment:</b> <i>Increase the representation of persons with disabilities in candidate pool for NSF careers</i>	<b>Information Gateway:</b> <i>Engage and educate HR professionals and hiring managers</i>
<b>Leadership Support</b> (e.g., Develop and publish communications to convey NSF Director's, Chief Human Capital Officer's, Office of Diversity and Inclusion Director's and Selective Placement Coordinator's program support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>			
<b>External Partnerships</b> (e.g., VA Department of Rehabilitative Services, VA Employment Commission, Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARN), Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), OPM Shared Register of Candidates with Disabilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Partnerships</b> (e.g., Team to Invigorate Marketing & Outreach, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Broadening Participation Working Group, Ambassador Program, and HRM Customer Account Representatives (CARs))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing &amp; Outreach Strategies</b> (e.g., Team to Invigorate Marketing & Outreach, New Outreach Video, Paid advertising and banner displays, Showcasing NSF as Employer of Choice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning, Development &amp; Training</b> (e.g., New Employee Welcome (NEW) & New Executive Transition (NExT), Career Planning Showcase, Perspectives on Employment of Persons with Disabilities Annual Training Conference, Call to Action—Hire People with Disabilities, PTSD Webinar, HRM/AO Exchange)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

