



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE —

EXECUTIVE ORDER 24-05

**IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN STATE EMPLOYMENT**

(Superseding Executive Order 13-02)

PREAMBLE

The state of Washington is committed to developing and maintaining a high performing public workforce reflecting the diversity of the community it serves, and to providing access, meaningful services, and improved outcomes for all Washingtonians. State leaders must bring diverse perspectives and experiences that examine the issues facing the state to fully serve the people. Diversity in the workforce promotes a deep understanding of issues and opens opportunities to craft new and better solutions.

WHEREAS, while the state of Washington is a national leader that recognizes and protects the civil rights of people with disabilities, representation of people with disabilities in the state workforce remains significantly lower than the percentage of people with disabilities who are available to work and the national workforce representation of people with disabilities.

WHEREAS, representation of people with disabilities in our state government workforce is critical to ensure diverse perspectives, identities, and responsiveness to community needs, while emphasizing the capability of people with disabilities as public servants; and

WHEREAS, people at middle and lower bounds of income earn most of their income from work and only 41.9 percent of Washington's working-age people with disabilities are employed, compared with a 77.1 percent rate of employment for people without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, 23.6 percent of people with disabilities in Washington state live in poverty, compared to 9.3 percent of people without a disability. Washingtonians with disabilities earn 22 percent less than those without disabilities and are 39% more likely to live in poverty. Research indicates that the level of employment, the quality of jobs, and the degree of access to those jobs are crucial determinants of poverty reduction; and

WHEREAS, intersecting historically marginalized identities within the disability community compounds the oppression and structural barriers to self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, the state's ability to better serve the public will be enriched by employing more people with disabilities, which requires both intentional and ongoing engagement of executive leaders throughout state government.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the state of Washington, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and statutes of the state of Washington do, effective immediately, hereby order and direct as follows:

REAFFIRMING WASHINGTON STATE'S DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT

Washington state reaffirms and renews its commitment to eliminating and remedying the historical effects of workplace inequities and barriers for people with disabilities. State government, one of the largest employers in Washington, shall strive to employ people with disabilities at all levels of state government at the same percentage within its workforce as the percentage of working age adults with disabilities residing in Washington state. State government shall strive to create universal access and belonging for people with disabilities throughout every phase of employment. Further, equity for people with disabilities must be embedded within diversity, equity and inclusion efforts focused on the state's internal workforce and external service delivery.

SUPPORTING THE STATE'S DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT

1. Executive and small cabinet agencies (collectively, "executive agencies") shall:
 - a. *Hiring and Workforce Plan*: Create a hiring and workforce plan as an area of focus in their Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Strategic Action Plan. The hiring and workforce plan must, at a minimum:
 - i. Assess the composition of their workforce and progress toward parity of employment for workers who are under-represented in the agency as compared with the Washington population, with a focus on workers with disabilities. For workers with disabilities, this analysis must include recruitment strategies, provision of reasonable accommodations, accessibility, and training/professional development. Hiring and workforce goals, developed from this analysis, should reflect strategies that remove barriers and increase the engagement, retention, and promotion of employees with disabilities.
 - ii. Assess disparities in hiring, retention, development, and promotion of people with disabilities, and create a plan to eliminate disparities that remedy any noted deficits that contains specific measurable goals and timelines for completion. Document hiring and workforce goals in the state agency's PEAR plan submitted to the Office of Equity. Agencies must complete this review and include a hiring and workforce plan as a part of their PEAR plan by December 31, 2025.
 - b. *Workforce Composition*: Strive to achieve a workforce that reflects a minimum of 5% of people with disabilities by December 31, 2026.
 - c. *Training Requirements*:
 - i. Ensure all materials created by executive agencies meet accessibility guidelines. All staff must be trained in creating accessible documents and forms within six months of the start of their employment.
 - ii. Ensure all training for employees meets accessibility standards, whether virtual or

in person. Any required assessments, trainings, or evaluations for promotion must meet accessibility and inclusion practices. Agencies with items, documents and/or systems that do not meet accessibility standards because they were created prior to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines' requirements will include timelines for bringing them to compliance in their PEAR plan, subject to funding.

- iii. Ensure those involved in the hiring process are trained to understand their role and expectations to support the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq. (1990) and the Washington Law Against Discrimination Chapter 49.6 RCW.
- d. *Reasonable Accommodations, Funding:* Adequately fund reasonable accommodations, so that any need for reasonable accommodations does not impact hiring, retention, training, or promotional opportunities for people with disabilities.
- e. *Recruitment Practices:* In furtherance of Executive Order 24-04, Increasing Employment Opportunities in Washington State Government, by December 30, 2026, analyze recruitment practices to identify the likely effects of those practices on inclusion for people with disabilities. This analysis must include review of all job description templates, job descriptions, essential job duties/functions, job postings, and accessibility of online systems. Develop and implement strategies to resolve barriers found through the analysis. Certifications such as driver's licenses and educational requirements will only be included when a clear necessity exists. Requirements that disproportionately eliminate people with disabilities from employment consideration, such as a requirement for a driver's license or including driving as an essential function of a job, must consider other means by which a task can be accomplished. Solutions such as teleconferencing or other methods of meeting requirements that allow full participation by people with disabilities must be considered. Public transit and alternative transportation beyond single occupancy vehicle commuting are considered viable options for accessing job sites.
- f. *Supported Employment in State Government Program:* Participate in the Supported Employment in State Government (SESG) program in accordance with standards established by OFM and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Beginning 2026, agencies will report on their participation to OFM at the end of each fiscal year and note strategies to increase participation in their PEAR plan submitted to the Office of Equity. Agencies must include dates and a plan for how participation goals will be met. Should an agency cite a need not met by the current structure of the SESG program, the agency will meet with SESG leaders to identify ways to address the unmet need. The SESG program will make every effort to meet the agency's needs.
- g. *Disability Inclusion Network:* Support employee participation in the Disability Inclusion Network (DIN), the cross-agency employee-led disability business resource group. The DIN is critical to Washington State's successful employment of people with disabilities, and executive agencies are encouraged to sponsor agency level employee resource groups for employees with disabilities.

- h. *Work Environments*: Ensure inclusive work environments through accessible physical environments, plain language communication to employees and prominently displayed, simplified policies and processes on reasonable accommodations included in onboarding materials and in areas where employees seek other employment related information.
- 2. The Washington State Office of Equity (“the Office”) shall work to facilitate policy and systems change to promote equitable policies, practices, and outcomes for people with disabilities in state employment by assisting agencies in applying an equity lens in all aspects of agency decision making, including service delivery, program development, policy development, and budgeting. The Office shall accomplish this by:
 - a. Leading the development and implementation of a *Statewide Universal Access & Belonging Plan* (the Plan) in partnership with state employees and community members with disabilities. The Plan must include, but is not limited to, policies, procedures, practices, and required legislation that promote universal access and belonging for people with disabilities in state employment and performance measures to determine the effectiveness of agency programs and services on reducing disparities and meeting the needs of employees and job applicants with disabilities;
 - b. Establishing a process for the Office to report on *Statewide Universal Access & Belonging Plan* agency and statewide performance;
 - c. Establishing a process for agencies to respond to the report including the agency's progress on performance, the agency's action plan to address areas for improvement and corrective action, and a timeline for the action plan;
 - d. Establishing procedures to hold agencies accountable, which may include conducting performance reviews related to agency compliance with Office performance measures; and
 - e. Providing guidance, technical assistance, training, and consultation to Washington state offices, agencies, departments, and commissions in universal access and belonging policies, principles, practices, strategies, and tools to ensure successful implementation of this Order and the *Statewide Universal Access & Belonging Plan*.
 - 3. The Washington State Office of Financial Management in partnership with the Office of Equity and other stakeholders shall oversee development and implementation of statewide policies, strategies, and services to ensure successful implementation of this Order. Specifically, OFM shall develop standards, guidance, best practices, and an accountability framework for: (1) policies on reasonable accommodation, and inclusion of people with disabilities;; (2) collecting and disseminating data related to representation of people with disabilities at an enterprise level; (3) in partnership with the Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, The Office of Equity, The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council and in consultation with the Disability Inclusion Network, developing procedures for clear pathways for agencies to administer and fund reasonable accommodations. (4) reporting progress to the Governor’s office on reaching parity for employment of people with disabilities each year.

4. The Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) shall advise, engage, convene, and support execution of policies, projects, activities and other actions which enhance access, opportunities, options and equity for individuals with disabilities seeking employment with and employed by Washington state as well as all other citizens with disabilities. GCDE will advise state agencies and make recommendations on increasing opportunities for employment for people with disabilities within state government. As such GCDE may convene workgroups, committees, subcommittees, and other groups to further employment in state agencies for people with disabilities. GCDE will work in partnership with people with lived experiences, members, and associate members of the GCDE, state agencies, and other disability policy experts.
5. The Washington State Office of the Chief Information Officer sets information technology policy and direction for the State of Washington. Washington state is committed to full accessibility of all electronic and digital resources as part of universal design. As such the OCIO must review current strategy and policy related to IT and accessibility to set the standard for the state of Washington. The OCIO will:
 - a. Review and update as needed OCIO policy 188 to strengthen requirements for accessibility of Washington state online hiring systems, internal online systems such as websites, apps, portals, training materials, and online trainings, internal data collection structures, and documents to ensure full accessibility to the communications of the state of Washington both for external customers and internal staff.
 - b. Develop, in partnership with the Disability Advisory Council and the Office of Equity, a list of approved accessibility tools and software for accessibility commonly used by people with disabilities as reasonable accommodations in the workplace. This list will streamline requests for reasonable accommodation and serve as a resource across the enterprise. Examples of such reasonable accommodations includes JAWS, zoom text, and other software programs for use of adaptive equipment. The document should also include standards for accessibility feature enablement in commonly used software such as Teams.
6. The Washington State Department of Enterprise Services manages enterprise-wide training. DES is positioned to ensure high quality, effective, consistent training on accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce. To do this DES, in collaboration with OFM State HR, Washington State Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council, the Governor's Committee for Disability Issues and Employment and the Disability Inclusion Network and other stakeholders, is charged with:
 - a. Reviewing accessibility training available in the learning management system including creating accessibility in documents, Excel workbooks, PowerPoint slides, eLearning, and email messages, and updating as needed.
 - b. Creating and disseminating training on reasonable accommodation and disability inclusive practices for supervisors and managers.

I invite other statewide elected officials, institutions of higher education, agencies of the judiciary, agencies of the Legislature, and all boards and commissions to follow the provisions of

this Executive Order.

Provisions of this Executive Order are not intended to alter any existing collective bargaining agreements. This Order is not intended to confer and does not confer any legal right or entitlement and shall not be used as a basis for legal challenges to any rule or any other action or inaction of the governmental entities and employees subject to it.

This executive order takes effect immediately.

Signed and sealed with the official seal of the state of Washington on this 4th day of December, AD, Two Thousand and Twenty-Four, at Olympia, Washington.

By:

/s/

Jay Inslee
Governor

BY THE GOVERNOR:

/s/

Secretary of State