



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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DISTRICT SELECTED FOR DOL'S NEON INITIATIVE

(Washington, DC)—The U.S. Department of Labor has selected the District of Columbia and 10 states to participate as "core states" in its [National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network initiative](#) (NEON). The Department on Disability Services (DDS) will manage the District's initiative and receive technical assistance from recognized subject matter experts to increase [Competitive Integrated Employment](#) for people with disabilities. This initiative brings together District partners to support the District in becoming a model employer of people with disabilities, referred to nationally as State as a Model Employer (SAME).

The [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) launched NEON in 2019 to connect government agencies to consulting, capacity-building support, and ongoing mentoring to increase employment outcomes. It is a complement to Mayor Bowser's efforts to elevate the District Government as a model employer of people with disabilities on all levels.

DDS Director Andrew Reese commented that the agency is taking all steps possible to ensure that DC becomes a model employer of people with disabilities. ***"We recognize the contributions that people bring, regardless of their disability, and we are making sure that our recruitment efforts for every position are broad enough that people with disabilities who are qualified will be considered for the job."***

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The Department on Disability Services is a dynamic organization serving people with disabilities through the services of was Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This comprehensive collaborative approach provides innovative high-quality services that enable people with disabilities to lead productive lives as vital members of their families, schools, workplaces, and communities. Learn more at www.dds.dc.gov.

The DDS State Office of Policy, Planning, and Innovation (SOPPI) will manage the NEON initiative for the District. There are three expected outcomes:

Outcome 1: Assess the Current Landscape--Complete an assessment of policies and practices across government agencies to support establishing the District as a State as a Model Employment (SAME) of people with disabilities who work at all levels of government.

Outcome 2: Improve outreach and engagement of key populations--Identify talent pipelines and best practice approaches to fill positions in DC Government, with a focus on employing youth/young adults with disabilities at all levels.

Outcome 3: Develop a SAME Workplan--develop a strategy that reflects the needs and opportunities identified in the Landscape Assessment to improve the employment of people with disabilities.

The District's technical assistance through NEON is expected to conclude in August 2023. Other states selected for the initiative include California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New York, Rhode Island, and Tennessee.

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