Effecting Policy Change Through Crowdsourcing:

*ePolicyWorks Online National Dialogues*

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) ePolicyWorks initiative is pleased to be the host of an important series of online dialogues. Brought to you through the use of leading-edge crowdsourcing tools, these online dialogues are interactive platforms for collaboration. They enable ODEP to work with their partners to enlist the public's input on key policy issues related to the employment of people with disabilities by channeling the brainpower of our federal partners, nonprofits, NGOs and other stakeholders.

**What is crowdsourcing?**

Crowdsourcing, which often takes the form of "online dialogues" or "virtual town halls," is the practice of using online tools to solicit ideas or contributions from stakeholders in order to solve problems and make decisions. The benefits of crowdsourcing include: connecting agencies to stakeholders or constituents, providing cost benefits and efficiencies, and serving as an outreach and awareness tool.

**How does online crowdsourcing compare to traditional methods of gathering feedback?**

Traditional methods of gathering feedback—whether it’s through a live, in-person event or a request for written comments—involves limited participation. They tend to be “one and done” engagements that are purely data-driven. Crowdsourcing, on the other hand, taps the power of technology and interactive online features such as voting, idea submission and commenting. It is community driven and value driven, and it emphasizes results.

**Is ePolicyWorks' online crowdsourcing tool accessible?**

ePolicyWorks has strived to make its online dialogue accessible and usable for all participants, including people with disabilities. The dialogue platform was built using the IdeaScale crowdsourcing solution, which currently meets Section 508 Web accessibility requirements and aims to meet WCAG v 2.0 guidelines. ePolicyWorks has performed extensive testing and worked with IdeaScale to implement modifications to ensure the accessibility of this tool. And in efforts to make it the most accessible crowdsourcing tool available, ePolicyWorks will continue to work with IdeaScale to explore and implement new solutions to further improve its usability in the months to come.

**ePolicyWorks Online Dialogues and Twitter Chats**

ePolicyWorks is the force behind a number of successful online dialogues conducted in partnership with various federal agencies and other organizations. These include a recent online event co-hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Accessible Transportation Technologies Research Initiative (ATTRI) that addressed enhanced transportation options as an effective employment support for people with disabilities. Titled *Breaking Down Employment Barriers with Accessible Transportation Innovation*, the dialogue engaged transportation and technology experts, as well as members of the general public, in a virtual conversation about next generation accessible transportation solutions such as connected and automated vehicles. The dialogue was complemented by ePolicyWorks' inaugural Twitter chat (#ePWChat) where participants joined a real time, interactive discussion on the current and future states of accessible transportation. This two-pronged approach enabled ePolicyWorks to reach a larger audience, achieve greater collaboration between experts, and foster a richer, more robust online discussion.
Breaking Down Employment Barriers with Accessible Transportation Innovation

For more information visit ePolicyWorks.org.

To learn more about our online dialogues, visit https://www.epolicyworks.org/EPW/Dialogues/ and follow @ePolicyWorks on Twitter.