

State as a Model Employer (SAME)

Annual Report for 2020 & Agency Plan for 2021



DEQ
LOUISIANA

I. History

According to the 2017 Annual Disabilities Statistics Compendium, 30% of people with disabilities in Louisiana live in poverty as compared to 16% of people without disabilities. Further, only 33% of people with disabilities are in the workforce as compared to 72% of individuals without disabilities. Recognizing that the State of Louisiana has a vested interest in reducing discrimination against people living with a disability, eliminating barriers to meaningful employment and attracting the highest candidates into state employment opportunities, Governor John Bel Edwards issued Executive Order JBE 18-08 which established the State as a Model Employer Task Force. Accordingly, the Executive Order declared that the state should serve as a model employer for business by a commitment to improve hiring, recruitment and retention of individuals with disabilities, with the goal that 7% of the state work force be comprised of persons living with a disability.

To that end, the SAME Task Force is working closely with representatives from across all departments within the Executive Branch in order to establish a series of best practices for improving the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities within state service. By developing and implementing these best practices, the state intends to increase the breadth and depth of diversity among individuals within state service.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) has created this Five Year Plan in accordance with the provisions outlined in Executive Order JBE 18-08, and in order to improve the recruitment and retention of individuals who identify as disabled.

II. Analysis and Discussion of Survey Data

In late summer and early fall of 2020, LDEQ employees were invited to participate in a web-based survey which was designed to determine the percentage of employees at the LDEQ that identify as disabled. Given the challenges and limitations that the state's workforce is facing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the questionnaire was e-mailed to employees multiple times over the course of approximately six weeks. The deadline for completing the survey was also extended through early to mid-October this year. These measures were enacted in order to provide employees with as much opportunity as possible to participate in this year's survey. As with previous years, participation in this survey was voluntary and respondents were assured that their participation, as well as their identities, would remain anonymous. Data from subsequent surveys will be used to guide the ongoing development of the LDEQ's SAME Agency Plan.

A total of 724 full time and part time employees received the 2020 poll, with 237 employees responding. The response rate was 32.73%, a decrease of 10.47% from 2019. According to the 2020 survey, 50 (21%) of the 237 respondents reported a disability. 6.9% of the LDEQ's 724 employees reported having some sort of disability.

III. Annual Report for 2020

The LDEQ continues to make progress toward its initial goals, which were outlined in its Agency Plan in October 2018. This Agency Plan includes the identification of an agency-wide liaison: Doug Bordelon, PhD (Human Resources Division). Dr. Bordelon worked with staff within the LDEQ and at other state agencies to establish guidelines and best practices that would allow the LDEQ to work toward/attain its annual goals. The text below includes an overview and an analysis of the LDEQ's progress toward its 2020 goals.

- Increasing the overall percentage of LDEQ employees who identify as disabled.
 - According to the initial survey data that was collected in 2018, 8.6% (our baseline statistic) of the staff at the LDEQ identify as disabled. Our goal has been to incrementally increase this overall amount by 1% over the next 5 years. A follow up survey that was conducted in August-September of 2019 revealed that we remain at 8.6%. However, the survey that was conducted in 2020 shows that our baseline statistic decreased by 1.7%. Our current baseline is 6.9%. We will continue to implement proactive recruitment strategies, namely by working with LRS and other allied organizations. In addition, and as soon as it is practicable, we will resume attending job fairs. These strategies should aid us in increasing our current baseline statistic (6.9%) by 1% over the next three years. However, given the challenges that coronavirus pandemic has presented in the past 8 months, particularly with regards to recruitment and intra-office communication, it remains to be seen how much progress we can make toward our goals in the coming year.
- The LDEQ will implement communication and other strategies that are aimed at informing applicants as well as LDEQ employees of the Department's philosophy toward employment of people who identify as disabled.
 - Effective January 2019, the LDEQ began to require the following verbiage in all LDEQ job advertisements: "Louisiana is a State as a Model Employer for individuals with disabilities." During new hire

orientation and through the conspicuous posting of policies, we routinely educate and remind employees that the LDEQ has no tolerance for discriminatory attitudes and behavior that is aimed at employees who identify as disabled.

- Designing and delivering training as a means for fostering a climate of awareness and respect toward employees, applicants, and citizens who are disabled.
 - The LDEQ agency-wide liaison completed the Windmills training in March of 2019. The agency-wide liaison designed supplemental training for LDEQ supervisors and managers on various issues and topics related to disability awareness, workplace accommodations, workplace rights, and disability issues in interviewing. The agency-wide liaison has also developed curriculum that is focused on recruitment and customized employment strategies for its HR Division's administrative team. Given the limited capacity to offer in-person training at this time, the LDEQ will work with its training program manager to develop web-based training on the topics outlined above.

IV. Agency Plan for 2021

A. The LDEQ reserves the right to revise and customize components of this 5 Year Plan in order to optimize performance outcomes.

B. Designation of Agency-wide Liaison

Human Resources Manager Doug Bordelon, PhD (Doug.Bordelon@la.gov / 225-219-1325) will continue to serve as the Agency-wide Point of Contact and Liaison for implementing the directives established in this Agency Plan. The coronavirus pandemic has hindered many of the strategies that are outline below. However, as soon as it is practicable, the Agency-wide Liaison will:

- i. Review the duties of all job vacancies within the LDEQ in order to match those vacancies with suitable candidates at LRS.
- ii. On a routine basis, and as soon as it is practicable, meet with the LRS Single Point of Contact in order to relay information on available positions at the LDEQ and also to ascertain the availability of candidates at LRS.
- iii. Coordinate information between LRS, and other allied organizations, with the LDEQ's hiring managers and supervisors.
- iv. Serve as a subject matter expert and advisor on customized employment strategies.
- v. As soon as is practicable, attend disability job fairs and other functions in order to promote employment opportunities at the LDEQ.

- vi. Establish and maintain contact with counselors within higher education, community/technical colleges, and high schools in order to develop and promote an internship program for students with disabilities.
- vii. As necessary, notify agency personnel of training opportunities and other resources related to the employment of individuals with disabilities.

C. Annual Goals

i. Staff Composition

At the inception of this initiative, the August-September 2018 survey indicated that 8.6% of the LDEQ's workforce is composed of employees who identify as disabled. The 2019 data revealed that the LDEQ's workforce remains at 8.6%. The 2020 data shows that the LDEQ is currently at 6.9%. We will continue to work toward increasing this level by 1% per year over the next three years; however, given the limitations imposed by the coronavirus pandemic, recruitment will be a challenge. We will focus on developing strategies which not only take into consideration these limitations but hopefully allow us to make some meaningful progress toward our goals in 2021 and beyond.

ii. Posting Requirements

At this time, given the coronavirus pandemic, we have limited recruitment opportunities. However, once we resume regular hiring, we will continue to promote awareness, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace through the following strategies:

- a. All hiring managers shall continue to include the following verbiage in all job advertisements: "Louisiana is a State as a Model Employer for individuals with disabilities."
- b. The LDEQ will continue to ensure that information regarding employment policies that prohibit employment discrimination and harassment directed at individuals with disabilities remains on its intranet, internet, and all facilities.

iii. Training Requirements

In order to foster a climate within the LDEQ that conveys respect and increases awareness, the LDEQ, in conjunction with other agencies, and as soon as it is practicable, will continue to enact the following measures:

- a. The LDEQ will require its employees to complete training in disability awareness and disability etiquette. Newly hired employees should complete this training within the first 30 days of their hire date.
- b. As resources become available, the LDEQ will require all its managers and supervisors to receive supplemental training on the topic of workplace accommodations, workplace rights, and interviewing as it pertains to people with disabilities.
- c. As resources become available, the LDEQ will require its supervisory and administrative officers within Human Resources Division to receive supplemental training on recruitment and customized employment strategies.
- d. On an as-needed basis, the LDEQ will design and deliver customized training related to disability awareness.

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality	2020		2019		2018	
	Participants	Employees= 731	Employees= 683	Employees= 724	Employees= 342	724
Yes - Disability	49	6.7%	59	8.6%	62	8.6%
Physical	9	1.2%	11	1.6%	9	1.2%
Intellectual	1	0.1%	5	0.7%	8	1.1%
Behavioral	19	2.6%	22	3.2%	28	3.9%
Sensory	4	0.5%	6	0.9%	8	1.1%
Disease	20	2.7%	18	2.6%	17	2.3%
doesn't want to report type	2	0.3%	2	0.3%	3	0.4%
No - Disability	175	23.9%	222	32.5%	259	35.8%
Does not want to disclose	9	1.2%	14	2.0%	21	2.9%
SSDI yes	2	0.3%	13	1.9%		
SSDI no	19	2.6%	22	3.2%		
SSDI unsure	28	3.8%	24	3.5%		
affects work A Great Deal	3	0.4%	3	0.4%		
affects work A Lot	3	0.4%	4	0.6%		
affects work Moderately	12	1.6%	12	1.8%		
affects work A Little	22	3.0%	24	3.5%		
affects work None At All	9	1.2%	16	2.3%		
affects life A Great Deal	4	0.5%				
affects life A Lot	2	0.3%				
affects life Moderately	15	2.1%				
affects life A Little	18	2.5%				
affects life None At All	9	1.2%				

