

Memorandum for the NCSE South-Central Region CEOs

Subject: Letter of Recommendation for Vanessa Ferguson for a Second Three-Year Term as the NCSE South Central Representative

Greetings:

This letter is to offer my strongest recommendation for Vanessa Ferguson to be appointed to a second three-year term as the NCSE South Central Representative. Yes, I am biased – I get to work with her every day and consider a peerless leader. And while I am sure there are many capable and suitable senior leaders in the South-Central Region, Vanessa has a proven three-year track record of selfless and extremely effective commitment to the mission and intent of NCSE.

But that is not why I am taking the extra step to call out her exceptional capabilities. I strongly believe that for these current chaotic and ambiguous times in federal resource decision-making, Vanessa's unique ability to gain consensus, build teams, hold teams together, and selflessly lead with an attitude of one mission, one voice, it would be a misstep to change out her incredibly effective leadership at this time when modernization (and defense) of the AbilityOne Program is essential to sustaining life-changing support to people with disabilities across the nation. At a time when we all need to work together, she is the best talent to bring and keep people together.

Regarding her track record, there is no doubt her instrumental leadership has moved the needle in a number of key initiatives:

- As the lead of the Workforce Development Committee, Vanessa revitalized its efforts by fostering collaboration among NCSE, SourceAmerica executive staff, and other social enterprises. Under her leadership, workforce development remained a priority in all discussions, ensuring that social enterprises of all sizes—small, medium, and large—had a seat at the table in shaping the future of AbilityOne.
 - The ground gained in the NCSE advisory role in Workforce Development will take root and advance with her continued leadership.
- Vanessa serves on the NCSE/NAEPB Compliance Advisory Council, where she provides critical grassroots support, insights, and guidance on regulatory compliance. Her contributions have played a key role in refining regulatory policies and facilitating productive dialogue among AbilityOne Social Enterprises, SourceAmerica, and the NIB.
 - She is a recognized thought leader and seen by all among a “tough audience” as the voice of reason. She is routinely requested to speak at Commission meetings and is sought out for advice and comments. Again, in this volatile environment of fast-changing regulatory policy, a steady hand and trusted voice is key to our collective success.
- As a founding member of the “CIE Dream Team,” Vanessa is a recognized champion of Competitive Integrated Employment. She has worked closely with state vocational rehabilitation agencies to re-establish a vital referral network, a cornerstone for the success of the AbilityOne Program in recruiting and retaining talent.
 - Again, in this regard at both national and state level, Vanessa is a well-known and trusted agent. Her retention in this position for three more years only makes sense.

I cannot overstate the importance of continuity of leadership at this time. Vanessa's unwavering commitment, strategic vision, and ability to drive collaboration make her an invaluable asset to the NCSE Executive Committee. Without question, I fully support every minute Vanessa spends working NCSE and South Central Region issues, because that effort is for the greater good.

I urge your most favorable consideration of Vanessa for a second term. I am readily available to respond to any questions or further clarification of this letter at tcucolo@pcsi.org, or my personal phone, 571-594-0053.



Anthony A. Cucolo III
President and CEO
Major General, US Army Retired

Vanessa Ferguson, Senior VP of Workforce Development | PCSI

Senior Vice President of Workforce Development

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Priority Statement

After 23 years in the AbilityOne Program, Vanessa Ferguson has touched every facet of it — from site-level employee to Senior Vice President and all points in between. With NCSE's efforts to increase accountability and drive grassroots decision making, few if any nominees can provide such a wide-angle lens of the entire Program, nor the network of cultivated relationships within SourceAmerica.

Vanessa's vision is to see the AbilityOne Program recognized as a trusted agent in the communities we serve. "Nothing about us without us," she says. By more deeply involving target communities and those working on the ground to serve them, NCSE can shape SourceAmerica into the relevant, accountable, transparent agency it strives to be. Vanessa's priority issues as an NCSE representative will be:

- Building Trustworthiness and Relevance
- Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment
- Advocating for Veterans' Inclusion
- Engaging Social Enterprises in Decision Making
- Providing Holistic Community Supports
- Strengthening Transportation Solution



As a subject matter expert for SourceAmerica and participating social enterprises, Vanessa leads the way through new initiatives and the potential impact on our shared mission. She keeps her finger on the pulse of Federal, State, South Central Regional, and personal issues surrounding people with disabilities, regularly attending NCSE meetings to learn and advocate for the mission. Her mentorship to organizations within SourceAmerica supports social enterprise compliance and continues to enable CIE in new States for the growth of the Program.

Biography

Vanessa Ferguson has almost three decades serving the beautiful population of people with disabilities in 14

states. of experience both shaped, and been shaped by, Vanessa Ferguson since 1996. From her first AbilityOne job scrubbing pots and pans as a Dining Facility Attendant at Fort Hood, Texas, to her promotion in 2020 to PCSI Senior Vice President of Workforce Development, Vanessa has inspired, educated, encouraged, and advocated for the cause in both word and action.

Vanessa has served for six years on the 898 Panel Definition Subcommittee, Veteran Employment and Initiative Subcommittee, IEE Subcommittee, and has acted as a subject matter expert on regulatory compliance and relevant challenges to other 898 Panel subcommittees. In this role, she worked on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to advocate for the AbilityOne Program.

She also worked as a leader and subject matter expert for the SourceAmerica Competitive Integrated Employment (CEI) Committee and the National Employee Research Service (ERS).

She was influential in launching the AbilityOne Commission Apprenticeship Program in 2020, traveling as an invitee to Washington, D.C., to attend the U.S. Department of Labor signing ceremony.

Vanessa's Community Employment Program (CEP) and partnership with ProjectSEARCH have placed more than 2,500 people with disabilities in competitive integrated employment outside of PCSI and connected them with the holistic supports they need to thrive.

Beyond AbilityOne, Vanessa lives the mission. She serves on the Board of Directors for Imagine A Way, Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, and Grassroots Advocacy. As the spouse of a 100% service-disabled, 22-year Army Veteran, Vanessa tirelessly advocates for Veterans' issues. She serves as a committee member for both the Austin Mayor's Council and the Texas Governor's Committee to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families. Every Thanksgiving, she and her family volunteer providing food for the homeless and Veterans in downtown Austin, TX.