Inter-State alliance will connect employers and job seekers with disabilities

(Salem, Ore.) — State agencies in Washington and Oregon teamed up earlier this year to form the Inter-State Disability Employment Alliance (IDEA). The first-of-its-kind collaboration will connect employers who want to hire people with disabilities with qualified candidates in the Portland Metropolitan Area. As part of this effort, the group is hosting a forum designed to educate employers about the resources and programs agencies in both states offer that can help them accomplish their hiring goals.

What: Inter-State Business Forum

When: Wednesday, October 11, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Where: Vancouver Water Resources Education Center
4600 SE Columbia Way
Vancouver, WA

Studies show that while some managers still worry about the costs of accommodating them, employees with disabilities stay on the job longer, have fewer absences and have nearly identical job performance ratings as their coworkers.

“Sometimes it just takes a bit of information for employers to learn what they need in order to includes a qualified person with a disability in their workforce,” said Donna Duff, Workforce and Business Coordinator for Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation. “This event will help employers learn about this labor pool and the free disability resources our programs can provide businesses to be successful.”
“It’s exciting to think of what is possible when businesses and qualified candidates come together,” added Washington State’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director Rob Hines. “The exchange of information and ideas at this event can help change the course of the employment market for those with disabilities in the Pacific Northwest.”

In the morning, business representatives will hear from a panel of state agency subject matter experts. They’ll be able to ask them questions about what it takes to be successful when hiring employees with disabilities. The afternoon session features a panel composed of local business leaders who have hired employees with disabilities. They will share their strategies for finding talent and discuss the benefits these workers bring to their businesses.

IDEA is comprised of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services’ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Oregon Department of Human Services’ Vocational Rehabilitation, Washington State Department of Services for the Blind and Low Vision, Oregon Commission for the Blind, Workforce Southwest Washington, Work Systems Inc., WorkSource and the Cowlitz Tribe.

###