>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: All right. Well, good afternoon everyone. I am so excited to be here with you today. My name is Philip Kahn-Pauli. I am the Policy and Practices Director at RespectAbility. My pronouns are he/him/his. To give you a audio description of what I look like, I am a 30-something man with brown hair, brown beard, glasses, a slightly craggy face and a gray professorial jacket. And I am joined on the line today with Ollie Cantos, vice chair of RespectAbility's board and a long time civil rights attorney, advocate. And there are a few people I know who deserve and earn the title of trailblazer and I think he is one of them. So Ollie, can you quickly introduce yourself to everyone?

>> Ollie Cantos: Thank you so much Phil. My name is Ollie Cantos, and I'm vice chair of the advisory board here at RespectAbility, and my preferred pronouns are he, him and his. And I am sporting a pair of dark glasses and I am balding, wearing a suit with a light shirt and a dark tie.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Great, thank you. And so, today, we are talking about people with disabilities at work, and a really incredible new resource guide to achieving economic independence and inclusion through employment and entrepreneurship that Ollie has put together. It is really an incredible new resource that he has spent years compiling ideas and insights, really leveraging his lived experience as a job seeker with disabilities, as an entrepreneur, as a leader in this field, as an attorney, and as a parent of brilliant young men with disabilities. Now I want to do a quick accessibility check. We've got ASL, we have closed captioning, you can click on the captioning option on the bottom. You've got the ASL interpreter Gabe with us. We are going to have a more of -- this is more of an interactive conversation between myself and Ollie, and then later we will be taking questions from the audience. To drop in those questions, put them in the chat box or put them in the Q&A section. My colleague Eric just dropped the live transcript link in the chat box, so go for that if you need it. And if anything comes up or you would like anything described or explained or I need to slow down my voice, just do so in the chat box and we'll get this conversation started. So I want to give you a little bit of a run through of some of the really incredibly different things that Ollie has done, frame the conversation about what's in this resource guide, why it's appropriate and important to all of you. So I already mentioned that Ollie is the Vice Chair of our Board of Advisors and he has been active in the civil rights arena since 1990, and for those of you who maybe on the younger side, you know what also happened in 1990: the Americans with Disabilities Act. And so his career has echoed the advancement of inclusion and disability rights and the embrace of disability justice in this work. He has worked at the Department of Education, he has worked for the White House, he has worked as an attorney, he has done so many different things around disability inclusion rights. He has been a leader for years in so many different areas -- if you actually look at our website, I will confess that Ollie's biography is in small print so that you can actually fit everything that he's done. Don't worry, it's sufficiently accessibly sized fonts, but it's still small to fit a lot of info on one page. Ollie has certainly had no -- has gotten no shortage of attention over the years. He's -- I mentioned that he is a parent of folks with disabilities as well as being a person with a disability. You may have seen the news stories about his three blind triplet boys, Leo, Nick, and Steven. They've been profiled by NPR, Washington Magazine, USA Today. They joined the ranks of the Eagle Scouts several years ago. As a former -- as an Eagle scout myself, and a former boy scout I was so excited to see that, because they put in the work and that really emphasizes really that spectrum of experience that Ollie has, and that he's really bringing to the table. And he has really taken that -- all of those experiences, those ideas, his passion for the subject and distilled it into a document that covers so many of the challenges that we as a community face. But more importantly it's a very solution-oriented guide. It really is about -- it's about both recognizing our past, our history, but also figuring out what works and what can change a life, and that is really wonderful. It's especially wonderful because things are not so wonderful these days. All of us have been impacted by COVID-19. This pandemic has been adding to the ranks of people with disabilities, it has been claiming the lives of thousands, the economy is an incredibly difficult position, but as we pull together, as we wear our masks and keep our distance, get our vaccinations, we're going to start rebuilding. And as we rebuild it's really important that we rebuild an inclusive economy that works for everyone, especially for millions of people with disabilities who have been impacted by the pandemic, and especially around issues of equity and tearing down systemic barriers. So typically I'd start a presentation by sharing a lot of statistics, because that's what's RespectAbility style. But I want to talk you through and then I'll finally let Ollie do the talking for the Zoomside chat. Just to give you kind of a sense of what you'll find in the guide that he's prepared, is -- you've got a great -- you actually have an entire section that tells you how to use the guide, which I think is just really important because you put out the resources, but if you actually don't tell people this is where you can find stuff, it's not going to be useful. So our first real substantive chapter is a brief history of the disability rights movement, and I think that's so important that foregrounding of the history of people with disabilities seeking access, achieving it, and then building a better broader coalition. I think that's so important, and understanding the history that went up to the moment of 1990 when ADA became law and the 32 years since then -- 31 years, it's been a long year. Then next up, and this is important, is the document talks about working with people with different kinds of disabilities. And that is so important because disability is a huge spectrum. There are invisible disabilities, there are visible disabilities, physical, cognitive, visual, auditory -- so many different aspects of disability and so many different categories of disability. And that spectrum -- those differences can be really intimidating, especially when it comes to the workforce. And as the old saying goes, if you've met this one person with a disability, you've met one person with a disability. And so really understanding both that solidarity across different categories of disability is important. We have an entire chapter dedicated to employment law and civil rights laws so you can understand the relevant regulatory and legal framework that support your success, your rights as a worker, as a job seeker, as a parent and seeking support for your children. As a workforce geek I really love the chapter about vocational rehabilitation services. The VR system represents billions of dollars invested in the states and territories to help people get work, but you're dealing with 54 different programs in the states and territories of the United States. Interfacing with each one is really challenging and so we've got some really practical advice in terms of how to do that. Next up we talk about assessment tools, so you can -- define your career direction and strengthen your confidence by encountering and developing successful role models. I will say that one of the biggest barriers beyond the systems of oppression and barriers to a workforce is oftentimes young people with and without disabilities can't envision themselves becoming the next CEO of Microsoft or the next deputy assistant U.S. attorney. And so role models are important, but also kind of figuring out the steps that go from how do you go from being an intern to being the head of the Department of Justice, and so we talk about that and I think that's exciting. I will say that making that -- particularly, the system of laws that define special education are robust. There's problems, but -- and they're being fixed. But when you make that jump from being a high school student with a disability to being a college student with disabilities, that is a huge change and the way that you advocate is different. The way that you secure accommodations is different. The way that you can get your needs net -- I can talk words -- the way you can get your needs met in a college context is very different than high school. And so we've got a chapter about that which I think is really great. And then we really start digging into that employment and entrepreneurship space with several chapters that detail things like job shadowing, on-the-job training, and also really critically important -- navigating work incentives. One of the things that holds so many people with disabilities back is the fact that maybe they're collecting SSI and they're -- or they're getting Medicaid. They're afraid that they're going to lose their health care if they try and earn -- if they earn too much money. But the fact of the matter is that you can still be eligible and keep your benefits and work, because there are programs designed to help you do that, to help you get into the workforce. And so understanding those is important. Saving for the future is a huge issue for people with disabilities. Thanks to things like ABLE accounts, people with disabilities have more options to save money to deal with future expenses, and that is a powerful tool of economic empowerment. Likewise, understanding the different sectors of the economy is something that's really important, because looking at the nonprofit space, looking at businesses, even the entire field of federal contracting has been changing so much in the last several years. And that change -- that rate of change has accelerated because of COVID and working from home. It's a lot easier to take a really challenging exciting job with a company across the country because you don't need to relocate. Maybe you can stay where you are, get accommodations, so that you can become an incredible worker. And I think Ollie has been modeling the work from home lifestyle for quite some time now, as have many of us. And at the same time we talk a lot about entrepreneurship, because that is really a really exciting area of disability employment. Even before COVID, about ten percent of workers with disabilities ran their own businesses, and finding your own place in the economy is something that is really a high priority for RespectAbility and for so many programs. And so we're talking -- we talk about that in great detail. Closing it out we've got lots of practical advice in this guide about educating businesses how to do professional networking and personal development. We'll touch on that a little bit more with Ollie. And then lastly, we have an entire chapter talking about workforce programs, providing accommodations asking for accommodations, that self-advocacy piece of becoming the best worker that you can be. And I think it's really an incredible guide, just very deep guide, and you're going to have to spend some time working through it. And so I want to pivot from talking about what's in the book to talking with the man who helped develop the book which is Ollie Cantos. So how are you doing today Ollie?

>> Ollie Cantos: I am doing great Phil, and thank you for providing that summary. That is just awesome the way you did that.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Gotcha. So it's a big book with lots of materials, lots of ideas. Who would you say are some of the constituencies that we're trying to reach with this document?

>> Ollie Cantos: I appreciate you asking that because there are a number of people who are intended to be served by this book. First and foremost, individuals with different types of disabilities. That includes those with physical, intellectual, developmental, psychiatric or mental health, and learning disabilities. Also important here are for those who are in the vocational rehabilitation system or anywhere within the arena of workforce development, if vocational rehabilitation counselors and others share this with their clients, customers, consumers, then right away they will have in one place a centralized series of resources that take them from point A to point B, etc. And that will enable them to empower themselves to do what they need to do to take action, because a lot of the time, job seekers and students don't necessarily know what they don't know. But now through this, they'll be able to make use of that. Also here for those in the private sector, private businesses can actually look on here to learn what -- not only what resources are available to their current employees, but also as they prepare to recruit qualified people with disabilities, they'll be able to look at different resources that are in here, including tax incentives, resources for providing reasonable accommodation, how do you promote voluntary self-identification, how do you create an inclusive environment. And then for the non-profit sector, there are six hundred thousand non-profit organizations in this country, and so we provide in here the way to reach all six hundred thousand non-profits and to learn more about them. And nonprofits can also learn the resources that are here, and especially for those who serve the disability community, they're welcome to share this book far and wide with those they serve, because then -- it can serve as a companion guide to whatever other guidance they already issue. So it's really intended for for multiple uses, and the best part is that people can go back and use this guide at different times depending on whatever their needs are, and that can actually help optimize. So it can sort of be the go-to place for you to find whatever you need.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Gotcha. That is really great and it really hammers home that there's stuff for people in all different aspects, whether it's people themselves, parents, people who work with people with disabilities, I think that's really great. And so I gotta ask -- and a question you have to ask when you're doing one of these kinds of author talks is what was your motivation for creating this guide, because it has so much and you put so much great work into it.

>> Ollie Cantos: Thank you. The motivation was that there were a number of friends who needed some guidance and support and who came to me to ask how I could help them find jobs or start businesses, or for friends who were wanting to know what was available out there. So I originally wrote an article in 2007 which had 90 resources in it, and then over time I kept updating and redistributing that. And that's how it emerged ultimately to become the book that all of us see today. But also it was done as a way to serve as a companion piece, because it -- for me there are people who literally come to me pretty much every day asking for help, but because of the book -- previously what used to be an article, all I would do is I would send the piece out to them and then I'd say here's where you go look. After you go through these resources come back to me and let's talk. So that was a way for me to leverage my time so that people can do what they are able to on their end and then I can guide them from there. And it just saved countless hours of time per person. And the best part about why I wanted to do this is essentially I wanted this to be accessible to everyone at whatever stage that they find themselves. For parents who are wondering what is possible for their children, for individuals who are still learning about the disability rights movement, for those who are looking for their first internship, for others who are wanting to work and to be employed or to advance in their careers, as well as for people who want to start and build their own businesses or want to join other businesses that are already in existence and to work there. So it's just such an intense labor of love. I have been married to this process now for almost 14 years, and I'm just so grateful to put this out to the world because my vision is not only for people to use this, but I am excited about having people report back on how they're doing with all of it, because that will inform what other resources at a national level that we should add, as well as pave the way for new stories of success that can then galvanize and inspire and motivate others to continue building that momentum within our disability community, in order to facilitate real outcomes for people in real people's lives. So this is not meant as just a scholarly discussion of the theory of disability employment and entrepreneurship. It is meant as a practical guide, which is why there are at least 339 resources that are linked in this document and/or shown in footnotes.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Wonderful. Thank you Ollie. And I'm starting to see more people commenting in the chat box. Thank you very much. Drop your questions, we'll get to them in a little bit. I will tell you that there are three different ways that you can access this resource guide. You can find it on our website at the link in the chat box. From there, you can then download a pdf version of the document, if you'd prefer to take that with you anywhere you go. It's also available as an accessible word document so that you can use whatever speech to text software you use to look at documents. So please keep dropping those comments in the chat box, or put a question under the Q&A tab. And so I wanted to ask you another question, and this is a little bit of a tricky issue. We talk about motivation but I also know you want to talk about inspiration in the right context. I think most of us who work in the disability field or people with disabilities have seen that video clip from some years ago of Stella Young defining the term "inspiration porn," and the way that those types of tropes and stigmas really exemplify ableism and really isolate people with disabilities. At the same time, we're human beings, we need inspiration and we need to aspire to be liked people, or to aspire to be you know an astronaut or a senator or a mother. So I'm really curious, can you talk about what do you think are some of the good inspirations that we can draw from, or good ideas or good role models that we can emulate?

>> Ollie Cantos: Inspiration is important, Phil, to all of us. We are all inspired by role models in different settings, whether it be in business or sports or the non-profit world. We look to our role models and those who have become successful in areas in which we strive to be successful. That kind of inspiration is not only important but it's critical, because it helps us move forward and it provides a way for us to stay motivated in moving ahead, in deciding what we want to do and how. And those things are really important. But there's another type of inspiration that also exists out there, where it's particularly difficult within the disability context, where people say to us as people with disabilities, as individuals with disabilities, well gosh what you do is so inspiring. And here we have to be really really careful. Because let's say, for example, this has happened to me where I would cross the street. As an adult, I'd cross the street, and people would say "wow that just really inspires me." And so that's a worry, because of course we want to be a positive inspiration to those around us, but it is really important to recognize the philosophical premise for the kind of inspiration that brings our community forward. I am an active opponent of anyone who leverages disability to essentially say well you know life was really horrible, but somehow I made it and so you can too. That sort of thing is just -- it's destructive to our community. But instead, if we are inspired by the successful accomplishments based on age-appropriate achievement. So if, for example, I as a blind person cross the street, that's not really inspiring because other people cross streets. But if let's say a person with a disability they attain a presidential appointment or they end up being hired in their dream job, or they work in the nonprofit sector, that's inspiring - not because they're a person with a disability, but because they've just done something that's noteworthy, period, see? So for people who are newer to this space it's important to recognize early on that that construct that we should all, as individuals with disabilities, as is true for people without disabilities, we should all be inspiring, but it should not be at the expense of people thinking that disability itself is such an overarching characteristic as to define the whole of who we are. All of us have different disabilities, some of them as you rightly pointed out are visible and some are non-visible. But whatever the disabilities are, we need to be inspiring to others because of our achievement, period. And if we have the characteristic of disability, that's fine, but it's -- again, we've said in the disability rights movement that it's part of who we are, but does not necessarily define the whole of who we are. And so we're proud of having a disability, but at the same time we don't leverage that disability as somehow implying to the world that life is necessarily that much harder or tougher. It doesn't mean we don't have challenges, because gosh knows we do. But it does mean that in having a philosophy of disability that embraces a whole person, and without being ashamed of saying we have a disability for that matter, then we can move forward appropriately in a manner that inspires people in the right context.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Thank you Ollie. And that is a really important distinction to be had. And I would point out that in the chapter we've got some examples of role models, if you go to RespectAbility's website we have extensive profiles of people who really embody that distinction of -- they're incredible people who happen to have disabilities. And I appreciate you talking about that. Please keep talking in the comments section, we'll be getting to your chat box questions. But I wanted to ask Ollie specifically about that education to employment piece. You very recently have had to deal with your boys getting up and leaving the nest, and navigating into the workforce or navigating school. So I'm kind of curious - can you talk about how this guide reflects your experiences as both a parent with disabilities, as well as a parent of young men with disabilities?

>> Ollie Cantos: Yes thank you. There are a number of sources of inspiration that I've had with my boys, where from the time that they were still growing up, I urged them to get involved with extracurricular activities, as well as to have real workplace experiences and to attain gainful paid employment as students before they even turned 18. And the reason why is because, from my own upbringing, from my parents I was urged to be involved in a number of other things. And so when students are young it's important not only to do as well as possible in school, but also to be involved in extracurricular activities on and off campus. And it's also important for our community members of that age to be exposed to different volunteer opportunities in the community. And that should not be the final stop, but it is -- service learning is a critical way to gain new skills, and especially within the context of people determining what they want to do in life, internships are a magnificent opportunity for them, for students to learn what they love to do and what they don't love to do. Because either way it's a success, because it helps them to refine their goals. Because they might think that work in a particular occupation looks a certain way and then after being exposed to that particular occupation they might say "wow, that is absolutely not what I thought that would entail. Actually I should probably change direction." Or they might say "I love that and I love that atmosphere and that's absolutely what I want to do." So it's important there. And so the boys were my driving force here, because I thought of what are the resources that would be important to parents and families and young people with disabilities, including students with disabilities making the transition to adulthood. What are the things that are needed? And that's what drove that portion of the book. And the other thing that I wanted to bring up here is the belief in people with disabilities -- and I just, before I forget, I wanted to make sure to point out it's important for people who are part of the vocational rehabilitation system to really look at rule 26 closures in a manner that doesn't just get people a job, but it actually sets people on the pathway toward thriving careers. And it's important here for us to recognize that when looking at the abilities of people with disabilities, they need to be tapped into consumer-driven organizations of people with different types of disabilities as well as their own, in order to have additional networking opportunities and so forth. So when looking at youth development here there are a number of resources that can really help folks. But again, the basis is the philosophical underpinning that they need to be as integrally involved as possible in the community, which paves the way for later success.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Gotcha well thank you Ollie, and I'm glad you touched on that. And we talked about the ways to support that success through some of the programs, and I want to touch on a couple of -- there's two comments that I want to bring up and tie back to what's in the guide. So we have a comment from Jesus Luna who says he's a 29 year old man with cerebral palsy who is trying to start a business and he's wondering about any grants or resources to become an entrepreneur with disabilities.

>> Ollie Cantos: Well there, the small business administration actually does have grants available that are linked in the book. And there is also guidance in the book about how to write a business plan. This is really important, including for people with CP and other disabilities who receive vocational rehabilitation services. If people want to start their own businesses, it's important for them to show their counselors that they've thought it all the way through, and that includes writing a viable business plan. And so in the book, you'll be able to to find where and how that can be done. And there is also information in there about grants that are available that are through the small business administration that could be of assistance as well. And there are actually -- I just learned this morning about some new possibilities with persons with disabilities who are looking for grants, but that's not ready for announcement yet. But I just heard from my partner organization this morning. So in the future, as that comes online, that will be also provided in the book with future updates.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Great, and that also emphasizes something that you and I were talking about before we launched our webinar today, that this is a live document on the internet. It's not a document that's been printed into a book form that will just sit on a shelf and not change. As new challenges emerge, as new ideas and resources come out and RespectAbility works on these issues, we'll be adding more materials to the document, we'll be updating information, which is an invitation to our audience. If there are things that you don't find in our guide that you think would be useful, tell us. Reach out to our staff, reach out to our board, tell us what we need to know. And then that brings up the next question from the audience I wanted to take, which was from Odonna Simpson. What is the job market like now for people with disabilities and where are people likely to get jobs? Odonna is also sharing that her daughter has worked for seven years in a restaurant but that restaurant's closed, so she's looking for new options.

>> Ollie Cantos: Oh gosh. There are so many opportunities in all sectors. And first of all, to find where they are, the book cites a list of 11 different websites that specifically look for qualified people with disabilities to serve in all functions, and they're listed and cited right in the book. They're -- the biggest one that I remember, well, I don't want to start citing specific resources here because there's so many, I don't want to leave anybody out. But suffice it to say that those organizations that we've listed actually have ties directly into the companies that have job announcements on their sites, so that when you submit information there, then that will help those companies recruit qualified individuals. And so these days, including in the service sector, it's pretty rough because restaurants have closed and that sort of thing. But this would also represent an opportunity right now to retool, because the pandemic is not going to last forever, and as a way to prepare for the next phase while folks are home, this is the chance to go through all the resources, to update the resume, as well as to to submit resumes to these specific sites that will help. Plus there's also information in here about job training and retooling to see what other skills are possible to learn, so that people who might have worked in one area can actually now look at different possibilities for working in another. And to help refine that, the book actually has a whole series of personality and career tests that are available that also match different career paths. And so that should be of assistance there as well.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Great, thank you Ollie. And that also covers Hernando Green's question which was about a list of companies that might want to hire people with disabilities. And I would just mention that one of the things we touch on in this guide and in other parts of RespectAbility's website is the huge field of federal contractors. Under regulation and law, federal contractors -- that is businesses who are doing business with the federal government -- have disability hiring goals. And so that is actually a huge network of companies both large and small that -- have incentives to hire talented people with disabilities.

>> Ollie Cantos: And in a section dedicated to the private sector, readers can go and look up non-profit organizations that have centralized information about companies that have specifically said they're looking to hire qualified people with disabilities. And so there's an entire section dedicated just to that, so they can then go to those non-profit sites, look at the companies that are wanting to hire, and then connect with those companies.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Yep all right. I am pulling up the Q&A box now. Shout out to Christine Grameyer, we already mentioned it but I'm gonna say it again, we want you to share this document. We want you to, if you feel comfortable, post it on your website, download it, email to your friends, families, your cousins, your work colleagues, because we want to see this guide go as far and wide as possible. Next up I have a shout out to Wanda Rogers who wanted to ask that now that your boys are in adulthood, are you going to work on a resource guide for adults?

>> Ollie Cantos: Actually the book covers adults. The book actually provides -- as people have hit adulthood what do they do for these different opportunities. And Wanda, it's good to see you on here, wow that's great, we haven't talked in a while. So it's -- I'm glad you brought that up Wanda, because this is intended for people of different ages including different stages of adulthood.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: All right. So my next question, it's kind of a specific one. And one of the topics that has changed as life has changed because of COVID, and that's networking. So I'm curious, why is networking an important skill for people with disabilities, and just how the heck do you network when everything is being done through Zoom?

>> Ollie Cantos: LinkedIn. That's the way to network. In the book, I talk about steps that people should go through to ensure that they have a good presence on LinkedIn. That includes making sure that all of their information is up to date, but also in reaching out. A lot of people who are on LinkedIn and on other social media they reach out -- let's say it's Facebook -- they just accept a friend request, or they confirm a friend request. And then on LinkedIn, they accept a connection and then that's it. The way to do it more effectively, especially in this online environment in which which we find ourselves now, is to look for people who are in your area of interest and then after you reach out to them, immediately to write them a note and find a way to begin building a relationship, saying "thank you so much for accepting my request to connect with you on LinkedIn, I am eager to work with you, etc." And then what ends up happening is, by creating an engagement plan for yourself then you can leverage LinkedIn, because there are all sorts of options. You can write articles on LinkedIn that can help highlight your work product. You can also add value to your connections by looking for items of importance and then sharing those posts with your network. And once you connect with people, whenever they have work anniversaries or birthdays or they switch jobs, take the time to write those individuals -- and develop general templates that can be customized -- but write to those individuals congratulating them on their work anniversaries or saying happy birthday or congratulating them on moving to a new position, etc. And then whenever you do that, it's also important to look at the particular niche. So if you want to build a relationship with specific individuals, look on their profiles, see what their interests are, and as you come across information that could be of importance or assistance to them, then all you do is just say "hi so-and-so. I just happened to come across this article. I wanted to send this to you in light of your expertise in x. Thanks, hope you're well." Then put in the link. That's it. And then you just do that from time to time, and what's going to happen is some people will not respond at all. Others will respond in a delayed way, and some will respond right away. And so there are approaches that we could probably go through on a different webinar, but there are ways to cultivate relationships in all of those those circumstances, and social media is the way to go, especially now.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Thank you Ollie. I'll just give an example to add to that. So RespectAbility has a Fellowship program, a type of internship for young professionals with and without disabilities to learn about things like public policy, communications, hollywood, non-profit management. Because of COVID, we've gone entirely virtual, which also means that a lot of other companies and organizations are doing virtual internships. And even as people get vaccinated, they're going to keep having to do remote work, which means that -- that's a barrier to entry that has been closed because of COVID. You know, one of my Policy Fellows can have a Capitol Hill experience virtually. They can't actually go to the hill because of what's been happening in the last month, but they can still meet with members and that's so important. So I also have been talking with my fellows about this. There are virtual career fairs and so the way that you might do networking -- before you go to a virtual career fair, what you could do is look at the companies that are at an event and then go on LinkedIn, make sure you have an up-to-date profile, and then go to find recruiters of that company and then send a note saying "hi, I'm a job seeker. I'm gonna go to this virtual career fair. Here's a link to my resume." Something like that, of trying to to handle those aspects of networking. And so we have a question from Alan Bergman here about benefits planning, with a fear of losing benefits, benefits counseling, so what are -- I know we mentioned it, so how does this guide talk about keeping your benefits but also finding work and earning an income?

>> Ollie Cantos: There are a number of details that are listed there, and it's important for people to go through. And there's also information there about how to link with benefits planners, and those who are out in the field as supported by the social security administration, so that people can not -- they can put themselves in a situation where they're not alone and they're not guessing. And so the book actually links right to where that information can be found so people can actually put a plan into place to make the transition to work.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Great, thank you. Ollie. All right, I just want to make sure I didn't miss anybody. Okay, quick shout out in the chat box to Nicole Rabinowitz. She actually has a comment about inclusive networking and supporting job seekers with disabilities and connecting them to inclusive employers, so Nicole, thanks for joining us and I'm glad you are focused in on that networking piece. And so I wanted to shift gears a little bit. So we've talked about federal contractors and we talked about the different types of businesses that might want to help people with disabilities, but you've been a federal employee for many years. And so I wanted to ask you about what was that like. How did you pursue a career in public service, and why would a person with a disability think about following that kind of career path?

>> Ollie Cantos: Well speaking as a federal employee, I can tell you that it is extraordinarily fulfilling to to work as part of the federal government. And the the wonderful thing is that there are actually policies and practices already in place at the federal government level to promote recruitment of qualified individuals with disabilities through what's called schedule a appointing authority. And once they're brought on board they can actually -- then they're put on a probationary status for two years, after which the job can be converted to permanent. And so that is appointing authority that is not used as much as it should be, but it is in use. And so the book provides the regulations of Schedule A appointing authority, and it also provides a sample what's called "Schedule A letter." A schedule A letter is the documentation that you need to certify that you're eligible for appointment as a person with a disability under schedule A. And I provide in there a link to the exact language where you just fill in the blank. And also, each each department has a selective placement coordinator whose job is specifically to identify people from different populations, including persons with disabilities, who should be considered. And some federal agencies also keep resume banks, so that once a person with a disability is part of that bank, then employers from the federal sector can look through the resume bank to see who could be qualified for jobs that are coming up, and then to appoint people to those career positions. So working for the federal government is just magnificently rewarding. There's an opportunity for each of us, and usajobs.gov has a number of jobs that come up every day that are available for people to apply to. And then on top of that, when that happens, they'll be able to go through the Schedule A process. And we've also linked to selected placement coordinators, so that way we want to know who the contacts are at different agencies, that is also available as well.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: I will just say, if you had a burning question for Ollie or myself, and you didn't have a chance to answer it, or you're watching this recording at a later date, please contact us and let us know what your question is, and maybe take a dive into the guide and see if we already answered it. It is really -- an impressive resource for being a little less than 50 pages long, so we really hope you'll dive the depths and take a look at what we have to offer. Definitely check out Ollie Cantos's website, which is very easy to remember because it's OllieCantos.com. That is spelled OllieCantos.com. We are nearly out of time --

>> Ollie Cantos: I'm sorry, real quick. Text -- send a text to 313131 and then in the body put Ollie, o-l-l-i-e, and that'll be a way that you can connect with me right away. And that's also -- you're welcome to share that as well.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Great. Well Ollie I want to ask -- we're nearly out of time, any final parting thoughts for our audience today?

>> Ollie Cantos: I'd like to end first by thanking Phil and Eric for for all of their organizational efforts with all of this, and the entire team at RespectAbility for making possible the book in its current iteration. This is just really incredible. And also to call upon all of us to continue to galvanize into action. This book is intended for active use, so please get the word out but also make use of it. Keep us posted about how it goes so that we can continue to add value to you. And I'm thankful and pleased to getting to know all of you as time progresses and to supporting your individual journeys. And I'm appreciative to you for the -- just being so wonderful. I just love our community, and I know that there's a lot that we can still continue getting to do together.

>> Philip Kahn-Pauli: Thank you so much Ollie. Thank you so much audience. Thank you Gabe, our ASL interpreter. Thanks to our captionist. Thanks to Eric for being off screen and helping us navigate the wild world of technology. Again, you can find the people with disabilities at work guide on respectability.org. Everyone who is with us today, thank you so much. Keep a tab -- keep an eye on our events page. We have a lot more webinars coming up, we have a lot more exciting presentations, and as Ollie said, please take this guide, share it with everyone you can, and let's all do our part to fight stigmas and advance opportunities for millions of people with disabilities.