The number of people with disabilities working for the state of Minnesota has risen considerably over the past four years, reflecting a concerted effort across agencies to improve outreach, recruitment and hiring practices. The latest state figures show that 7 percent of the workforce has a disability of some kind — the goal set by Gov. Mark Dayton in a 2014 executive order. “We need a state workforce that reflects the diverse populations we serve,” Minnesota Management and Budget Commissioner Myron Frans says.

Minnesota established two initiatives to reach its 7 percent goal. The first program, known as “Connect 700,” gives Minnesotans with disabilities opportunities to demonstrate their skills through on-the-job, trial work experiences that last up to 700 hours. The Supported Worker Program, meanwhile, offers people with disabilities integrated employment opportunities with up to 50 full-time positions within various state agencies. These positions can be shared by up to three people with disabilities.

Nationwide, people with a disability are much more likely to be unemployed — an average of 9.2 percent in 2017, compared to 4.2 percent among individuals without a disability.