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| ​​Minutes​ | |
| Digital Accessibility and Equity Governance ​​Board Meeting (DAEGB)​ | |
| **​​DATE​** | ​​April 25, 2024​ |
| **​​TIME​** | ​​10:00 AM​ EST. |
| **​​MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY​** | ​Christina Kovach, Deputy General Counsel and Board Counsel, EOTSS |

1. **Introduction and Roll Call**

Jason Snyder, Secretary, Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (present)

Devyn Paros, Executive Office of Technology Services and Security for CIAO Ashley Bloom (present)

Ashley Bloom, CIAO, Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (not present)

Mark Fine, Assistant Secretary for Administration, Executive Office of Administration and Finance (present)

Ellen Christy for Heath Fahle, Assistant Secretary for Finance, Executive Office of Economic Development (not present)

Antoine Harrison, SCIO, Executive Office of Education (present)

Faye Boardman, COO, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (present)

Olivia James, Executive Office of Health and Human Services (present)

Tim Reardon, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (present)

Paolo Franzese, COO, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (present)

Maria Michalski, SCIO, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (present)

Dave Bedard, SCIO, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (present)

Brian Chase, SCIO, Executive Office of Veterans Services (present)

Jordan Crispin, Governor’s Office (present)

Dan Sionkiewicz for Niko Mendoza (present)

Dr. Opeoluwa Sotonwa, Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (present)

John Oliveira, Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (present)

Mary MacCauley, Massachusetts Office on Disability (present)

1. **​​review and Roll Call approval of Minutes**

​​Members present voted in favor of approval of March 18, 2024 meeting minutes.

1. **DISCUSS GOALS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025**

Discussion led by Devyn Paros regarding process for establishing goals for FY2025. Big picture, strategic level, what, what for and for who? Ideas on how to establish these goals.

**What does digital accessibility and equity mean to you?**

MCB: Digital means that MCB materials are available to consumers in a digital format that’s accessible to them. Having access to printed materials via computers and electronic devices that software programs are accessible. Websites are clear and accessible to users of adaptive equipment. Systems by internal state employees are accessible.

MCDHH: all information that we share internally and externally must be accessible in ASL and captioned. Digital formats including website, video content, among others. Standard practice of ensuring website is accessible (visual descriptions, captions for video). Information received and sent from others needs to be accessible. Strategic goal for platforms to keep accessibility in mind for all including deaf, hard of hearing, all constituents regardless of cultural background.

DOT: Public outreach is important, especially for RMV and Highway, and then taking in feedback and information from the public. Everyone should have some baseline experience and ability to access and remit information (tools, processes to support this). Feedback needs to support the goal for everyone to be heard, and nothing is lost (bidirectional feedback).

TSS: We are using technology to ensure that we communicate and interact with those we serve on their terms vs. ours. Do others representing executive branch agencies feel they have systems or tools that are not accessible for internal staff/employees?

ANF: Transparency and accessibility in the information that A&F provides to the public digitally. How are we considering a broader audience? What are mediums we are leveraging? What is the context we are providing? How do we meet people using the channels they are using today?

MOD: Financial and fiscal roles in the Commonwealth often are using tools that aren’t accessible. Poor access and poor usability makes things less efficient (this taps into equity). Training ADA coordinators, JAWS (speech synthesizer) training. The accessibility of the internal tools affects access to the roles and careers within the state (job specific and general tools like SSTA). Ensuring that new programs and software are accompanied by proper supports and communications training. Changing/new assistive technology can create challenges in creating equitable experiences for users.

EOE: Remove barriers created by technology, foster inclusion, to foster the same learning outcomes, equitable playing field.

EOVS: Design of external facing tools can be adaptable and flexible with changing needs. Need to be able to evolve. Literacy requirements, ensuring that invisible needs (may not be diagnosed) are accounted for in our service design and delivery.

MCDHH: OSD and Commbuys could simplify current cumbersome system to allow vendors with disabilities to conduct business with state agencies. This would level the playing field.

ANF: Good points from Mary (MOD) and previous contributors about the importance of the BEST project to redo our core accounting systems and ultimately human resources systems. Every employee in the Commonwealth will interact with those in the future in some manner so accessibility is key.

**What does it mean within the context of your organization?**

It is June 2025, what news headlines would show the Commonwealth has succeeded in making digital services more equitable and accessible for all?

-Rollout of BEST allows all employees to access and work effectively.

-The Commonwealth of MA is leading the way in digital accessibility. Recognition in IT press.

-Positive progress, forward movement. Journey not complete, but striving toward goal.

-Other states look to MA as a leader and informing their efforts.

-Recent survey results (reliable, valid) show that people with disabilities are interacting more successfully with state agencies and services to get what they need.

-Demonstrating MA as a model to emulate what is coming next.

-The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a state of firsts, on the cutting edge in terms of full accessibility or services with the state.

-We can report and have accountability to our progress (dashboard)

-MA recognizes digital accessibility is an ongoing process, committed to continuous improvement, feedback and evolving best practices.

-The Commonwealth of MA has a successful implementation of inclusive design principles across digital platforms, resulting in a more seamless and intuitive user experience for all residents. MA has a robust long-term strategy to continue this effort and is tracking metrics to ensure accountability to continue this positive effort.

-Access provides the Ability for Digital Inclusion for ALL – Powered by MASS GOV.

1. **Updates & Next Steps**

**Next Steps**

Devyn Paros outlined the following next steps after today’s meeting:

1. Synthesis: We will extract themes from today’s discussion to assist with goal creation.
2. Homework: We will assign Board members to individual working groups to meet to define and refine goals for each theme.
3. Reconvene: We will present refined goals to the full Board in May.

**Updates**

Update from Chair Ashley Bloom by Devyn Paros. In terms of the digital accessibility and equity program, first is for the strategic plan that we are required to formulate, we have made progress in the scope of work and are close to finalizing contract execution with an unidentified vendor partner to help us lead the work over the course of the remainder of this fiscal year into next fiscal year. We have also begun the process of drafting the annual report that the Board is required to present to the Governor and have a number of people contributing to that, so thank you if are on the call and are contributing to that and there will be more to come and eventually the draft will be shared with the Board for review.

Next, we are planning to staff the accessibility central team in EOTSS and so building a team under Ashley to advance the work of the program. We are also assessing the impact of the Department of Justice that issued a final rule for changes to Title II of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) that specifically affect state and local government digital accessibility. And then also continuing to track the progress of the public candidate appointment process.

Related to the regulation changes, proposed in July of last year we provided comment during the public comment period in August/early September with contributions from a number of folks within the Commonwealth, with particular thank you to Mary and Julia from MOD. Since we submitted public comment about two or three weeks ago the DOJ met to review and to advance the rule, which has now been published. The rule requires state and local governments to conform to and to comply with Federal regulations for digital accessibility, for web and mobile channels. They have also established a minimum compliance standard that is the web content accessibility guidelines 2.1 level AA otherwise known as WCAG or WCAG 2.1AA. That compliance standard is the state’s current compliance policy standard being used but this establishes it at the Federal level. Compliance with the regulation changes for accessibility for built and bought digital assets must be met in two years for entities over 50,000 people in population, (including the Commonwealth). For entities with fewer than 50,000 there is a three-year compliance time frame (city and towns.) We are working internally to prepare some guidance for the above.

1. **Board next steps**

1.Public candidate background check and appointment. Nine qualified candidates. The sub-committee narrowed it down to four qualified candidates and submitted to Governor’s office for review. Three candidates are currently undergoing background checks.

2. Once background checks complete, resumes and statements of interest will be circulated. Evaluation notes shared with the Board members in advance of asking members to vote on the candidates. You should have a meeting on your calendar for May 3rd for targeting that meeting for a vote, this is subject to the progress of the background checks.

3.Vote on Board strategic goals in May.

4.Review annual report draft review – targeted May 30th meeting.

5. Approve annual report at June 26th meeting.

1. **Board Remarks**

None.

1. **Public Remarks**

None.

1. **Motion to Adjourn**

11:04 am the motion to adjourn was made by Mary MacCauley and seconded by John Oliveira. A vote was taken by roll call; all members present voted in favor.