

## **Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council FY22 Recommendations**

6/17/21 approved by the State Rehabilitation Council

MRC Response

7.28.21

### **Recommendation FY22-1**

Responsible SRC Committee: Executive

The SRC seeks MRC's support in developing a strategic vision and plans specifically to infuse a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens on its work. Also, by creating and supporting a strategic vision for the work, and leadership competencies among Council leaders.

The SRC is guided by the following Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals as a starting point for this work:

The SRC will evaluate its own work and what MRC is doing for DEI work. The SRC requests that MRC to provide the SRC with updated reports and other related DEI information on a quarterly basis. This information will be used by the SRC for:

- a. Refining the Council's definitions and vision/mission, including a focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- b. Recruiting diverse voting Statewide Rehabilitation Council members.
- c. Developing structured processes for governing all activities of the SRC, ensuring a DEI lens.
- d. Training on how to recognize disparate impact within organizational structures (e.g., policies and procedures) on Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC)

### **MRC Response to FY21-1**

MRC agrees on highlighting DEI work within the SRC – this maps on to a similar emphasis within MRC, as evidenced by DEI and Racial Equity focused work being one of five active Roadmap priority areas for the agency, our recent agency racial equity SWOT, etc. Our shared commitment is also demonstrated by the SRC's current DEI consultation with HMA. MRC proposes to amend the recommendation as such:

- Edit recommendation to read, "Develop a strategic vision, goals, and leadership competencies for the SRC that integrate and infuse Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Racial Equity principles and values."
- The "goals" statement above (paragraph 2) appears to be missing. MRC assumes that defining concrete "goals" specific to DEI/RE will be part of the work with HMA, so perhaps it is premature to define goals at this point in time.
- Edit language that discusses, "SRC will evaluate its own work and what MRC is doing for DEI work." MRC is happy to share with the SRC, on a quarterly basis, ongoing DEI activities within the agency, but would like to exclude language specific to SRC evaluating MRC DEI efforts.
- MRC would like the SRC to consider adding focus or a goal re: the work of the SRC specific to DEI/RE would inform and advise how best to reach, serve, and support unserved/underserved consumers and potential consumers (so adding a focus on consumers to this work).

**Recommendation FY22-2 (formerly FY21-1): Support employment of individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth through developing a baseline understanding of current data and trends, which can inform**

**a high-level strategy to increase the numbers of state employees with disabilities. Include the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion lens in this work, and work with MRC to ensure the robustness of this effort.**

Responsible SRC Committee: Business & Employment

**MRC Response to FY22-2**

MRC continues to support and align with a high-level goal of supporting individuals with disabilities with employment via the Commonwealth. MRC is able to share data and trends of EHS agencies specific to rates of employment among those with self-identified disabilities. MRC would like to note that movement on this goal will require high-level engagement and strategy development across agencies (e.g., MOD, DMH, DDS, etc) and partnership with other Directors and Commissioners. MRC is happy to partner with the SRC in that work. MRC has no modifications to this recommendation.

**Recommendation FY22-3 (formerly FY21-2): Increase availability and accessibility of SRC materials online and develop a robust communications, marketing, and branding strategy for MRC. Make materials available to SRC for review related to accessibility to all including from a DEI lens.**

Responsible SRC Committee: Business & Employment

**MRC Response to FY22-3**

MRC continues to agree there is more work to be done in increasing the virtual visibility and accessibility of SRC materials. SRC materials are included within the current rebranding work ongoing with MRC with consultant Think Argus. MRC is also partnering with MCB to develop a more systematic and agency-wide approach to ensuring accessibility of our materials, resources, and processes. MRC proposes to amend the recommendation as such:

- Edit recommendation to read, “Increase availability and accessibility of SRC materials online, as part of a robust communications, marketing, and branding strategy that is inclusive of and integrates DEI and Racial Equity best practices.”
- MRC would like to work with the SRC to best determine which points of MRC communication would best inform the SRC.

**Recommendation FY22-4 (formerly FY21-3): Ensure that there are sufficient vendors to meet the wide range of services needed by consumers. Procurement must consider the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse populations, the offerings in particular regions to facilitate informed choice, as well as anticipate commonly used services. Additionally, there should be a transparent procedure in place to purchase services with limited delay when there is no contract in place.**

Responsible SRC Committee: Policy

**MRC Response to FY22-4**

MRC agrees with the importance of needing to have sufficient numbers and quality of vendors to meet consumers’ needs, with particular understanding of the reality of an insufficient vendor pool to provide culturally and linguistically competent services and supports. We assert that “ensuring sufficient vendors” is a laudable goal, albeit a long-term one that will take more than one year to achieve. We propose some initial

steps that include focusing on increasing our list of available vendors. Marketing will be key in these efforts. MRC proposes to amend the recommendation as such:

- Edit recommendation to read, “Increase number of available vendors to better support consumer informed choice. Areas of focus should include the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse populations, as well as increasing vendors in geographic areas with historically limited choice.”
- MRC will need to better understand this component of the recommendation – “Additionally, there should be a transparent procedure in place to purchase services with limited delay when there is no contract in place.” MRC is bound by Commonwealth procurement practices, so there would need to be conversation to better understand the goals and intent of this statement. MRC’s Office of Fiscal Management and Budget can work with the SRC to both support understanding of procurement parameters as well as identify pathways and opportunities available.

**Recommendation FY22-5 (formerly FY21-5): Update and make more user-friendly all self-employment resource materials. Include translation into languages which ensure accessibility**

Responsible SRC Committee: Business & Employment

**MRC Response to FY22-5**

MRC recognizes that interest in self employment has increased during FY21 as a result of Covid-19 and individuals needing to pivot regarding employment. We also acknowledge that self employment has traditionally accounted for a small number of goals (FY20=98) and placements (FY19=7; FY20=18) within VR. We propose that the focus of this goal is first to identify what is happening re: self employment within other VR agencies – how are they responding, what resources are they using, etc. Additionally, counselors may need additional resources and tools to support to assist consumers with self employment goals. MRC would like the focus more to be on considering how self employment fits into a larger array of employment supports offered by the agency, as well as partner with other entities (e.g., DOL, ICI) who have a track record of focus on self employment. As such, we propose to do some bigger picture thinking, with the SRC, before jumping into developing resources. MRC proposes to amend the recommendation as such:

- Edit recommendation to read, “Develop a baseline understanding of self-employment, including but not limited to assessing needs (consumer and counselor), data trends (state and national), and identified best-practices and partners, to inform a strategy for self-employment services within MRC.”
- We propose not focusing on developing targeted resources and/or translation of these resources until the above referenced baseline understanding and priority areas are fully formed.