**Recommendation FY22-2: 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.**

SRC Update on Recommendation FY22-2:

The committee learned that the state agencies tasked with addressing the equity of numbers for people with disabilities in commonwealth jobs has been organized and will provide an update about changes to the makeup and goals of the group; it continues to be a priority at MRC to facilitate this process at high personnel levels within participating agencies.

**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 SRC.**  **Make materials available to SRC for review related to accessibility to all including from a DEI lens.**

SRC Update on Recommendation FY22-3:

The committee has been able to connect with MRC’s Communications Department. There was discussion within the committee that the committee’s work must extend beyond review of SRC materials to MRC materials, as the role for the SRC is primarily about advisory guidance to the MRC. Committee members have advised that the Business and Employment Committee (BEO) focus upon reviewing VR materials that are specifically geared toward employers as opposed to just reviewing MRC’s overall rebranding strategy for VR or reviewing all of their materials, in order to capture the attention of employers and make them understand that there is a great pool of qualified people with disabilities with whom they can connect via VR.

**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.” **The SRC SPC accepted this revision and has made the change.**
* MRC would like to work with the SRC to best determine which points of MRC communication would best inform the SRC. **The SRC SPC is interpreting that MRC is asking the SRC to provide MRC with more specific feedback on what the issues are with the SRC materials online.**

**Recommendation FY22-5 (formerly FY21-5): 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**

SRC Update on Recommendation FY22-5:

MRC is appointing an operational leader to work with the committee to better understand the opportunities and constraints and has pledged to assign this to an Area Director as a lead Manager to liaison with the Business and Employment Committee (BEO) and the SRC. MRC reports that it has had some staff experts over the years who could do internal consultation on Self-employment plans but have lost institutional knowledge due to retirement of staff with that expertise, etc. It is reported that this manager-appointee will have the role of pulling other staff and consumers who have worked with MRC on self-employment plans to advise and guide the process with the BEO.

**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.” **The SRC BEO accepts this revision.**
* 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. **The SRC BEO recommends finding ways for MRC to support people already involved with a Self-Employment Goal in an Individual Plan of Employment to be able to access the resources that are available in the community now.**