

Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2023

1:00-3:00pm EST

Attendees:

- Statewide Rehabilitation Council Members: Ronaldo Fujii, Inez Canada (SRC Chair), Joe Bellil, Christine Tosti, Doug Mason (Ex-Officio), Steve LaMaster, Olympia Stroud
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff: Kate Biebel, Amanda Baczko, Amy Karr; William Noone

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

Meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm by the Chair.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Chair Canada called for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned to approve the January minutes. Mr. Fujii seconded. Chair Canada asked whether there were any corrections to the January 2023 meeting minutes. The January 2023 minutes were approved with no corrections.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Membership Updates** – Mr. Mason has agreed to become a voting meeting. No update yet from EOHSS on the two nominees we submitted in December and January. Another candidate AJ Pape has applied for membership as well.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Introduce Amy Karr, admin support, and her role (Ms. Canada)**
 - Amy Karr introduced herself. Chair Canada explained her role supporting the SRC with hosting meetings, meeting minutes, tracking compliance obligations, organizing and tracking website/Teams content, and other administrative tasks.
 - Chair Canada reminded chairs to get approved minutes to Alison Scher within one week of the meeting in which they were approved. She read the list of minutes missing from the SRC website. She asked Chairs to send minutes to Ms. Karr, who will then send them to Ms. Scher. She also reminded Chairs to make sure Ms. Karr is added to the distribution list of all committees.
- **Committee Reports**
 - **State Plan Committee – Joe Bellil**
 - The last meeting was on February 8th.
 - Talked about timeline for Annual Report FY 2024 SRC recommendations.
 - February to April: Committees need to develop recommendations.
 - May 4: Draft recommendations go to the Executive Committee meeting,
 - June 1: The Executive Committee reviews and approves the recommendations.

- June 22: SRC full membership will vote on the recommendations at the June Quarterly meeting.
- June 23: Full recommendations sent to MRC.
- July 31: MRC's response to the recommendations is due.
- August 9: The State Plan Committee reviews the MRC's response.
- Need to have SRC recommendations finalized by October 2023
- The next WIOA State Plan is due in July 2024, subject to change. Mr. Noone just received this from the Department of Labor; he has not spoken to RSA representative yet. Mr. Bellil will make adjustments to the WIOA State Plan timeline. Mr. Noone said there will be public hearings at the state and federal levels. Each will post notices.
- The next State Plan meeting is April 5th at 11am.
- **Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment Committee - Ronaldo Fujii**
 - The last meeting was February 28th. Mostly discussed status and results of survey.
 - Mr. Fujii will send an email to the full SRC today with the preliminary survey results Ms. Baczko provided in the meeting and will give them a week to review and offer comments.

Chair Canada asked Mr. Fujii to discuss changes in the CSNAC meeting schedule; the Committee will now meet every other month. Members will see the cancelled meetings invites.

- **Policy Committee – Naomi Goldberg**
 - Ms. Goldberg was not present - no report
- **Business and Employment Opportunities Committee -Steve LaMaster**
 - Previous meeting February 9th.
 - Guest Laysha Ostrow. She has submitted a proposal to get funding for a 3-arm clinical trial for self-employment support via resources, course materials, and a learning community. She is interested in working with VR agencies throughout the country. She felt that VR consumers seeking self-employment could benefit from connecting directly with a personal mentor.
 - Ms. Baczko has scheduled a meeting with Mr. LaMaster and MRC Communications team to discuss final SRC marketing materials.
- **MRC Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility Council Representative - Doug Mason**
 - DEIA met late November 2022.
 - Priorities assigned to various ERGs (Employee Resource Groups). Solidified process on Tuesday 2/28, so meetings should be more productive.
 - DEI manager responded to Mr. Mason's question about last month's meeting. Mr. Mason requested that the information be submitted in writing so he can prepare to present it to the full SRC meeting.

- It was decided not to add any new members to the council. But some current members will be leaving. There will be reshuffling. Mr. Mason will make a full report to SRC at the meeting this month.
- There were no questions for the committee chairs.
- Mr. Fujii asked Ms. Baczek for clarification about the data. Ms. Baczek is fine with sending the data to the full SRC. She encouraged Mr. Fujii to send any member questions or request to breakdown the data further. Chair Canada suggested that in his email to members Mr. Fujii have people to reach out to him about any questions or desire to see the data in a different way and he can send them all to Amanda at once. Ms. Baczek said about it will be about 4 weeks max to get back to Mr. Fujii. Ms. Canada suggested giving 10 days at the most to ensure that Ms. Baczek will have as much time as she needs to work with data analysts.
- **Set Agenda for March 23 Quarterly Meeting (Ms. Canada)**
 - Chair Canada reviewed the existing agenda template and proposed agenda items for the March 23 SRC Full Meeting Agenda (see attachment).
 - A suggestion came up in January Executive committee meeting to provide an Appeal process Overview and Trends - Presentation re: types of issues coming up with VR from Client Assistance Program (CAP) and MRC Ombuds Program was added to the agenda Also, Ms. Baczek stated that MRC is working with CAP to develop some foundational information and training internally about what the Appeals and Ombudsman roles are and can bring that content to the SRC.
- **MRC updates (Ms. Biebel and Ms. Baczek)**
 - MRC will be sharing Boston office space with the newly established Executive Office of Veterans' Services.
 - Hyannis VR office is scheduled to move to a new office in the same building.
 - Leadership updates: 3 VR leadership positions open in Hyannis, Lowell, and Malden.
 - A few internal promotions from VR counselor to supervisor position.
 - Recruitment is occurring across the state, including bilingual positions.
 - Starting to feel more fully staffed.
 - HR of Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is "fully pointed" in the direction of recruitment. Trying more creative ways to recruit, including TikTok videos.
 - There was a stakeholder call 3/1/23 regarding the Governor's budget proposal. Suggested 10% increase for MRC budget.
 - Ms. Biebel received an email during the meeting that the date for budget testimony is 3/21 in Fitchburg. It is open to the public. Prepared testimony is being reviewed by Commissioner Wolf. Not sure if there will be a livestream of the public meeting.
 - Office of Learning and Community Engagement –
 - Next MRC *Office of Learning and Community Engagement* newsletter will come out in April, usually in the middle of the month.

- The next Family Forum is on 3/14 6-7 pm. Just brought in 10 family ambassadors (family members of people with disabilities), very diverse. May want to bring family ambassadors to a future SRC meeting.
 - Forum topic: Bridgewater State Excel program 3/14, ID or DD (intellectual or developmental disabilities). There are several of these programs popping up throughout the state and nationally.
 - Ombudsman Mark Cowell retired. A candidate has been identified but the onboarding process is slow. One of the Administrative Review Officers has left.
 - Looking to recruit new Administrative Review Officers.
 - Ms. Baczko talked about the diversity of the interview panel. CAP declined involvement in interview because could be perceived as a conflict of interest but will be involved in training the Ombudsman, who will train Administrative Review Officers.
 - Ms. Baczko shared the new Ombudsman web site <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/mrc-ombudsman> An Ombudsman inbox has been created, and the Ombudsman website has been updated with a new email address and corrected phone number.
 - The Ombudsman role has been revamped for more engagement with the community. Ms. Baczko asked for ideas about what events the ombudsman should be attending; she is creating a training program that will include those ideas.
 - Also, Creating some templates for the appeals process in collaboration with CAP.
- In a response to a question about diverse hiring, Ms. Biebel said best practices about interviewing panels is focused on diversity. Interview questions have been reviewed by the Diversity Officer before including them; he also reviews candidates to be interviewed to ensure a diversity of applicants. Ms. Baczko added that the Diversity Officer reviewed the interview questions and candidates for the Ombuds role. In general, the EOHHS requires at least 2 DEI questions in all interviews.
 - Chair Canada stated that the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO), which puts out an affirmative action report for the state, recommends that The diversity officer or ADA coordinators for state agencies should review the applicant pool to ensure it is diverse. She noted that MassCareers has a statement about how diverse candidates, who often choose not to because of the qualifications listed, should apply even if they feel they don't meet all qualifications for a position.
 - Mr. Bellil asked for updates about consumer conference.
 - Ms. Baczko said there will be one this year. The conference will be in August. It will be a 2-day conference. The first day will be consumer focused; the second day will highlight the peer workforce. Budget has been approved. The next priority will be to nail down exact dates.

- **Open Mic**

- Ms. Baczko reminded the committee that March is Brain Injury Awareness month. There is a Brain Injury Council. March 1 was Assisted Technology Awareness Day.

Chair Canada called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Mr. Bellil. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fujii. Meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.