

Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

March 8th, 2022

1:00-3:00pm EST

Attendees:

- Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members: Joe Bellil, Inez Canada, Naomi Goldberg, Olympia Stroud, Ronaldo Fujii, Cheryl Scott, Christine Tosti
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff: Amanda Baczko, Bill Noone, Kate Biebel, Commissioner Wolf, Vivian Pham, Cassandra Pierre-Louis, Joan Phillips, Graham Porell
- Public: None

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

Meeting was called to order at 1:00pm by the Chair. Attendees introduced themselves verbally and via the chat.

Discussion of the SRC 5-year DEI Roadmap

- Chair Canada opened the discussion with remarks about the purpose, which is to
 - highlight areas in the Roadmap where the SRC would like **implementation support from MRC** and it's Executive Leadership team
 - note places where the SRC can **join VR learning and DEI efforts** of MRC
 - to learn more about how VR works through opportunities to visit VR offices, sit in on VR presentations or trainings, attend consumer and/or VRC orientations, etc.
 - hear preliminary thoughts on a **budget** to support the SRC's work, we will review a proposed draft later in the meeting
- Commissioner Wolf and Team commented that MRC is willing to support SRC in the areas mentioned. She reminded the SRC that thoughtful planning is necessary. MRC is on board with the SRC having a budget. VR funds are in a good place currently, but SRC will need to reevaluate budget on a regular basis as funding changes
- Commissioner Wolf asked MRC Chief of Staff, Vivian Pham to discuss the MRC DEIA Council and the overlap with SRC DEI goals
 - Ms. Pham discussed DEIA Council's work to improve the equity and climate at MRC. Exec. Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) partners with MRC for this work. SRC has a representative on the MRC DEIA Council, Mr. Doug Mason. The monthly meetings are a place where SRC can connect with MRC through Mr. Mason to exchange ideas. Ms. Pham mentioned ideas like DEIA learning series and presentations that the SRC members may be able to join. She suggested that Mr. Mason be the nexus for learning about MRC DEIA initiatives that are aligned with SRC DEIA Roadmap goals
 - Ms. Canada agreed and discussed that Mr. Mason will be providing regular updates at the SRC Quarterly meetings. He is set provide an

update at the SRC March 24th meeting. His update will be similar to committee updates as DEI work is under Executive Committee. Ms. Canada noted that she met with Mr. Mason to discuss this expectation already. She will meet with Mr. Mason to discuss his capacity to attend these meetings going forward.

- MRC will be embarking on a DEI learning series, and we can explore how SRC members could participate in this. The MRC DEIA Council has SRC representation (Doug Mason) on that Council – he will need to support SRC in bridging work and updating the rest of the SRC. A suggestion came up regarding having Chair Canada and Mr. Mason report to the MRC DEIA Council on the SRC DEI Roadmap progress.
- Commissioner Wolf expressed concern surrounding the scope of the SRC and helping SRC members to think about the difference when serving as an “advisor vs. doer.” She urged SRC to keep this in mind for what makes a good recommendation, especially
 - Chair Canada indicated that the March SRC meeting will address what it means to sit on an advisory board and the scope of roles and responsibilities.
- Mr. Fujii mentioned bringing in representation from the transgender community, and continued recruitment of diverse SRC membership.
- Commissioner Wolf suggested having our Employee Resource Groups present to the SRC about their ongoing work.
- Assistant Commissioner of VR Joan Phillips highlighted that the role of SRC is to serve as advocates for the disability community and to carry the VR message through their own spheres of influence to help advocate for better employment outcomes.
- The five-year Next Gen Careers innovation grant was discussed, and Ms. Phillips referenced the focus on youth and young adults, with a highlighted focus on underserved populations like those on the autism spectrum, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.
- Commissioner Wolf continues to ask members to help communicate that a culture of change is happening at MRC, and to have the SRC serve as ambassadors to help spread that message.
- A question came up regarding getting monthly updates on MRC work. MRC liaisons to the SRC, Kate Biebel and Amanda Baczko, will share updates about upcoming activities monthly during Executive Committee meetings. A draft of that report template will be reviewed later in the agenda. Additionally, the MRC website is currently being updated to discuss ongoing MRC work, and MRC social media accounts are a great source of information. The quarterly disability and family forum and quarterly consumer facing newsletter are great avenues to hear MRC updates as well.
- Feedback to the DEI roadmap was discussed. Ms. Baczko and Ms. Biebel noted that roadmap goals 3 and 5 are MRC-facing as currently written. They proposed to (1) combine goals 3 and 5 as they are duplicative (2) write them, so they are more SRC-facing and (3) add a new goal about structure and orientation for SRC membership

- Mr. Fujii agrees with the proposed change and suggested including unconscious bias training as a part of orientation.
- The group unanimously agreed to move forward with proposed changes
- Ms. Baczko and Ms. Biebel will draft some language to address these proposed changes and send them out. Ms. Canada will review the templates, agendas and other materials presented in the HMA report to see if there are any tools missing that we need to request from Health Management Associates.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Chair Canada transitioned to the minutes for the February meeting. She asked whether there were any corrections. Hearing none, she called for a motion to approve the minutes. Bellil motioned to approve the February 2022 minutes. Mr. Fujii seconded. The February 2022 minutes were approved with no corrections.

Old Business

- **Review March 24 Quarterly mtg Agenda:**
 - Chair Canada reviewed a draft of the agenda, referencing a change in meeting time to 5-7pm and tentative agenda items.
 - Mr. Bellil suggested adding an invitation to SRC members to provide feedback on the annual recommendation process. State Plan Committee report was broken out to allow time for recommendation discussion.
 - Ms. Goldberg asked why the State Plan recommendations aren't the same as the goals that MRC have developed as part of their Combined State Plan. It could be a helpful place to start regarding evaluating the effectiveness of VR.
 - A conversation about this alignment will be discussed at the next State Plan Committee.
- **Review Draft SRC Budget and SRC Admin Asst. Job description**
 - Chair Canada showed a draft of the budget that will be propose to MRC based on prior feedback from Committee members.
 - Once the budget is approved by full SRC, the SRC will send it to MRC for review and approval. If MRC declines to fund a requested item and the SRC disagrees with the decision, the question will go to the Governor for final determination.
 - Discussion and Questions about providing translation (e.g., Communication Access Real time [CART], American Sign Language [ASL], languages other than English)
 - alternate strategies were raised given the current state shortage for translators. A suggestion came up to translate CART transcription into multiple languages to promote continued accessibility.
 - Chait noted that ASL and CART are not guaranteed when asked and should be advertised on meeting notices as "ASL and CART has been requested."

- Chair expressed that as a public meeting targeting disability population, ASL and CART should be given at SRC Quarterly meetings, even if no one requests them as an accommodation
 - Question re: whether ASL and CART would be cancelled if no one asks for them as accommodations. Chair responded that ideally, they would not be cancelled.
- Chair reviewed the current Administrative Assistant job description and asked for feedback.
 - Questions came up regarding how many hours and the hourly rate for this role: Current thinking is 15-20hrs per week; MRC will work with their CFO to get a pay estimate from our Temp Agencies.
 - Chair noted that most dollar amounts on budget spreadsheet were estimates. Chair is working with MRC to research estimates
 - Mr. Bellil asked that MRC consider VR consumers for this role
 - Mr. Fujii suggested language be added about helping SRC with event planning. Chair added it to the bullet about helping with special projects.
- Chair Canada requested any further feedback for the Administrative Assistant job description in track changes by end of day 3/4/2022.
- **Report Content guidance docs – Committees; MRC**
 - Chair Canada called attention to the revised SRC guidance documents discussed in February. The documents were posted with the meeting notice and a message to review to ensure all feedback was included.
 - Hearing no objections, Chair requested additional feedback on all proposed SRC guidance documents by Friday March 18th otherwise the documents will be considered final.
 - Chair Canada recognized Ms. Baczko to discuss the MRC report template.
 - Committee members agree with the general categories and add DEIA updates and updates on operational changes.

New Business:

- **Committee Reports:**
 - **Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment Committee: Ms. Stroud & Ms. Baczko**
 - Ms. Stroud hosted a meeting on March 4th with MRC Staff Bill Noone, Graham Porell and Kate Biebel regarding how to move forward with monthly planning for their agenda and ongoing collaboration. Ms. Stroud also participated in an AQA road tour meeting with the Pittsfield VR Counselors about how MRC uses data to inform Area Offices. Ms. Stroud has a better understanding of the impact of data MRC collects and how Vocational Rehabilitation works on the ground. There was a positive unintentional consequence that VR Counselors also had a better understanding of the SRC and its function.
 - A suggestion was proposed to structure more of these visits for SRC members to continue to bridge this collaboration. Ms. Stroud expressed interest in the data of an office that serves BIPOC

consumers. This would also provide a contrast to Pittsfield which is a majority white community.

- Ms. Baczko provided an update that a vendor is almost ready to sign their work contract for the Consumer Experience survey and MRC has included an updated scope of work to oversample underserved populations.
- The upcoming committee meeting will take place Thursday March 10th from 2-3:30 and will include an overview of the Pittsfield visit, an update on the Consumer Experience survey, and suggestions for MRC on improving services and building connections informed by a review of raw data from the last consumer survey.
- **Policy Committee: Ms. Goldberg**
 - Ms. Goldberg hosted a meeting with MRC VR Director of Communications Jessica Cimini and MRC staff Jack Houliker regarding ongoing collaboration for policy and procurement. The next committee meeting will take place Thursday April 7th from 11-12:30pm.
- **State Planning Committee: Mr. Bellil**
 - The Committee discussed the recommendation process during their February meeting and felt comfortable with their current MRC recommendations and discussed the timeline and process for recommendations.
 - Feedback committee members discussed included:
 - Reviewing UMass focus group report and the input from MRC Listening and Learning Forum with the Disability Community. Graham will send Joe this information.
 - Get input from the upcoming MRC Consumer Conference- maybe have focus groups. Provide a welcoming environment- Affinity spaces: BIPOC, LGBTIQ+, Black Consumer, people with disabilities, etc. Kevin Goodwin would like to join the Consumer Conference Committee.
 - Provide an online way for MRC Consumers to provide input on recommendations. Post this on the website and MRC's Facebook page
 - Have the State Plan committee provide input on the recommendations that they would like to work on with MRC
 - Invite people to share their thoughts on the recommendations at the SRC March Quarterly meeting.
 - A future Committee meeting is not yet scheduled.
- **The Business & Employment Opportunity (BEO) Committee: Chair Canada**
 - The Committee has met with VR staff Paula Euber and SRC member Ellie Star regarding self-employment and getting buy-in from VR Counselors and identifying their capacity for supporting self-employment, as well as the current number of consumers involved. Ms. Euber will work with the MRC AQA department to get the data.

- Graham Porell, MRC AQA, noted in the chat that he is currently compiling that data
- The Committee discussed the goal to survey MRC Counselors to determine their interest in learning more about self-employment and how much they already know.
- Director of Communications Colleen Casey suggested the Committee work on revamping the SRC Guidebook to make it user friendly and implement plain language principles. SRC member Cheryl Scott has been pulled in to support that effort.
- Chair Canada did not have information on the progress of increasing the number of individuals with disabilities in state government.

Open Mic:

- Mr. Bellil mentioned his strong support for providing stipends for unpaid council members.
- Ms. Costa reminded the group that March is Brain Injury Awareness Month.

Adjournment: The Chair called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bellil made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Stroud. **The meeting adjourned at 3:01pm.**