

Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

June 1, 2023

1:00-3:00pm EST

Attendees:

- Statewide Rehabilitation Council Members: Inez Canada (SRC Chair), Joe Bellil, Doug Mason (Ex-Officio), Ronaldo Fujii, Steve LaMaster, Christine Tosti
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff: Kate Biebel, William Noone, Sahara Defensor, Graham Powell, Amy Karr

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

Meeting was called to order at 1:01 pm by the chair. Ms. Karr read off the list of the attendees from the participant list.

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

OLD BUSINESS

a. Membership Update – Inez Canada

Membership applications have been submitted for Anthony “AJ” Pape and Mr. Mason. Ms. Canada hopes for an update on the other two submitted applications, Boyang Bian and Sarah Carroll, before the June Quarterly meeting. The person handling the appointment process is on leave until the end of June. At the June Quarterly meeting we will also discuss membership reappointment and recruiting new members since some members are not eligible for reappointment. It was suggested to create a one- or two-year written plan for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) since appointments and reappointments will not happen overnight.

Information about the roles of SRC officers will be sent out before the June Quarterly meeting. Officers will be elected by the SRC. In addition, Ms. Karr is keeping track of the status of each member’s completion of the required Open Meeting Law (OML) and Conflict of Interest (COI) training and members will be informed if training needs to be completed.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Renew the SRC budget – Inez Canada

The budget had been sent to members before this meeting. **(See Copy of 2022 SRC Budget Request_Draft 03.03.2022_SRC approved_0804.docx.)** Chair Canada shared the budget worksheet during the discussion of the FY2024 budget. The full SRC will vote on the budget at the June 22nd Quarterly meeting.

A member who was unable to attend this meeting submitted questions and comments about the budget in advance of the meeting. The general questions about the budget are directly below. Comments related to specific budget items are listed with that item.

General questions:

- Is it possible to know how the SRC's expenditures matched the FY2023 budget, in order to help determine needs for the FY2024 budget?

There is no formal tracking of expenditures. Tracking is difficult because funds for different items are paid from different sources.

- Can the SRC carry over unspent funds from year-to-year?

Ms. Biebel stated that there are two years to spend the funds, it is not really a carry-over situation. Ms. Biebel reminded members that the dollar amounts are not large in respect to the overall MRC budget, and encouraged the SRC to ask for what is needed.

Each budget item was reviewed sequentially.

- **Admin support, ASL interpreters and CART:**

The amounts for these items will probably stay the same since the rates are probably not changing. The admin support is the biggest item on the budget.

- **Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) conference**

The SRC did not use as much CSVAR funds as was budgeted for. It was decided that \$1,800 requested for the previous year is too low for two members to attend. The SRC will request \$3600; it is preferable to overestimate rather than underestimate. Chair Canada reminded members that the budget is a spending guideline estimate.

- **National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) conferences**

The NDRN holds virtual conferences, usually in April, June and October, that include SRC-specific sessions. However, the specific sessions are only announced approximately one month before the conference. It is hard to determine whether to set aside funds without knowing the agenda. It was decided to indicate this item as "TBD based on specified need."

- **DEIA and Leadership training**

No funds had been allocated for this for the previous year. The member who submitted comments did suggest budgeting some money to bring in a subject matter expert on a particular DEIA or leadership-related topic. There was discussion about the amount of money to budget for such training. The ranges of instructor fees and possible instructor travel costs for in-person training were discussed. Cost may also be affected by the model of training, such as training for a single member versus for multiple members. It was decided to estimate \$5,000, not to exceed \$10,000, for this item.

- **SRC team meeting funds**

\$10,000 was allocated for the previous year but was not used. Chair Canada wants to hold an SRC meeting at this year's consumer summit in order to recruit new members and meet consumers, and wants to request funds for this again this year. It was decided to keep the amount of \$10,000.

- **Zoom subscription cost**

This cost is fixed, so the amount, \$150.00, will remain the same from the previous year.

- **Stipends for unemployed SRC members with disabilities**

Nothing was allocated for this for the previous year. Currently Massachusetts law only allows for reimbursement of members' costs, not stipends paid directly to members. Federal law gives states the option to allow compensation for members, but Massachusetts would need to amend its law to take out the provision of only allowing reimbursement. Chair Canada will ask if it is possible to propose an amendment to Massachusetts law with the submission of the new proposed Executive Order.

The full SRC will vote on this budget at the June Quarterly meeting. It will then be sent to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) through MRC Fiscal. Members will receive a copy of the proposed FY2024 budget before the June 22nd Quarterly meeting.

b. Agenda for June Quarterly meeting

The agenda for the June 22nd Quarterly meeting was planned. Committee chairs were informed that the ASL interpreters for that meeting requested bullet points for the Chairs' committee reports prior to the meeting in order to facilitate translation.

c. Committee Reports

- **Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee – Ronaldo Fujii**

The committee has not met since the May Executive Committee meeting. No committee report was given. The date of the next CSNAC meeting is June 20th.

- **DEIA Council – Doug Mason**

The council met on May 16th. In attendance was Commissioner Wolf, who is going to be more directly involved with the council. The council welcomes her attendance and input. The council was also introduced to Jennifer Barthelemy, the new EOHHS Secretariat Director of Diversity Equity Inclusion and Access. She gave a short presentation. The topic of this meeting focused on ensuring that the voices of both the individuals we serve as well as their family members are front and center when it comes to the design, development, and delivery of services by MRC. The council is working on exploring employment pay equity between people of color with their white counterparts, and what specific issues we are faced with when hiring people with disabilities. The council will also discuss gender neutral bathrooms.

Mr. Noone noted that data about the salaries of people MRC serves will be presented at the next DEIA council meeting. He would like council to give advice and input to MRC. Chair Canada indicated she would like the SRC to learn about this, and it will probably be scheduled for the September Quarterly meeting.

The next meeting of the DEIA council will be June 20th from 12-1:30 pm.

- **Business and Employment Opportunity Committee – Steve LaMaster**

The committee has not met since the May Executive Committee report; no committee report was given. The date of the next BEO meeting is June 8th at 1:00 pm.

- **Policy Committee – Naomi Goldberg**

Ms. Goldberg was absent and no committee report was given. The next Policy Committee meeting is on August 3rd at 11:00 am.

- **Executive Committee – Inez Canada**

There will be no Executive Committee meeting in July. This meeting would occur just after the Quarterly meeting and many people may be on vacation. Necessary votes and submissions will have occurred before the start of the new fiscal year. The next Executive Committee meeting is August 3rd at 1:00 pm.

- **State Plan Committee – Joe Bellil**

The committee last met the previous day, May 31st. The main focus was to go through the State Plan recommendations to be submitted to MRC. Some wording was revised at that meeting. Each recommendation was assigned to an SRC committee.

At that meeting Mr. Bellil also shared the Annual Report recommendations template that was created by Colleen Casey. He will send this to the committee Chairs. The Annual Report write-ups are to be sent to Mr. Bellil by August 1st. The Annual Report will be reviewed at the next State Plan committee meeting. The next committee meeting is on August 9th at 11:00 am.

d. Vote on 2024 recommendations – Joe Bellil

Mr. Bellil read off the seven recommendations discussed at the State Plan committee meeting. (See Draft- SRC FY24 Proposed Recommendations as of 5-31-23.docx.)

At this meeting it will be decided whether to send the recommendations to the full SRC for vote at the June 22nd Quarterly meeting. After the vote on June 22nd the recommendations will be sent to MRC on June 23rd.

There was a brief discussion about the recommendation to reach out to learn more about Worcester County's inmate dog training program. It was noted that not everyone coming out of incarceration has a disability and is eligible for MRC VR services. Serving people leaving jail who do not have disabilities is not within the scope of MRC VR.

Chair Canada noted that three recommendations were assigned to CSNAC and four were assigned to the BEO committee, and wondered if the workload distribution would be feasible. Will there be enough time for the committees to monitor their recommendations? There was a discussion of committees having co-chairs. The procedure for having a co-chair is for an interested member to approach the committee chair and get them to agree and then the SRC chair will appoint them as a co-chair. Electing co-chairs would be a change in the process of selecting co-chairs would require a change in the SRC bylaws.

A member unavailable for today's meeting submitted questions she suggested be asked about the recommendations. The answers may help provide more context for the recommendations and help facilitate discussion and vote. Chair Canada shared the following suggested questions:

- What problem is this [recommendation] trying to solve or what issue is this trying to address?
- What is the intended value and purpose as it relates to vocational rehabilitation? In other words, how will this help achieve "competitive and sustainable employment for all people with disabilities"? (The quote is from the SRC mission.)
- What is the expected outcome or deliverable for this recommendation? What impact is it expected to have?

Chair Canada proposed sending these questions along with the recommendations in advance of the June 22nd Quarterly meeting. The answers to the questions will help clarify how the recommendations fit in the scope of what MRC can do. Mr. Bellil will ask the person who made the recommendation to be prepared to answer the questions at the June Quarterly meeting. Mr. Bellil noted that discussing the answers to these questions will take additional time in the Quarterly meeting agenda. Chair Canada stated that she will answer the questions for the recommendation about an RFR for self-employment business consultants.

Chair Canada asked the members if they were comfortable moving the recommendations forward to the full SRC at the June Quarterly meeting. Members indicated by consensus that they were. The recommendations and questions will be sent to the committee Chairs, members who made the recommendations and the full SRC in advance of the June Quarterly meeting.

e. MRC Updates – Kate Biebel

- There are still the same three Area Director vacancies at Lowell, Hyannis, and Malden. The MRC has recommended candidates for Lowell and Malden. The Hyannis position has been reposted. MRC wants someone knowledgeable about the Cape and Islands.
- MRC has started ASL interpreter interviewers. There are many interpreter openings. Some screening interviews have been done. There are not many candidates, there is a limited pool.
- Taunton, Hyannis, and Greenfield will be on MRC Connect as of June 12th. Malden and Lawrence will be added by June 26th. All MRC offices will be able to have consumers apply online via MRC Connect. This has taken over a year.
- The Office of Learning and community Engagement newsletter will be sent out either June or July. It will have a Pride Month focus.
- The July Disability Forum has been cancelled to focus on the MRC consumer summit.
- There will still be a Family Forum on June 13th.
- MRC is shooting for early September for the consumer summit; they will know the date by the time of the Family Forum. Have been touring facilities to make sure they are accessible. Different levels of disability accessibility and room design/spacing need to be considered.
- NextGen enrollment since October 2022 (about nine months) is 324. The target is 1000. Enrollment continues to be ahead of projections. There have been 249 community outreach meetings. Meetings were held at nontraditional locations that had not previously been used. Last week 10 new people walked in the door. Enrollment was slow in the beginning, but picked up in the new year. A member congratulated MRC on NextGen enrollment. MRC will look at what can be brought from NextGen to regular VR. VR staff will be looking at data regularly. Want to see if looking at data early and often makes a difference.

Questions / Comments

- Who produces the newsletter, and does it ask for input from consumers?
Ms. Biebel stated that Amanda Baczko's office produces it. Ms. Biebel will ask if the newsletter is looking for content contributions.

f. Open Mic

- Mr. Noone stated that MRC is starting the process of developing the next State Plan. He had requested the list of SRC appointed members and did receive that from Ms. Karr. SRC member Cheryl Scott is involved in this process.

Chair Canada called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Mr. Fujii. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mason. The meeting was adjourned at 2:36 pm.