

## Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

October 7, 2021, 1-3pm EST

Please note: this meeting was held virtually.

### Meeting was called to Order at 1:05pm by the Chair.

#### Attendees:

- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Members:** Inez Canada, Joe Bellil, Naomi Goldberg, Olympia Stroud, Steve LaMaster
- **SRC Attendees:** Christine Tosti, Sarah Wiles, Cheryl Scott
- **SRC Ex Officio Members:** Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel, Amanda Costa
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff:** Bill Noone, Jacqueline Ryan, Colleen Casey, Manel Desvallons

#### Minutes Approval- *Ms. Canada*

- Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned for approval of the minutes. Mr. LaMaster seconded. Minutes were approved with no corrections.

#### New Business:

##### Announcements – *Chair Inez Canada*

- Newly Appointed Members-
  - The Chair announced that Christine Tosti & Ronaldo Fujii are now fully appointed and official voting members of the SRC. The Chair thanks them for their contribution and robust engagement.
- RSA Innovation Grant-
  - The Chair announced that MRC, in partnership with two sister agencies, has received the RISE Innovation Grant. Ms. Canada then introduced MRC Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel to present additional information.
    - Deputy Commissioner Biebel shared that MRC was awarded one of eight RSA Innovation Grants. This grant was submitted in partnership with MA Commission for the Blind and MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, with MRC as the lead agency. This grant is for total of \$17 million over a 5-year period. MRC will continue to work with the Synergy Consultants and the SRC as we continue to work on developing this plan.
    - Ms. Christine Tosti flagged that she would like to put in a plug for service dogs and would like to see some of the funding go towards that initiative.

#### SRC Annual Report – *Colleen Casey*

The Chair introduced MRC Director of Communications, Colleen Casey, to present on the SRC Annual Report.

- Ms. Casey provided information on the SRC Annual Report, highlighting that the report is a great opportunity to elevate the SRC. Ms. Casey did want to flag for the SRC that the goal is to not completely change the report but to modernize the report by including:
  - A featured letter from the Chair, Inez
  - Impactful stories from MRC consumers

- Infusing modern/engaging language to not only gain awareness of the SRC but also assist with recruiting efforts.
- The Chair had requested SRC Executive members provide ideas/feedback for the Annual Report. Ms. Canada flagged that committee members agreed on most items except for the inclusion of consumer stories and a letter from MRC Commissioner Wolf.
  - The Chair wanted to discuss those two items in order to come to a decision. Ms. Canada compiled that information and shared the document with the group.
- Consumer Stories (SRC Annual Report) -
  - Ms. Casey discussed that her team has done a lot of research during the MRC rebranding project and has found that many similar organizations use very bureaucratic language that is not user friendly. MRC is rebranding to change that as an organization and including consumer impact stories is a great way to start that change.
    - Ms. Stroud, Ms. Scott and Mr. LaMaster agreed with the value of engaging consumer stories. Additionally, Mr. LaMaster flagged that if consumer stories are going to be featured, it is important to link them to SRC initiatives such as DEI-A (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility) works and increasing the number of disabled individuals working in the Commonwealth.
    - The Chair stated that it sounds like the Executive Committee is opened to featuring Consumer Stories if they are linked back to SRC initiatives, and we are able to hit the due date.
    - The group decided to focus on what we can do for this year based on time constraints given a November deadline, and then focus on continuing to make the report more user friendly for next year.
- Letter from MRC Commissioner Toni Wolf (SRC Annual Report) -
  - A discussion surrounding including a letter from Commissioner Wolf was discussed, as it is common practice in the non-profit and educational fields to include a letter from a Board of Directors Chair as well as the President. Ms. Casey flagged that Commissioner Wolf's message would be focused on thanking the SRC, discussing the importance of the SRC and echoing the Chair's message.
  - The Chair flagged that it sounds like members are in favor of the letter if it is SRC focused. Additionally, Ms. Canada flagged that most of the items for the report are completed or can be completed quickly.
  - Ms. Casey mentioned that her next step will be creating a folder for she, Mr. Bellil and the Chair to add information and collaborate. Once the folder/draft is complete, Ms. Casey will share the information with the group for review.
  - Deputy Commissioner Biebel flagged the report is due at the end of November to the Governor's office. Additionally, the Deputy Commissioner mentioned how having a Communications department working on this report makes a huge difference in our ability to put together a robust report and make a difference.
  - Ms. Casey has requested that all additional information/reports for the SRC Annual Meeting be submitted to her one week from today (October 14<sup>th</sup>).
  - Ms. Casey reminded the Executive team that October is National Disability Employment Awareness month and has asked that members share the MRC content.
    - The Chair requested that Ms. Casey send an email to the group with the content she mentioned.

## **Committee Reports – Joe Bellil, Naomi Goldberg, Olympia Stroud & Steve LaMaster**

- State Plan & Interagency Committee – Joe Bellil
  - Mr. Bellil touched upon FY22 recommendations and that he has not heard back on any additional responses from SRC or MRC. Mr. Bellil will start working on the workplans.
- Deputy Commissioner Biebel wanted to ensure that Committee chairs are working with her, Amanda Costa to identify MRC leads/points of contact on the workplan for information gathering. MRC wants to be clear and concrete about who is responsible for what and what staff members bandwidth is for providing information/support.
- Policy Committee – Naomi Goldberg
  - Ms. Goldberg reported that Policy Committee will meeting every other month going forward. This will align with the other SRC committees.
  - The current focus of the policy committee is procurement. Last year was focused on learning about procurement but the committee is now moving forward with ideas and action plans. The committee would like to speak with Joan Phillips regarding a survey of VR counselors as well as a survey of business partners/vendors.
- Needs Assessment Committee – Olympia Stroud
  - Ms. Stroud wanted to start update with recognizing Amanda Costa & Manel Desvallons and the great work done at the Forum.
  - The Needs Assessment Committee is staying on top of the Synergy tool and is waiting for the Request for Response (RFR) to go through. The committee met with Commissioner Wolf & the Synergy team, to ensure that MRC/SRC are serving the underserved and underrepresented. The funding for the project is there and the committee is very excited about this process.
    - Amanda Costa provided an update that Commissioner Wolf has approved the contracting of a vendor to get the data for this project processed and staff trained. Additionally, demo group sessions have been taking place. MRC is hoping that the vendor can do the bulk of this work over the next 6 months.
- Business & Employment Opportunities Committee – Steve LaMaster
  - Mr. LaMaster reported that the Business & Employment Opportunity Committee did not meet in August due to scheduling conflicts but are meeting next week.
  - The Committee met with Bill Allen to discuss the current disparity of the number of individuals with a disability in Massachusetts that works in an official capacity in the Commonwealth.
    - Mr. LaMaster did flag that there is an issue with collecting that information and numbers as it is not regularly discussed. Not everyone wants to disclose that they have a disability as there still exists a large amount of discrimination.
  - The Committee is also focusing on marketing and branding. Mr. LaMaster hopes to find time to connect with Colleen Casey and the MRC Communications team to discuss this initiative and entrepreneurship.
    - Naomi Goldberg inquired how the committee was defining entrepreneurship? Additionally, Ms. Goldberg wanted to ensure that there was data being collected for different types of employment such as uber, doordash or gig work.
    - Christine Tosti provided comments regarding individuals with mental illness and the concerns around sharing said disability/diagnosis. Ms. Tosti shared that the fact that

there is no biological and/or blood test, diagnosis is based on the individual administering the test and their opinion.

- Olympia Stroud agreed with Ms. Tosti's comments and shared that many individuals with mental illness and/or disability are especially cautious of sharing a diagnosis with their employers/Human Resources.

#### **2022 Meeting Calendar – Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel**

- The Chair introduced the 2022 meeting calendar and shared that committee chairs should have reviewed prior to the meeting to ensure that we don't hit any holidays and to verify that they are keeping the same meeting cadence as 2021. The Chair then turned over the discussion to Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel.
- Deputy Commissioner Biebel shared her screen and made live updates to the calendar based on committee chair's feedback.
  - The calendar is attached.
- The Chair will be sending out the newly updated calendar to all members for review along with information on the time change of the Quarterly meetings and that meetings will continue to take place remotely.

#### **Open Meeting**

- Mr. LaMaster is coordinating an Employment Advocacy meeting for the end of October.
- Deputy Commissioner Biebel shared how successful the Individual and Family Forum event was on Tuesday and congratulated Amanda Costa and Manel Desvallons on their hard work.
  - Olympia Stroud also thanked Ms. Costa and Mr. Desvallons for their efforts to organize and manage the forum.
  - Amanda Costa reminded the group that the next Individual & Family Forum is set for January 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Sarah Wiles shared information on the upcoming Mass Commission for the Blind Virtual White Cane Day -Oct. 15 at 12N.

The Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Stroud motioned to adjourn. Ms. Goldberg seconded. **Meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.**