NMTAP logo, state with Zia symbol with four stick figures with disabilities

*Bill Newroe*

*Vice-Chair*

**NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

Monday, January 24, 2022

Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT); Chris Zafra (Department of Workforce Solutions/DWS); Albert Deimer (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); Nat Dean (Consumer of AT); Robin Garrison (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM); German Benitez (New Mexico Commission for Blind/CFB) Absent**:** none

**NMTAP Staff**: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Maurice Alvarez (AT Specialist), Julie LaJeunesse (AT Specialist); Jesse Armijo (AT Coordinator)

**NMTAP Partners present:** Daniella Saucedo and Jordan Robinson (Adelante Development Center/ADC); Larry McCabe (San Juan Center for Independence), Patti West (Western New Mexico University/WNMU - NMTAP Satellite), **Absent:** none

**Guests:** Julie Bisbee

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Bill N, Council Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:11 pm. Roll call of those in attendance established that a quorum was present.

Bill N asked for approval of the agenda. Nat D moved to approve the agenda; Robin G seconded, and all council members approved by a roll call vote. It was acknowledged that the Chair, Keith Maes, resigned and that Vice-Chair, Bill Newroe, will be presiding over the meeting today. Leadership of the council will be addressed in the next meeting.

Bill N asked for approval of the draft minutes from October 18, 2021. Chris Z moved to approve the minutes, Robin G seconded, and all council members approved the minutes by a roll call vote.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A made some notes comparing the first half of the current state fiscal year (July 2021 to December 2021) with the last year (July 2020 to December 2020). This year, outreach was five times higher with an effort to remind New Mexicans that we were still available through the pandemic. Training doubled this year as we were able to pivot to robust online services. Device demonstrations, device loans and financial loans are slightly higher. Information and referral contacts were slightly less, but we are on track to meet our key performance measures. The key performance measures track the number of devices loaned and the number of overall outreach interactions with the public statewide.

Tracy A reviewed training events on the calendar currently. On January 21st, staff did a training for the Farmington Consolidated Schools and will do one for the Regional Educational Cooperative #2 regarding augmentative alternative communication (AAC), learning disabilities, and executive functioning. The ongoing project training speech language pathologists at the University of New Mexico on AAC will be held again on February 11th and 18th. On February 23rd, the NMTAP staff will provide an online statewide training on assistive technology (AT) for activities of daily living, apps for cognitive challenges, and tablet accessibility. Our northern satellite office in Las Vegas, will offer a training on AT, employment, and employability along with the NMTAP staff within the next couple of months. Finally, we have set the date for the assistive technology conference (ATC22) to be held virtually September 12th through 15th, 2022.

Tracy A finished the report noting that they will update the program brochure due to paper brochures still being requested; it will be available digitally and in print. The device loan paperwork will be updated to reflect the increased loan period of 6 weeks. She noted that AT programs across the country will receive funds from the American Rescue Plan 2021 to prevent, prepare, and respond to COVID-19. More details for this project will come later and may allow for partnering with other agencies. The update on AgrAbility is that the current grant is in the last year and a new application was submitted for another four years starting in the fall of 2022. The primary role for NMTAP in AgrAbility is to provide training with staff member, Julie L , as the lead on this project. The final note was that the Governor’s Commission on Disability (GCD) is closer to appointing a new Director. Note that the GCD Director is also the director for the NMTAP program. She thanked all the partners for their work and thanked the diligent NMTAP staff Jesse A, Maurice A, and Julie L.

**FINANCIAL LOANS (NM SEED Loans and Access Loan NM) UPDATE:**

Larry M reported on both financial loan programs. The financial overview for Access Loan includes a large decrease in one of the Morgan Stanley accounts from $182,780.36 to $34,784.70 at the end of December 2021. The report noted that $148,000.00 was incorrectly credited to this account in December of 2020. The other Morgan Stanley account increased from $231,647.70 to $233,979.27 in the last month. There is $357,079.90 currently available for loans and a total of $2,178,078.40 with $1,463,918.60 held in Certificates of Deposit (CD) for current open loans involved in the Access Loan program. Larry M noted that CDs are held for any new loans and when the loans are paid off, the CD is cashed out to be available for other loans. There were no new loans, four loans were paid off and one defaulted in December 2021. The one defaulted loan was for an accessible vehicle that was returned after the consumer passed away. SJCI was able to sell it for the balance between the value of the CD and the amount still due on the loan, so no money was lost to the overall program. Majority of Access Loans are for accessible vehicles. The availability of modified vehicles is down and those available cost much more. Chris Z requested that the make and model of vehicles be included in the report. Larry M stated that the resold vehicle was a 2018 Dodge Caravan with 28,000 miles, so it sold quickly for$34,000. Larry M noted that one borrower continues to pay $850 monthly to SJCI on a loan that defaulted in 2019. The balance on that loan is now down to about $21,000.

The financial overview for the SEED Loan program includes small increases in both Morgan Stanley accounts with one ending with $448,819.08 and the other $122,287.15 balance. The total amount of $595,230.24 is involved in the SEED Loan program at the end of December 2021. The one remaining open loan was paid off and there were no more loans provided.

**REUSE (Back In Use and DiverseIT - Adelante) UPDATE:**

Jordan R, DiverseIT, noted they continue doing public outreach and providing computers to consumers. The initial orientation on a computer provided when it was picked up has changed to on-line support after the curbside pickup due to the pandemic. Unfortunately, the primary location for DiverseIT on San Mateo was vandalized in December 2021 and has no power. They do offer a helpline for general technical questions at 505-503-4636 (or 505-503-INFO). He noted that they are offering “how to” classes in partnership with the City of Albuquerque as well as the other trainings they provide shared in previous meetings.

Daniela S, Back in Use, noted that they provided 507 equipment items to 216 individuals in the last quarter. They have had an increase in requests from locations outside of Albuquerque, such as the Navajo Nation, Santa Fe and Mora. The main items needed are wheelchairs and shower chairs. There was a discussion regarding these items not being provided through insurance or Medicaid due to consumers being told they are considered “cosmetic” items. Consumers are also being put on a wait list, not approved due to a short-term disability or other reasons. These denials should be appealed by individuals so as not to supplant what should be covered. DRNM can assist with appeals to Medicaid and Managed Care Organizations, noting the time for an appeal is limited so contacting them quickly is needed. DRNM also has several tip sheets for self-advocating and will share them. A discussion regarding this was suggested to continue outside of this meeting.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

Robin G, DRNM, reported that they did multiple voting access site visits and training for poll workers, but realizes that many of these locations will still be inaccessible after voting days. They are working to address these as they come up and are looking at transition plans required to make locations accessible. They also did disability awareness and accessibility training at the Roundhouse in preparation for the legislative session. She noted that accessibility makes life easier for everyone, not just persons with disabilities.

Nat D noted that the service animal information on the GCD website continues to be outdated and offers her expertise to address issues she feels remain. She requested this be on the next meeting agenda. Center for Development and Disability has tip sheets through Information Network, that are available on-line. There was discussion during the financial loan report regarding putting complete information together such as a tip sheet, for details to help people obtain accessible vehicles and was continued at this time. Chris Z noted that onecommunityauto.com is an organization that refurbishes vehicles for non-profit agencies and may be a resource for accessible vehicles. Tracy A agreed that NMTAP could create comprehensive information on this subject.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Bill N stated that voting for the Chair and Vice-Chair will be addressed at the next meeting and encouraged members to recruit needed members. The council needs someone from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, someone from Education and four persons with disabilities or their parents or guardians. The requirement is that 51% of the membership have a disability and are not serving as an agency representative. Members are encouraged to volunteer and nominate leadership in preparation for the next meeting as well. He noted that an Executive Committee should also be decided on, which is made up of Chair, Vice-Chair and one other member. A primary task for an Executive Committee is to review the By-Laws annually.

Bill N suggested that a discussion for informational tip sheets be included in the next meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Julie Bisbee was thanked for attending today’s meeting and introduced herself. She noted that she was independently providing on-going volunteer support to an individual in the Four Corners area in using a speech generating app and would love to see if it is possible to expand this type of service for others across the state. Tracy A offered further discussion with her on this idea.

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on April 18, 2022, on Zoom at 1pm. The meeting was adjourned at 3:21pm.

***Approved 4.18.22***