NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES

Monday, April 18, 2022

Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT); Nat Dean (Consumer of AT); Robin Garrison (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM) **Absent:** Chris Zafra (Department of Workforce Solutions/DWS); Albert Deimer (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); German Benitez (New Mexico Commission for Blind/CFB)

**NMTAP Staff**: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Jesse Armijo (AT Coordinator); Stan Ross (Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD)

**NMTAP Partners present:** Anthony Montoya, Mirian Martinez Rodriguez, and Julia Monge (Adelante Development Center/ADC); Larry McCabe (San Juan Center for Independence), Glenn Damian (Northeastern Regional Educational Cooperative(NEREC)/NMTAP Satellite), **Absent:** none

**Guests:** Brian Schobel; Dennis Campos

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Bill N, Council Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. It was established that a quorum was present. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

Bill N asked for approval of the agenda. Nat D moved to approve the agenda with the amendment to vote on Chair and Vice-Chair before NMTAP Update; Robin G seconded, and all council members approved as amended.

Bill N asked for approval of the draft minutes from January 24, 2022. Nat D moved to approve the minutes as amended, Robin G seconded, and all council members approved.

**New Business – Vote on Chair and Vice-Chair:**

Bill N, Council Vice-Chair asked for nominations. Nat D nominated Robin G as Chair and Ricardo O as Vice-Chair. Both members accepted the nomination. Nat D moved to vote Robin G as Chair and Ricardo O as a slate of leadership, Bill N seconded, and all members present voted yes by a roll call vote.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A welcomed the new GCD Director, Stan Ross, who comes from within the agency bringing a current understanding of the mission and activities. She noted that 63 individuals borrowed and returned 138 devices the first two quarters of this year. Demonstrations are not utilized as much as they could be statewide, and she described the process and value virtually and in person. There were 12 trainings provided in the last quarter and Jesse A briefly described them. The staff did training for the Regional Educational Cooperative #2 serving the Northwest region of New Mexico. The routine 2-day training for the University of New Mexico’s Speech Language Pathology Therapy students were done in February. This has been in place for several years and is beneficial as the students enter to serve the community. Several in attendance noted the training NMTAP staff provides is excellent. There have been several virtual public awareness events and we are moving into a few in person events. The first was the DiverseIT Senior Tech Fair held recently at the beginning of the month. ATC22 will also take place in person from September 12th-13th. Call for proposals just closed and there are several options. It has not been decided if there will be a virtual capacity included at the conference and will depend on the type of sessions. Nat D proposed offering scholarships for individuals to attend the Assistive Technology Conference 2022 (ATC22) and offered to assist is soliciting for sponsors to support that. It was noted that this conference is targeted to professionals and while individuals with disabilities are welcome, this may or may not be appropriate or feasible. This decision is up to the Director.

Stan R noted that he has experienced the conference and talked about a positive follow up to a presentation he witnessed with an attendee. He noted that the official state budget is not due until early May, but the preliminary NMTAP budget is $543,200 for the next fiscal year. The possibility of applying for congressionally directive spending from Congress to support NMTAP was suggested by Nat D.

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

Larry M reported on both financial loan programs verbally rather than viewing it on the Zoom screen since that would not allow for lip reading by attendees. The financial overview for the SEED Loan program includes small decrease in one Morgan Stanley account from $427,005.50 to 421,447.45. The other Morgan Stanley account increased from $124,637.25 to $125,279.79. The Four Corners Community Bank (FCCB) account has $24,128.87 so the SEED Loan program holds a total amount of $570,856.11 in the program as of 3/31/22. All loans are closed.

The financial overview for Access Loan includes an increase in both Morgan Stanley accounts; one increased from $34,759.91 to $34,760.56 and the other from $238,908.39 to $240,233.55. There was an increase in the FCCB account from $120,170.17 to $151,032.40 due. Currently there is $1,326,290.21 held in Certificates of Deposit (CD) for current open loans involved in the Access Loan program. The total program funds include $2,178,343.23. There were no new loans due to the continued issues with obtaining modified vehicles. There were also no loans paid off or defaulted on.

There was a discussion regarding the idea of leasing modified vehicles rather than purchasing one. Further discussion would need to be held outside of this meeting.

Bill N opened the discussion about the SEED Loan program and Tracy A provided a history of it. NMTAP applied for a federal Telework grant that was a one-time competitive grant to encourage an increase in employment for persons with disabilities, including the ability to telework. New Mexico was awarded this grant in 2004 for just under a million dollars including the federal grant and a small state matching amount. Between 2004 and 2022, there were 34 loans provided to entrepreneurs with disabilities. Most of those were provided in the early years and the last one in January 2019. She also noted that in 2014 all the states that were awarded a Telework grant closed that program, transferring all remaining funds into the AT Programs traditional financial loans per the federal government. That traditional financial loan program, also known as an Alternative Finance Program, in NM is the Access Loan program. Tracy A noted that these transfers occurred just as she started with NMTAP and has advocated to keep our Telework, or SEED Loan program, separate. However, we are advised to follow suit due to the small business climate changes, only 5 loans provided since 2014 and none in the last 3 years. Closing the SEED Loan program is still in process and Tracy A asks to expand advertisement of the AT that can be obtained through the Access Loan program, including AT needed by entrepreneurs with disabilities. Look for changes soon when the official agreement with our partner SJCI is completed.

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

Anthony M, Back in Use, noted that they hired a new employee in which they were able to increase activity. However, there is a decrease in donations with many requests continuing to come in. They are working with Presbyterian to have a Durable Medical Equipment (DME) donation drive soon. He noted that they have been working on doing regional drop off days of DME together with NMTAP staff as well. The record showed that 419 equipment items were provided to 216 individuals, valued just under $80,000 in the last quarter. While incontinent products are not included in these numbers, they provide many of them to the community. He stated they provide broken walkers to a third party, who repairs them and provides them to persons in need.

Julia M, DiverseIT, introduced herself and Mirian R. They just recently hosted the Senior Tech Fair which was quite successful. They recently received a large shipment of laptops which are always in need. The report was brief since they were joining the meeting from their training activity at Tech High.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Bill N opened the discussion regarding the upcoming **NMTAP** **State Plan that is due by July 1, 2022**. These are made for 3-year periods and Tracy A suggested that all components continue. She reviewed the components that include the four core areas of device demonstrations, device loans, financial loans, and reused equipment. Another component is training, which is geared primarily for professionals but also open to persons with disabilities. Also, information and assistance and technical assistance services are provided, both involving many hours of interactions. NMTAP is currently partnering with DRNM to make the NM legislative website accessible, which is a Technical Assistance project. We also do public awareness events. Tracy A noted that purchasing new AT is always a need to conduct all these services. Input from council members for changes or ideas are welcome.

Bill N opened the discussion on the **Assistive Technology Public Health (ATPH) funding for NMTAP**. This funding is provided to all AT programs to prevent, prepare for, or respond to the COVID19 pandemic. As part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, it is specifically to recruit, hire, and train public health workers to respond to the pandemic. Tracy A noted that is short-term money and contracting with someone versus hiring a staff person is most feasible. Ideas include addressing digital divide and accessibility, the new adaptive gaming initiative NMTAP is gearing up for, addressing social isolation, addressing elderly populations or remote monitoring. She asked all members to contact her by email with input so that GCD/NMTAP can finalize the plan with the federal government.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

None.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Brian S offered the special funds could apply to AT Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with DVR or Workforce Connection.

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on July 18, 2022, via Zoom at 1pm. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.

***Approved 7.18.22***