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

*Robin Garrison – Chair*

*Ricardo Ortega – Vice Chair*

**NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

Monday, July 18, 2022

Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** Robin Garrison (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT); Brian Schobel (Consumer of AT); German Benitez (New Mexico Commission for Blind/CFB); Julie Bisbee (Guardian Consumer of AT); TJ Chester (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); Andrea Sterling (Consumer of AT); Valerie Griego (NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/NMDVR); Dennis Campos (Department of Workforce Solutions/DWS) **Absent:** Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT)

**NMTAP Staff**: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Stan Ross (Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD); Lisa McNiven (Deputy Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD)

**NMTAP Partners present:** Anthony Montoya and Mirian Martinez Rodriguez (Adelante Development Center/ADC); Leslie Wright and Damon Wright (San Juan Center for Independence), Jason Quimby (Western New Mexico University (WNMU/NMTAP Satellite), **Absent:** none

**Guests:** Nat Dean; Carli Mortensen

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Robin G, Council Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm. It was established by roll call that a quorum was present. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

Robin G asked for approval of the agenda. German B moved to approve the agenda, Andrea S seconded, and all council members approved by roll call.

Robin G asked for approval of the draft minutes from April 18, 2022. Brian S moved to approve the minutes, Dennis C seconded, and all council members approved by roll call with Dennis C and TJ Chester abstaining.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A reported on the State Fiscal Year (July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022) data of all services with a brief description of the services as well. Services for individuals with disabilities usually start with an informational call, a device demonstration is provided to that person, and then a device is loaned to them to try in their own environment. Training for groups to learn in depth information about AT, guidance in the use of AT or AT services and any technical assistance is provided to entities. All these services provide knowledge and access to AT. The Reuse and financial loan services allow for acquisition of AT. Regarding statistics, NMTAP staff answered just under 1000 constituent calls, hosted 8 information booths with over 20,000 persons in attendance, provided 34 trainings for 1328 persons, provided device demonstrations to 58 individuals with disabilities, and posted 271 Facebook posts which resulted in 2503 engagements. During this period most services were done virtually, and more in-person services started slowly by appointment in the last two quarters. The Re-Use portion of our services exceeded the goal of 900 by providing 1,682 items including durable medical equipment and computers to individuals with disabilities. Credit goes to our contract partner, Adelante, who provides these services through the Back in Use and DiverseIT programs. There were four financial loans provided by our contractor, SJCI, and more details will be provided later in the agenda.

Regarding the Performance Measures tracked by the State, the goal for overall events was 175 and we exceeded that by providing 360 events. The state report also tracks the number of devices that are borrowed by individuals. This performance goal was to loan 580 and NMTAP loaned 330 different AT devices. This number is low for several reasons. COVID slowed down the loan program, some inaccurate tracking of the multiple AT applications or software on one device, and that frequently we do not have AT that has been requested. We are adjusting practices and looking for funding to purchase the new ever-changing AT that is needed.

Discussion of service delivery since the pandemic was discussed. A description of some virtual and some in-person events going forward were given. NMTAP staff have started to travel to other locations when an in-person experience is required. We will provide additional services to others when in that area. Robin G noted a virtual training done for DRNM resulted in several AT items being purchased by attendees and encouraged referrals to other groups that can benefit. It was noted that virtual services also allow for increased outreach to rural areas and for those with limited transportation, so both methods will continue.

Tracy A also reviewed that federal funding was given to all AT Programs under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to specifically hire a healthcare professional related specifically to AT required to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. This is limited funding for $80,000 ending in 2024 so this will be done through contractual services rather than hiring a new temporary staff. After many discussions, including prior NMTAP Council meetings, it is decided that this will be used for a Digital Divide Coordinator. This person will look at virtual platform, website, and document accessibility for consumers in all areas of life. NMTAP staff is working on that scope of work which will include end users and those hosting events or websites. This will also increase statewide knowledge of all NMTAP services. Council members provided input and acknowledged the need for this project.

The 3-year state plan for 2021-2023 is due currently and Stan R, Director, is working on submitting that with the goal to continue all seven services: device demonstration, device loan, financial loan, reused equipment, training, information and assistance, and technical assistance. It was discussed that these services are offered to persons with employment, educational and community living needs. For example, outreach to long-term care facilities and senior centers will be provided again as pandemic restrictions are beginning to ease. NMTAP is obligated to provide services statewide through the lifespan, throughout the state.

Jason Q at WNMU was requested to share some of their current activities. He stated that as pandemic restrictions are lifted, they were able to reconnect with several agencies in the Southwestern area including the local veteran program, schools in Deming and Silver City, WNMU students, Hidalgo County services and the Gila Medical Center.

Stan R noted the GCD Commission meeting is in late August, and he will have more financial details after that. He welcomed the new council members and applauded the staff for continued services through the pandemic. A story of how the GCD Residential Accessibility Modification Program (RAMP) was able to assist an individual in a long-term care facility during the pandemic may further open collaboration with these types of facilities related to AT. Stan R introduced Lisa M, GCD Deputy Director, who stated she was happy to support the goals already in place for NMTAP.

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

Leslie W reported that Larry McCabe retired, and Damon Wright is the new financial loan representative at SJCI. One SEED Loan program Morgan Stanley account decreased about $18,000, which is not as severe as it could be due to the conservative investments. She offered to invite a Morgan Stanley representative to a future meeting. The Four Corners Community Bank (FCCB) account has $24,131.88 and she suggests holding it there rather than adding to the investments. The SEED Loan program is no longer active. Discussions to close this loan program started in September 2021. That council stopped meeting in February or March 2022, no new loan had been provided since January 2019. The official contract to close that is still pending. The advertisement for SEED Loans was removed from NMTAP and SJCI so there is no confusion in the public. After the contract is completed, a public closing can be provided statewide.

In this last quarter, the Access Loan program closed six loans and opened one. Most of these were for accessible vehicles. The process in the loan program is that a Certificates of Deposit (CD) is held as a guarantee for any loan provided to a consumer. SJCI only has information on the original CD and increase in the value. Since the actual loan is between the bank and the consumer, the current balance on the loans is not provided to SJCI by the bank. The financial overview for Access Loan indicates $1,215,771.50 is currently in CDs held for current loans. She reported that the one investment account with Morgan Stanley for Access Loan gained about $37,000. The total program funds in the Access Loan program are $2,291,082.70, with $537,655.60 available for new loans. The checking account has $261,905.78 that is available for new loans. Four loan applications are in process. It was noted that FDIC only insures up to $250,000 at any bank, not just account.

TJ Chester noted that traditionally there has been difficulty getting vehicle modifications in New Mexico with only one vendor available and Leslie W responded that Damon W has stepped in with another company, AMS.

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

Anthony M, Back in Use, noted that 419 equipment items were provided to 216 individuals, valued just under $80,000 in the last quarter. They receive calls for equipment every day with any items donated and cleaned are given out almost immediately. The drop off equipment drive with Presbyterian is currently on hold as they work out some details. He shared a touching client story from the Las Cruces area. TJ Chester opened the discussion on the challenges of taking equipment to more rural areas. Anthony M said he will do anything possible to take needed equipment and the conversation to do a regular mobile delivery in the future continues between Adelante and NMTAP.

There have been many staff changes at DiverseIT. Mirian R noted that the number of computers they provide to consumers have increased. A brief discussion on computer training for individuals continues to be a challenge. We can explore options for NMTAP to be involved in standard computer training in groups. Andrea S inquired about advertisement for donations for both DME and computers. It was noted that most computer donations are from businesses, but they are accepted from individuals as well with specific requirements. It was suggested computers could also be donated at a DME donation drive. The donation drives restarting are in the planning phase, now with restrictions lifting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Robin G noted that a review of the Bylaws for this council is due and asked for volunteers from the council to review the Bylaws and Open Meeting Act resolution. Ricardo O, Brian S, and Andrea S volunteered. TJ Chester moved to accept this as the committee, German B seconded, and all council members approved by roll call vote. Tracy A will coordinate with this committee as a liaison.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

Robin G noted that DRNM has many individual cases regarding AT related to schools, housing, and medical health insurance. They also work to improve systems, including the work with NMTAP to increase accessibility in the Legislative Council. She applauded the head of the council, Raul Burciaga, who requested help versus waiting for official complaints. There was a brief discussion regarding lack of homeless resources and substandard living conditions especially in rural areas.

Brian S noted that in education, there is discussion to increase IDEA funding and improve transition services in the schools. The NM Public Education Department just hired a new coordinator for transition services to develop a more universal plan for the whole state. Tracy A added that NMTAP met with the Office of Special Education Ombudsman and plans to collaborate with them going forward.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Nat D stated she was happy about the legislative committee work, to have served as a council member and requested to be notified of NMTAP Council meetings. Tracy A will make sure she is notified.

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on October 17, 2022, at 1pm. It is pending as a hybrid (in-person and zoom) meeting in Albuquerque. The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm.

***Approved 11.7.22***