

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES  
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

**Videoconference Host:**

Governor's Council  
550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1230  
Anchorage, Alaska

**Meeting Date**

Wednesday, January 19, 2022  
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Attendees:**

Dean Paul, Co-Chair  
Director Duane Mayes  
Ric Nelson  
Jena Crafton

**Guests:**

Eric Gurley  
Marcus Sanders  
David Berube  
Ken Hamrick

**Staff:**

Jess Doherty  
Jamie Kokoszka  
Jackie Kim  
Myranda Walso

**CALL TO ORDER – 1:02 p.m.**  
**ROLL CALL – Quorum not established**

### **WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

Dean Paul welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked them for taking time out of their day to attend. Dean shared that the Empowerment Through Employment Job Fair has been scheduled for May.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES**

The approval of the agenda and meeting minutes was tabled due to a lack of quorum.

### **BUSINESS**

#### **Alaska Work Matters Task Force Update (AWMTF)**

Director Duane Mayes reported that the task force has wrapped up its scheduled meetings. He shared that the task force is working through the procurement process to hire a contractor to join the writing team creating the report. The goal was to complete the report in March/April of 2022, but the reality is to submit it at the end of June of 2022. After the report is finalized, the writing team will distill the recommendations and create a two-page executive summary.

Director Mayes reported that the plan for dissemination includes commissioners from the Departments of Labor (DOLWD), Health and Social Services (DHSS), and Education (DEED). The intent is to bring the report forward to the Governor and have a conversation with him regarding the recommendations. Director Mayes shared that Miranda Walso recommended bringing it forward to the legislature through various advisory boards. He noted that the report will need support throughout the process to ensure it doesn't get shelved.

### **BUSINESS RELATIONS UPDATE**

Marcus Sanders shared the following business relations update:

- Planning for the virtual job fair has begun.
- Meet and greets at State Chambers are underway.
- Plans to attend the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) forecast luncheon.

- Eric Gurley, from Access Alaska, will be speaking at the next JobX event

The floor was opened for questions.

**Q: Has the lack of people applying for jobs helped get employment for people with disabilities?**

*A: Director Mayes responded that the dynamic of how DVR communicates with employers looks different today than in the past. Employers are much more attentive to hearing the message when it comes to the employment of Alaskans with disabilities because they are struggling to fill positions.*

**Q: What does DVR hope to gain from networking with chambers, and have they seen any benefit from the outreach?**

*A: Marcus Sanders responded that the outreach is meant to promote the Department of Labor and DVR representing people with disabilities and providing information to the chamber members on DVR services. Making connections in the community and providing that information is valuable so communities understand DVR services and that DVR offers a pool of applicants for hire.*

**Q: Are the JobX events drawing new employers, or is it static?**

*A: Marcus Sanders responded that there is a long list of new employers, and he agreed to share the listserv for JobX.*

Director Mayes reported that DVR uses a dual-customer approach to providing services: the consumer with a disability and the employer. JobX is a program that elevates resources to do more to create the connections for successful employment relationships. Dean Paul remarked that there is a tremendous opportunity to increase awareness with employers because they have such a great need to hire people.

Eric Gurley and Director Mayes described the current work environments. They noted that staff in various occupations report being overwhelmed and fatigued, not just because of the job, but also external stressors like childcare, school, and community. Director Mayes noted that it is a challenging setting for people in general and is exacerbated for people with disabilities.

## **REVIEW WORK PLAN OBJECTIVES**

Jess Doherty directed the members' attention to the GANNT chart included in the meeting documents for review. She reported that the GANNT chart extends through September of 2022 and led the committee through a review as follows:

Employment First Implementation:

1. Collaborate with Alaska Work Matters Task Force
  - Discussion points:
    - Continuing the work, report expected in June.

2. Work with partners to participate in at least one employment activity annually
  - Discussion points:
    - Empowerment through Employment Conference
    - BEST virtual job fair (last week of March).
3. Collaborate with partners in at least one project or program that provides information, grants, and/or tools for self-employment across the life span.
  - Discussion points:
    - Staff partners with the Trust Micro-Enterprise Program/DD Mini-Grant.
4. Statewide stakeholder input on concerns and ideas on employment, one per year (due date TBD).
  - Discussion points:
    - Discuss topic specific to employment, and receive stakeholder input at a following meeting.

#### Traditional Transition:

1. Support and contribute to the development of a modified curriculum that is regionally, culturally, and linguistically relevant for rural transitions in three regions of the state. Support further development of modified curriculum that is regionally, culturally, and linguistically relevant for rural transitions.
  - Discussion points:
    - Staff working with SESA on rural transition to employment curriculum for working in place in the community.
    - Looking at a rollout in the near future for the new units.
2. Collaborate with partners on a plan for collecting baseline data on rural transitions, develop a pilot using the curriculum, and measure progress.
  - Discussion points:
    - Staff working with SESA.
3. Promote the pilot in at least one meeting with policymakers annually (state and national). *Clarify: One meeting at either state or national level.*
  - Discussion points:
    - Staff working with SESA.
4. Statewide stakeholder input on concerns and ideas on education for transitions to adulthood in rural Alaska one per year (due date TBD).
  - Discussion points:
    - Staff working with SESA.

Dean Paul opened the floor for input on the tasks.

Director Mayes suggested that when the AWMTF final report is released, they could bring the executive summary before the Employment Committee for review and

feedback. Myranda Walso noted that the timing might be such that the Employment Committee would have an opportunity to share the summary with the entire Council at the spring meeting.

Jess Doherty led a review of the Five-Year Plan and tasks related to the Beneficiary Employment and Engagement (BEE) funding from the Trust as follows:

Performance Measure 1: Technical Assistance:

- Provide technical and administrative assistance to the AMHTA program officer to assist with planning, development, and implementation of activities related to improved employment outcomes for Trust beneficiaries.
  - Provide support for completion of the strategic plan
    - Discussion points:
      - Staff only.

Performance Measure 2: Technical Assistance:

- Provide technical assistance support to Alaska Project SEARCH programs.
  - Serve as liaison to national Project SEARCH technical assistance as needed.
  - Provide timely technical assistance for sites as needs or issues arise.
    - Discussion points:
      - Staff only.

Performance Measure 3: Employment First and Policy:

- Work with the Departments of Education and Early Development, Labor & Workforce Development, Health and Social Services, and the Office of the Governor to implement the Employment First law.
  - Coordinate annual Employment First reporting to the Trust by DOLWD, DEED, and DHSS.
  - Continue development of Employment First Task Force, including policy solutions to beneficiary employment barriers.
  - Lead October National Disability Employment Awareness Month efforts, including social media and listserv distribution as well as Governor's proclamation request. (Completed)
    - Discussion points:
      - None.

Performance Measure 4: Public Awareness and Training:

- Coordinate training and outreach to business and industry organizations including the State Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, the Alaska Society for Human Resource Management, and other organizations on the benefits of and services/supports available in hiring qualified individuals with disabilities.
  - Support Business Employment Services Team (BEST) for collaborative employer engagement efforts.

- Explore mediums to hold the next Employment First Job Fair (2021) in collaboration with DOLWD, which could include the utilization of virtual format.
  - Discussion points:
    - None.

Performance Measure 5: Public Awareness and Training:

- Train state agencies, providers, beneficiaries, and the general public on employment services, supports, and resources for individuals with disabilities (including information on ABLE, DB 101, Empowerment Through Employment Guide, and the Transition Handbook).
  - Hold at least three employment empowerment tool presentations annually (in-person and/or statewide webinar).
  - Increase awareness of and impact of Transition Handbook and Empowerment Through Employment Guide through social media and listserv posts.
  - Increase awareness of the Alaska Disability Benefits 101 website through social media and listserv posting.
  - Increase awareness of the AK ABLE Act through social media and listserv posting.
  - Lead August 2020 #ABLEtoSave social media campaign (at least three ABLE posts per week during August) in addition to listserv posting.
    - Discussion points:
      - Tentative months were chosen to avoid overlap and allow time to review handbooks and create webinar trainings.
      - Looking at potentially doing a monthly series of webinars based on the four topics beginning April 2022.
      - Looking for input from the committee on activities.

Performance Measure 6: Public Awareness and Training:

- Provide support for self-advocacy leadership training by supporting employment-related content for an annual Self-Advocacy Summit and/or self-advocacy webinar
  - No description.

Performance Measure 7: Public Awareness & Training:

- Provide support for Supported Decision Making Agreement (SDMA) implementation and increase awareness of SDMA and associated resources across the state and across beneficiary categories.
  - Increase SDMA awareness with all beneficiary populations (including individuals with mental illness, Alzheimer’s and related dementia, as well as alcohol and substance misuse disorders) through trainings and resource outreach via social media and listserv as well as maintaining a relevant web presence.

- Disseminate SDMA guide for IEP teams to all school districts as well as to provider organizations and parents.
  - Discussion points:
    - Potentially scheduled for March or April.
    - Staff.

Performance Measure 8: Public Awareness and Training:

- Provide support for authentic rural transitions for students with disabilities.
  - Disseminate authentic rural transitions curriculum widely across the state to school districts.
  - Present and increase awareness of authentic rural transitions via Council website, listserv, and social media.
    - Discussion points:
      - Staff working with SESA.

Jess Doherty encouraged the committee to provide input on the tasks. Dean Paul opened the floor for comments, a summary of which follows:

Myranda Walso commented that the SDMAs are geared to adults, and she questioned the effort to work with school district IEP teams. Jess Doherty remarked that the intent is to use the outreach as a primer for individuals on an IEP so they understand there is an option after graduation.

Ric Nelson remarked that regarding Performance Measure 5, he was pleased to see that the activities separate the events for the Transition Handbook and the ETE handbook. He noted that it becomes complex when combined, even though they involve the same subject matter. He shared that he would be willing to assist with presentations.

Ric Nelson called attention to the ABLE Act task under Performance Measure 5 and suggested changing the delivery message because he senses the information is repetitive and the message is beginning to fade. He also recommended changing the qualification age to avoid a plateau in the number of participants.

Ric Nelson asked for an update on the usage of the Disability Benefits 101 tool (DB 101). Jess Doherty noted that the Council receives DB 101 updates monthly, and she agreed to pull that data for the committee. She remarked that there was a proposal to do a DB 101 training, and there is a tentative training scheduled in June as part of the webinar series. There is a link on the Governor’s Council website to the tool.

**DISCUSS COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION AND MISSION STATEMENT**

Dean Paul presented the committee goal, chair’s vision, and the mission statements as follows:



- Employment goal as stated in the Five-Year Plan is:
  - People with developmental disabilities will have access to supports, services, programs, and training necessary for successful transitions to adulthood, meaningful work experiences, integrated and competitive employment, as well as career development across the lifespan.

Myranda Walso noted that the committee descriptions match the goal statements from the Five-Year Plan verbatim. Each committee chair has been asked to develop their overview and ideas thoughts regarding the committee and focus areas. The intent is to have this information included on the Governor’s Council’s website committee pages and incorporated into communications and messaging regarding the upcoming committees and activities.

Dean Paul suggested changing “the lifespan” to “their lifespan” in the five-year employment goal. Myranda Walso noted that the language in the five-year work plan could not be amended.

- Committee Chair Vision Statement:
  - To help individuals with disabilities of all types gain meaningful, competitive, and integrated employment in their field and community of choice across their lifespan. Meaningful employment to them encompasses transportation, education, environment, and housing across Alaska.

Ric Nelson commented that the vision statement didn’t make sense to him. He is not sure how transportation, education, and environment fit within Employment Committee’s goals. He noted that you couldn’t change a work environment to make it meaningful.

- Mission Statement:
  - To bring awareness for the state and society to realize that employing an individual with disabilities is not a barrier preventing individuals contributing to the economy.

No comment was offered.

## **OPEN COMMENTS FROM THE GROUP**

Eric Gurley shared that Anne Applegate will participate in a panel discussion via Zoom as part of the Access Alaska Advocacy Series Tea Talks on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. as part two of the discussion of the DD Shared Vision and SDMA. There will be a discussion on the nuts and bolts and tools used for SDMA.

Ken Hamrick commented that often IEP teams aren’t aware of SDMAs and routinely recommend a guardianship. Providing awareness to school IEP teams will help in the transition process.



## **DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next Employment Committee meeting is scheduled for February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., subject to change.

## **GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting ended at 2:18 p.m.

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