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 22, 2024

625 Silver Ave SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102 Conference Room and Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** [In person]: Robin Garrison (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM); Brian Schobel (Consumer of AT); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT); Amanda Sofio - Proxy (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); Andrea Sterling (Consumer of AT) [via Zoom]: Karen Wiley (Consumer of AT); Eric Gonzales (Commission for the Blind); Dennis Campos (Department of Workforce Solutions/DWS); Pilar Murray (Family of Consumer of AT); **Absent:** Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT) excused; Julie Bisbee (Guardian Consumer of AT); Desiree Anaya – proxy for Valerie Griego (NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/NMDVR).

**NMTAP Staff Present**: [In person]: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Lisa McNiven (Deputy Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD); [via Zoom}: Jesse Armijo (NMTAP AT Coordinator)

**NMTAP Partners Present:** [via Zoom]: Anthony Montoya (Adelante Development Center/ADC); [In person]: Stephanie Dawson, FundAbility Manager, and Maria Otero, CFO (Adelante Development Center/ADC) **Absent:** none

**Guests:** David Haughawout

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Robin G, Council Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Meeting protocol was reviewed. It was established by roll call that a quorum was present. See attendance noted above.

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

Robin G asked for approval of the draft minutes from April 15, 2024. Karen W moved to approve the minutes, Brian S seconded, and all council members approved by roll call.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A noted the Hands-On Workshop of Assistive Technology (HOW-AT) at WNMU went well. There was lots of engagement from the audience, including therapists, school staff, WNMU staff and Dennis C brought some folks from DWS Veteran services. Tracy A and Jesse A provided training on AT for a Special Public Education Department (SPED) in the northern area. Many regional school staff and higher-level SPED staff, including the Deputy Secretary of Special Education, Dr. Cage, were present and enjoyed the hands-on experience of AT that can be utilized in educational settings. Jesse A also provided training at the Leading Educators through Alternative Paths (LEAP) 2024 conference. This is an area of NM education services which provides alternative comprehensive licensing for teachers to better serve students in NM. This was our first training with LEAP, therefore expanding the awareness of educational tools from a new angle for students with disabilities. NMTAP also did a presentation for the University of New Mexico Community Health Workers (CHWs). Those CHWs will be providing resource booths all around the state at a variety of community events to share our resources. We recorded that session for on-going training for new CHWs to continue the outreach on our services. We also provided outreach and training for the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) again. We continue to engage in a relationship with the Development Disabilities Services Department (DDSD) in their Enabling Tech initiative and offer non-biased information on AT. When AT vendors show persons their specific equipment, there is a real or potential bias toward their own product. We demonstrate and train on many vendors’ equipment, therefore no bias to purchase one or the other.

As is often brought up in these council meetings, the federal grant funds only stretch so far and the ability to purchase new AT is needed. To potentially change budgeting to allow for the purchase of equipment, both Satellite offices with Western New Mexico University (WNMU) and Northeast Regional Education Cooperative (NEREC) are no longer open. The funds for those contracts will be redistributed in the NMTAP budget as needed. Our Assistive Technology Conference (ATC24) has been postponed from the standard September timeframe due to a change in our fiscal partner. We also have a new collaborative effort with the Department of Cultural Affairs Library which includes training on built-in accessibility and computer ergonomics. The services for individuals with disabilities continue alongside all these events, which are vital.

The council requested that NMTAP staff assist them in gathering information to best present to the GCD Commission meeting next month regarding the needs identified for AT statewide. We have provided this requested information to the Executive Committee at their meeting to compile information for needed AT services statewide.

There was discussion from the council members regarding the closure of Satellite Offices. Dennis C inquired about the disposition of AT equipment at WNMU. The plan is to return appropriate equipment to our main office to still be available to the southwest area of the state. Some equipment will be offered to WNMU, area agencies, and schools. The offer was extended to Dennis C for veterans. Brian S inquired about the timeline for the closures and the plan is to do it soon around the needs of those partners. Both of those areas, along with all quarters of the state will continue to be served by the main NMTAP office.

Lisa M reported some information about the NMTAP budget for state FY25, which started 7/1/24. LM agreed to send this to all council members and Tracy A noted that it should be considered a best projection, and some things may change in areas. Lisa M noted that the budget includes three areas.

1. Personnel initial budget is $344,300 and an additional $10,000 is needed for a 3% increase in pay and the insurance premiums for all NMTAP staff. This results in a negative $8,231.00 balance which will be covered with some funds from the WNMU and NEREC closures.
2. Contractual services initial budget is $95,000, including the $42,000 for Back in Use/DiverseIT, which the contract and purchase order have been set up. The $50,000 that was originally for the satellite offices will be redistributed with about $9000 going toward the personnel shortage, $2,450.00 for website support, and the remaining amount may be used for new AT or other needs. Lisa M shared that GCD has earmarked $50,000 (and up to $60,000) from the GCD fund balance to purchase new AT. Therefore, money available from the closure of the satellite offices will be utilized, after the GCD funds, for AT. Council members thanked GCD for the money which will go toward the purchase of new AT.
3. Other costs for the initial budget include rent, vehicle gas and maintenance, printing, and travel. The largest expense in other costs is $64,585.29 for rent, which NMTAP federal funds will cover $45,098.83 and GCD will cover $22,486.43. GCD paying part of the rent is justified since Lisa M utilizes an office in the NMTAP location at least two times a week. GCD will be looking for other office space options to save money. It would be ideally more than 3000 square feet, accessible to public transportation, with good internet reception, space for a mock smart home set-up, more private spaces for consumer services, individual offices for staff, a bathroom with a changing table, and centrally located in Albuquerque. If anyone becomes aware of possible space, please let Lisa M know. Lisa M continued to share line items in other costs. Travel is budgeted for $2000.00 for in-state travel and lodging, there is no out-of-state travel budgeted. The probability of an increase in travel with the closures of the satellite offices was discussed. Lisa M said that there is a possibility of partnering travel with other GCD programs when it’s feasible or using some of the available funds out of contracts for increased travel. It was noted that two primary annual conferences important for NMTAP, the National Training Workshop for AgrAbility and the AT Leadership Symposium are being held in New Mexico, reducing travel expenses.

The last financial update is regarding the separate federal grant for the Digital Divide Coordinator project. There is roughly $37,000.00 remaining for FY25. Lisa M has asked Alice Shriver to be on standby because a final budget amount needs to be confirmed, and a new contract completed. It was noted that Alice S has done a wonderful job through her contract that ended 6/30/24. GCD plans to ask for a No Cost Extension to spend the full grant amount after the 9/30/24 deadline.

The last notations from Lisa M were that there was an amendment to the contract with ADC for FundAbility which is being reviewed by the GCD attorney. Signatures on the contract are expected to be done soon, and all the funds for the financial loans have been transferred to Adelante. The request for funding from Representative Heinrich was not approved.

**FINANCIAL LOAN (FundAbility NM) UPDATE:**

Stephanie D reported that the funds have all been transferred and their auditors have been engaged to review the funds at the time of the transfer. She has been working with their marketing department for the website and print materials. She brought FundAbility business cards if anyone wants some. They are currently drafting the policies and recruiting members for the application review council. It is unknown what the amendment entails for the contract between GCD and ADC. Maria O stated she is scheduled to meet with Stan Ross, Director of GCD, in early August and hopes to have an update at that time.

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

Anthony M reported that they continue to provide a steady average of about 195 Durable Medical Equipment devices. There continues to be a higher need for wheelchairs than are donated. They have given about 10 motorized wheelchairs or scooters to individuals with disabilities in this last quarter. Sometimes the equipment is not working, but the need for equipment is always higher than what is donated. The recipients express how the equipment is life-changing, and he is happy to share the quarterly reports with the council members. Possible options to provide equipment beyond the primary metro area is part of an on-going discussion with Tracy A, however it is noted that it is hard to meet the needs in the metro area with the number of donations. We will continue to explore ways to better serve the rural areas. Council members noted the great job they are doing in the Reutilization part of the NMTAP program. Anthony M stated they are pleased to have the purchase order from GCD in time to invoice for services at the start of this fiscal year. He noted that they continue to provide refurbished computers regularly.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Robin G, noted council members have provided the Executive Committee with feedback about the needs of persons with disabilities regarding AT statewide, as requested. The Executive Committee plans to compile information from the NMTAP Advisory Council to inform and advise the GCD Administration and Commission. Their next meeting is on August 23, 2024. The NMTAP staff will provide a short presentation as an agenda item and the council members have been invited to speak during the public comments. One of the primary AT concerns repeatedly discussed in the NMTAP quarterly meetings is the challenge to increase all services to the rural areas. The only recourse is to have an increase in funding to re-establish Satellite offices, increase staff travel, purchase new AT, etc. The Executive Committee asked Tracy A to provide ideal and reasonable estimates of additional money needed in the budget. GCD staff are formulating their budget requests for all GCD programs that will be approved by the Commission at their next meeting. This means information needs to be shared with the Commissioners and GCD administrative staff prior to August 23rd. Since Commissioner emails are not publicly available, Lisa M said she would ask Stan Ross, GCD Director, if they can be provided to the NMTAP Council chair to send information and advice prior to the meeting. It was noted that Commissioners may have other ideas of where additional funding can come from and that most other AT Programs across the United States and Territories rely on additional state funds, contract, and grants funds to leverage their federal grant funding. All council members are encouraged to share their compliments or concerns during the public comments at the GCD Commission meeting. This is anticipated to be a hybrid meeting held in Santa Fe and on Zoom. Meeting information can be found on the GCD website for August 23, 2024.

It was clarified that the role of the NMTAP Advisory Council is “to provide consumer-responsive, consumer-driven advice to the State [GCD] for, planning of, implementation of, and evaluation of the activities carried out through the grant”, per the federal AT Act statute. The role of the GCD Commission is to create the plan to “establish and maintain a comprehensive statewide program designed to encourage and promote attention to the concerns of education and employment of individuals with disabilities in this state”, according to the GCD statute’s defining rules. Council members stated that the NMTAP services provided are wonderful and necessary, however an increase in more rural outreach and new AT would be needed to serve more people.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

Robin G noted that DRNM is a bit understaffed at this point but continues to provide their services. A recent issue noted is that persons who are deafblind within the Adult Protective Services (APS) were not provided with tactile interpreters. DRNM, in collaboration with the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will be providing training to all staff with APS on the importance of AT, meeting the needs of their clients, and how to work with partners to support consumers with disabilities. This will be done on August 15, 2024, and similar training will be provided to other Aging and Long-term Services staff in the future. Tracy A noted that an educational session on AT for deafblind will be included in our next AT Conference as we try to address all disability challenges as much as possible.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Tracy A thanked everyone for the birthday wishes and potluck lunch. Karen W shared a bit about the services and economic challenges in the Ruidoso area due to the fires and flooding. Lisa M added that there is a Disability Pride movement in New Mexico. The Santa Fe Mayor’s Committee on Disability hosted an event on July 13, 2024, and there is another event on Saturday July 27, 2024, with additional ones around the state. Brian S noted he has planned to attend the NM Public Education Department’s celebration with information about special education on July 23, 2024, from 3-4pm in Santa Fe and it is open to the public.

**ADJOURN:**

It was noted that council leadership will be elected, voting on the Bylaws update and Open Meetings Act Resolution at the October meeting. The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on **October 21, 2024, from 1pm – 3pm** with a location in Santa Fe TBD with a Zoom option. The passionate and active engagement of this council is appreciated. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.

***Approved 10.21.24***