

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR)

December 1, 2021

Meeting Held Via ZOOM and DHS Hillview Plaza/Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vicki Stewart, Jennifer Trenhaile, Jonathan Englund, Eric Weiss, Cole Uecker, Beth Schiltz, Joe Vetch, Brooke Lusk, Chris Olson, Pete Bullene, Brad Konechne, Lisa Merchen and Kevin Barber. **MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jolleen Laverdure and Bill McEntaffer. **OTHERS PRESENT:** Bernie Grimme, Ronda Lynch, Katie Gran, Jordan Trumbo, Jessica Sehnert, Kim Ludwig, Shawnie Rechtenbaugh, Tom Martinec, Jimmy Warne, Tammy Keller, Wayne Weston, Roberta Ecoffey, Trina Lone Hill, Brittany Gordan, John Johnson, and Colette Wagoner. Interpreters were Julie Paluch and Rick Norris.

OPENING ACTIONS: Cole Uecker, BVR Chairperson called the meeting to order. Housekeeping items/Voting Process: Cole noted a few housekeeping items and reviewed the voting process. He stated that any action item(s) will require voting by roll call, staff will review the list of voting members and each member will be asked for their reply of yes, no, or abstain. Approval of Agenda: Cole asked if there were any changes/additions to the agenda. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA – MADE (M), SECONDED (S) AND CARRIED (C).** YEAS: Vicki, Beth, Lisa, Joe, Jonathan, Brad, Brooke, Kevin, and Chris. NAYS: None. Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes: Cole called for changes/additions to the September 9th meeting minutes and the November 10 Executive Committee meeting minutes, **MOTION TO APPROVE BOTH SETS OF MINUTES (SEPTEMBER 9TH MEETING MINUTES AND NOVEMBER 10TH MEETING MINUTES), MSC.** YEAS: Vicki, Beth, Lisa, Joe, Jonathan, Brad, Brooke, Kevin, and Chris. NAYS: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Cole invited announcements of any kind and there were none.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment provided at this time. (A conference room was reserved for anyone wanting to attend the virtual meeting, no one was present).

GREETINGS & DHS UPDATE: Cole turned the meeting over to Eric. Eric spoke about his time working for the Department of Human Services and working with Shawnie Rechtenbaugh, Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary and Tom Martinec, Deputy Secretary. He asked for all present to introduce themselves, and if the person was a board member to please include their role on the Board. Shawnie introduced herself indicating she has been with the DHS for three years. She spoke to the Department's vision of being of service and welcomed comment/feedback regarding ways to do better, improve services, innovations, and/or how to be more supportive of individuals with disabilities. She invited input on how to improve outreach to individuals

with disabilities. She noted that the Governor would challenge the Board as well as other boards/councils to be innovative; to explore ways to improve services statewide. She extended a thank you to each member noting they each serve in a volunteer capacity, speaking to the commitment of time (attending meetings, related travel). Each member brings a unique perspective to board related business. Tom Martinec spoke next stating he has been with the Department for two years. He stated he appreciates being invited and he is wanting to learn more about the Board and the role they have with the Division and the Department. He also thanked members for their service and commitment of time.

DIVISION DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS: Eric thanked members again for their service to the Board. Eric spoke to hosting meetings via Zoom and feels this format is working well, noting that we have experimented with a hybrid meeting. He is open to exploring other meeting formats as long as they are accessible to anyone. Quarterly Data Report: The most recent report reflects data collected through July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2021. Eric spoke to the categories of total applications, eligibilities, and the closed case data. Division staff are conducting more outreach trying to get information out to all that may be eligible for services. Division Budget: COVID has impacted the budget in terms of the Supported Employment (SE) funds. Approximately \$100,000 in SE funds were relinquished. SE funds have more restrictions placed on how funds are utilized. The Division did not request regular case service funds (110 funds) through the reallocation process nor were funds relinquished. Expenditures are up slightly this quarter when compared to this same time period last year. Goals/Performance Measures: Eric explained that the Department presented new performance metrics to the legislative committee. One goal is to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities from 52.1% to 54% within the next 5 years. South Dakota has always been in the top five (or higher) in the nation in this category. Strategic planning will outline activities to include outreach initiatives. The Division is looking forward to working with the Department's Communications Officer, a newly filled position, to explore outreach efforts (sharing success stories, working with referral sources, developing social media). The Division is also looking at training materials currently available and will be updating this information. This includes exploring how to best utilize technology with either providing training or having access to it. This process also includes the review of fiscal policies and the need for updates. Cole spoke to the role of the Board and offered assistance in terms of policy review or providing feedback.

TRANSITION SERVICES FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS IN SOUTH DAKOTA: Eric introduced Jimmy Warne to members noting that he is a long-term advocate for Native Americans in the state. Jimmy is from South Dakotan, born on the Pine Ridge reservation and now lives in California. Jimmy works for the SD Center for Disabilities as the Community Engagement Director. Jimmy leads the Oyate' Circle

which is a resource, education and outreach training effort for Native Americans and other underserved populations in South Dakota. Oyate' Circle partners with the Sinte Gleska University on the Rosebud Reservation to provide training and develop new curriculum for a human services degree specialization that addresses disability. Oyate' Circle encompasses the knowledge and strength of Tribal members, and partners with Tribal VR, Tribal colleges and other Native American members and service providers. Members were reminded that 15% of VR funds should target students and youth with disabilities of transition age. Activities include Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave, a few other Transition Services Liaison Project activities as well as some VR counselor time. Jimmy noted that some states struggle with targeting the 15% expenditure rate of funds for students/youth with disabilities. Jimmy spoke to the Native American young population and that it has grown significantly over the past decade, which includes the increasing number of students with disability, acquiring disability and long-term impact of COVID. This ties in with the need to conduct better outreach and provision of services. Jimmy introduced several partners involved with the Oyate' Circle. Wayne Weston, who resides in Rapid City and travels to very small rural Tribal communities providing outreach. Burdette Clifford, Director of the Sinte Gleska University Sicangu Vocational Rehabilitation Program on the Rosebud Reservation was mentioned but he was not available for today's meeting. However, several staff members, Brittany Gordan and Tammy Keller were available. The impact of COVID was discussed and the additional restrictions utilized with a number of Tribal communities (travel restrictions, proof of vaccination). Jimmy turned to Trina Lone Hill who works with the Lakota Tech High School, who is the executive assistant for Dr. Fairbanks, Superintendent of Oglala Lakota County School District (not available today). Trina provided information about Lakota Tech; she read through a report to the school board, mission statement, frustrations with use of technology, needed therapy appointments for students, 46 students on IEPs who have dropped out of school which impacts school budget (decrease of \$400,000 in Special Education funding), outreach to students to return to school/re-enroll. Lakota Tech is the first public high school established on a Native American reservation in South Dakota. There is a long waiting list to get into this school and the need to identify additional funding to support growth of the school. Wayne Weston spoke to transition services and what would work best in Indian Country. One priority is building better tribal relationships with state agencies. Jimmy and Wayne spoke to the challenges i.e., jurisdiction, obtaining tribal approval for research, sovereignty and cultural issues which vary for each Tribal reservation. Jimmy shared the website for Lakota Tech <https://www.olcsd.com/o/lakota-tech> and various information. Trina noted that in May there were 24 graduates of the Lakota Tech and some of the students now work for the school district. This path provides a cultural approach with vocational preparedness. The Lakota National Invitation (LNI) will be held in Rapid City and provides opportunity for programs to host booths and share information with many attendees. Members were invited to contact any of these staff members with any questions.

UPDATE ON THE SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES (AIVRS) PROGRAMS. Jimmy introduced Roberta Ecoffey and Nadine Blue Bird (?) from the Oglala Sioux Tribe Vocational Rehabilitation (OSTVR) Program from Pine Ridge. It was explained that the Oglala Sioux Tribe VR offices are still closed to the public and the majority of work is being conducted via phone. The OSTVR program was recently refunded for 5 years. Jimmy noted that there are 6 American Indian VR programs in South Dakota. The AIVRS are exploring how to host summer transition events and needing to partner with the state agencies. Eric noted the request for funding process that the Division utilizes to support these types of events. John Johnson was introduced, he works for the Center for Disabilities, as the Research and Development Director. John spoke to their work and looking at ways to improve transition services for students with disabilities. He spoke to teacher training, preparing teachers in the area of Special Education and accommodating students with disabilities in a culturally appropriate manner. John invited feedback regarding how all students with disabilities have access to transition services, pre-employment, and independent living skills training. Wayne spoke to work through the Oyate' Circle and that it has broadened outreach to Tribal members and elders, veterans, emergency management, law enforcement, other emergency responders, treatment centers, schools, state agencies. Wayne attempts to identify and attend unique opportunities to speak about disability related issues with native and non-native populations. On behalf of all Jimmy's guests, Jimmy extended a thank you for the invitation to attend and share information on transition services and the Tribal VR programs and that he is very hopeful for continuing and evolving dialogue.

LUNCH BREAK

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION RAPID CITY DISTRICT OFFICE OVERVIEW: Ronda Lynch, Rapid City District Supervisor was introduced. Ronda has worked for the Division since 2005. The main office is located in Rapid City and a satellite office is located in Spearfish. This office serves 11 counties, 22 public schools and 7 Tribal schools. There are a total of 12 staff and the Rapid City office is co-located with the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (2 counselors, 1 rehabilitation teacher), and one Division of Developmental Disabilities staff member. There are two benefits specialists co-located with this office. Ronda highlighted the partner agencies this office works with and the exploration and use of technology. She talked about Department of Labor and Regulation's 'Prep Program' which provides assistance to those working to complete their GED i.e., housing/food/transportation assistance. This program recently expanded and now works with adults. They work with the One Heart Program, a shelter which provides services for those with issues related to substance abuse, employment, housing. It is housed in the National American University building. There are 12 students with disabilities enrolled in Project SEARCH at host sites in

Rapid City, Sturgis, and Spearfish. Work with Project Skills is continuing but more slowly due to pandemic issues. Challenges for the Rapid City office include transportation, homelessness, cost of affordable/available housing, year-round employment, and a high transient population. She talked about new businesses coming to Belle Fourche (Ramen Noodle Factory) and Rapid City (battery factory). These businesses could need up to 1,000 employees. Other challenges for this office include the local mental health center eliminating its vocational department and the need for competitive employment outcomes and individuals working at minimum wage or higher. There were no questions. Cole thanked Ronda for her time and sharing information with the Board.

VR PROGRAM INITIATIVES: Bernie spoke to the initiative seeking Employment Specialist Coordinator positions. This initiative sought four positions to meet the needs of consumers/employers in very rural areas. The primary responsibility is obtaining competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. The employment specialist coordinators will be located in Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City and Yankton and the positions are all filled or will be in a few days. The employment specialists will assist consumers to prepare for and find employment; conduct outreach to businesses and employers; and coordinate provider meetings and trainings.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities is in the process of revising policies, and this will impact services and all community service providers. Bernie reminded members of a specific change incorporated a few years ago regarding conflict free case management. An individual served by a CSP would have a case manager assigned from another agency to avoid a conflict of interest. Referrals will now involve case managers, taking a primary role of making referrals to VR. Case managers will be more involved with the VR application, eligibility process and plan development.

Bernie spoke to some necessary changes needing to be incorporated within the VR system impacting the maintenance of consumer information within the Social Security System. Changes are required to ensure the security and safety of consumer information which includes the security of related facilities. Again, any individual receiving social security benefits is presumed eligible for VR services. This means the Division must develop internal procedures and identify who has access to such information (i.e., mainframe information). Bernie noted that a lot of this rests on the state's IT department.

Fall Conference. Bernie reported that the 2021 Fall Conference had 240 paid registrants to include 22 DHS board/council members. An evaluation was disseminated to all attendees following the conference. Bernie shared a summary of the evaluation results which included sessions offered, the average rating, and the estimated number of attendees at each session. Overall, the Division is fairly pleased with the ratings with

the sessions/speakers. Bernie highlighted that Disability Rights SD was a co-sponsor of the Oyate' Circle preconference session and that this was appreciated. There were vendors available the middle day. Bernie reviewed information on conference attendees and one noted item was that 30% of attendees were first time attendees. The 2022 Fall Conference will be held in Sioux Falls on October 11-13, 2022, at the Best Western Ramkota and a planning committee is in place already to identify training needs, speakers, etc.

Bernie turned it over to Jordan Trumbo. Jordan's first topic was provider training. She referenced the contract with Griffin-Hammis and Associates and finishing the first year. Year two of the contract is being finalized and routed for signatures. The contract is geared towards provision of provider training, increasing certification of providers, and providing training on customized employment. She reviewed a listing of upcoming provider trainings, supervisor and leadership training, as well as new topics of business engagement and ethics training. Quality Assurance/expansion of the case file review process. The Division will incorporate a quarterly targeted review of cases with the intent of reviewing a smaller number of cases to make it more manageable for field staff conducting the review. This will allow feedback for staff in addition to providing policy clarification or training to staff in a timelier manner to help reduce errors. Customized Employment (CE) Establishment Grant: Jordan has received feedback from providers and agencies that it is very difficult to provide time intensive CE services while performing other duties. An RFP was developed in response to these types of comments and will be utilized to support providers financially. This will support getting dedicated staff in these types of positions. One proposal was received to date. Jordan noted follow-up comments received from providers/agencies about the lack of responses to the RFP. Providers indicated that with staff shortages/turnover and trying to recruit for positions it is very difficult at this time. Monthly Newsletter: Jordan developed a monthly newsletter (started in January 2021) to disseminate information about the case management system and policy changes. She includes resources and information for staff to utilize in their day-to-day work.

Katie Gran: Request for Proposals for Expanding Transition Services: DRS published a Request for Proposals (RFP) on November 1, 2021. The purpose of this RFP is to help with start-up costs for establishing or expanding transition programs for students with disabilities between the ages of 18-21. Eligible entities include SD School Districts and/or Educational Cooperatives. The programs will focus on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students who have finished educational credits but need support for learning a variety of life skills, i.e., employment and independent living skills. Students are still eligible for services through an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Three letters of intent were submitted, and proposals are due no later than December 20, 2021. The Division assisted with four establishment grants the 2020-2021 school year and currently has four contracts again this school year (2 with East

Dakota Educational Cooperative, Harrisburg School District, and Mitchell School District). The Huron School District did not have enough students to participate so the contract is on hold and can start up again next school year if they get enough students.

2022 Summer Pre-Employment Transition Services Call for Proposals: DRS and Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) have offered funding opportunities since 2016 to host summer sessions offering Pre-ETS training for students with disabilities. DRS and SBVI will again provide funding opportunities. DRS and SBVI will support funding summer training initiatives that focus on the following areas: job exploration activities; workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; instruction in self-advocacy; post-secondary training/college exploration, preparation, and planning services (optional); and information about VR services and other programs available to assist individuals with disabilities. Proposals will be accepted from entities interested in this opportunity starting November 29, through the deadline of February 11, 2022.

Kim Ludwig, Business Specialist: Trainings to Businesses: DRS, Business Resource Network (BRN), and the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills (WDBNH) host statewide WINDMILLS trainings. These interactive trainings assist employment professionals/employers to become more inclusive. There are 12 curriculums addressing various disability-related topics. Activities she has been working on or conducted:

- Session offered during the 2021 Fall Conference.
- Conversation and meetings with Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) about conducting WINDMILLS trainings.
- Training provided in November to Aspire, community support provider staff including their human resources staff and supervisors. Training included defining disabilities, Americans with Disabilities Act, Title I (employment provisions), the dos and don'ts' of interview questions, and reasonable accommodations.
- A virtual training will be held on December 21st offering a repeat session from the August training which participants completed a questionnaire regarding their knowledge about disabilities and followed by a large group discussion. This session will focus on covering the remaining questions that weren't covered. Only participants that attended the first training will be invited.
- A virtual training will be held on January 18th that will focus on demonstrating how facts become distorted through rumors and illustrate how inaccurate information can affect employment and return to work of people with disabilities.

Business Outreach: A meeting was held with Larry Klipfel Director of Communications & Community Programming with the City of Harrisburg. The City established a Disability Awareness Commission and was seeking information and resources

regarding disability topics; and exploring partnering with the Division, BRN, and the local VR office in Sioux Falls. This relationship will assist BRN with becoming acquainted with the Harrisburg Chamber of Commerce and to facilitate outreach to businesses in this area. A meeting was also held with the Mitchell Area Development Corporation and Chamber staff. This familiarized their staff with the VR services and how other partners, i.e., Department of Labor and Regulation, Career Connections/LifeQuest work together. Discussion included community resources, workforce needs and other opportunities in this area. Mitchell VR office will become more involved with the Mitchell Area Development Corporation and Chamber for business outreach opportunities. Pete expressed his appreciation for this information and asked about receiving a summarized snapshot of contacts/resources shared for activities that Kim has been involved with, i.e., presentations, referrals, companies contacted. Kim was willing to work on something to share with members. Cole inquired about the number of contacts increasing, whether more businesses are pursuing the Division (VR services) in light of COVID/staff shortages. Kim and Eric both provided comments that the Division has been connecting with a number of businesses with many vacancies, however the Division does not have the pool to draw from to meet the needs of so many employers. Vicki noted how overwhelmed employers are and providing any assistance is appreciated i.e., sharing of job announcements.

COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Bernie explained that the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment is outlined in the Rehabilitation Act as a requirement for both DRS and SBVI. Goals and strategies have been outlined for years 2020 – 2022 and now the Division is called to develop new goals/strategies for program years 2023-2025. Bernie outlined the federal requirements for refreshing and identifying needs/strategies for persons with disabilities; persons with the most significant disabilities, minority groups, unserved and underserved populations, those served through other components of the work force system, etc. Bernie spoke to the steps of how the CSNA is planned and designed and what was done years ago. The focus has changed federally which allows VR agencies to review various information/reports/surveys/conversations with key partners in order to gather information for the needs assessment. The Division will contract with Russell Thelin, Known Way Consulting, to assist with developing the CSNA. An executive team will be developed involving the boards' chairpersons as well as Division staff with responsibilities of providing feedback regarding data collection, and survey development. Bernie reviewed the current goals of the Division's State Plan and noted that the State Plan is located on the Division's website if members wanted to review additional information. Bernie noted the discrepancy with the timeframes of the Unified State Plan, a four-year plan and the CSNA is on a three-year cycle. This means the Division and the Board need to consider the timelines and activities in order to meet CSNA requirements.

STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL: Eric reminded members that he serves on the SILC as an appointed member and an update is provided to the Board on a quarterly basis. The Rehabilitation Act (Act) requires each state to have a SILC in order to receive federal funds to support independent living services. The Act outlines the need for the SILC to develop a State Plan for Independent Living in addition to language of coordinating activities with other entities such as the BVR and Council on Developmental Disabilities. The SILC last met on September 22 via Zoom and agenda items included the review/monitoring of the SPIL goals/objectives and indicators, CIL quarterly reports, program reviews, Division of SBVI and SBVI Board and BVR updates, and staff report. An update was provided by Dan Rounds on the Transition Services Liaison Project and the 2021 Youth Leadership Forum. The SILC presented the Champion of Independent Living Services Award to Helen Hartmann during the September meeting. Helen was selected for this award because of her years of service and commitment to advocacy. She was involved with assisting individuals with vision loss, distributing and organizing low vision items thru the Gadgetry program and for her years of service as volunteer peer support leader. The next meeting will be held virtually on December 15th. Information can be found regarding the SILC on the Boards/Commission's portal located at: <https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov>

DIVISION'S YEAR END REPORT: Jessica Sehnert, Quality Assurance and Support Specialist, was available to speak to the Division's 2021 Data Report. This report was forwarded to members prior to the meeting. Jessica highlighted information from the report as well as compared data with last year's information. Applications were down in Fiscal Year 2021 when compared to FY 2020; the average age of applicants is 32.6 years of age; there was a small increase in the applicant age group of those 25 and younger with a decrease in all other age group categories. The top three barriers to employment have not changed for individuals with disabilities when comparing this information to the previous year. The three barriers were low-income, long-term unemployment and basic skill/low level of literacy. She reviewed information about those identified eligible for services to include school attendance and highest grade level completed. Closure type information included unsuccessful closures, success rate and the number of applicants found ineligible for services. Unsuccessful closures can include those no longer interested in services as well as those that are unable to locate as the two highest reasons. In looking at employment occupations there were increases in professional, paraprofessional, and technical positions as well as production, construction, and material handling. Decreases were in the areas of clerical and administrative support sales and related services. In looking at the average employment related data, the information for FY21 reflects an increase in average weekly hours and wage. She reviewed information for primary support and medical insurance at time of application vs. at time of closure. Youth with disabilities

information was shared noting application by age group and common services provided to youth. The number of participants enrolled with Project Skills and Project SEARCH (per site) were outlined. Additional information was provided for payment by vendor type, payment to Community Support Providers, Ticket to Work payments, and consumer satisfaction survey results to include the new category of results for those closed unsuccessful. There were no questions for Jessica at this time.

STAFF UPDATE: Board's Annual Report: Staff reported that a draft copy of the annual report was disseminated to members prior to the meeting. This report is submitted to the Governor and RSA Commissioner prior to the end of December. The report contains highlights of board activity and information from the Board meetings held December 2020, March 2021, June 2021, and September 2021. The report also highlights accomplishments of the Division information was utilized from the 2021 Data Report that Jessica spoke too earlier. Board staff asked for all edits by December 20th, in order to final the report and submit it by the due date. There was a **MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT REPORT AS DISSEMINATED, MSC.** YEAS: Vicki, Beth, Lisa, Joe, Brad, Peter, Kevin, and Chris. NAYS: None.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM): Staff reported that the 2021 events concluded, and work is being done to gather and finalize bills. Activities were conducted in 11 of the 12 communities; Watertown was not able to carry out their event due to complications caused by illness/death/COVID. Some events were held virtually and some were held in person. A debriefing meeting will be held on December 20th which is open to members if interested in listening to the dialogue. The debriefing will allow representatives from the local planning committees to speak to the event(s), what worked well/what did not, if there were things the planners could change or do differently, what would this entail/or how would it look, what has worked well to engage employers or providers, and what challenges have they faced. The debriefing provides an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and exchange ideas to prepare for future events. There were approximately 470 attendees at the events in addition to over 1,000 students who attended school related functions in Volga, Madison, and Sisseton. The Request for Funding proposals will be disseminated prior to the end of December with a due date of early February. Staff spoke to the NDEAM Review Committee, comprising members of the BVR, SILC and B/SBVI. Volunteer review committee members will consist of: BVR/ Lisa, Beth, and Joe; SILC/CJ, Patty, Mark S and Catherine; B/SBVI will include Nichole Nelson and Chelle Hart.

Governor's Awards: Staff explained that Eric, Kim, and Colette have had continued conversations since the awards ceremony was held in October. A recommendation being offered for consideration involves the Employer Category. Currently, there are three employer categories: 1) Small/less than 50 employees, private, non-government; 2) large/more than 50 employees, private, non-government; and 3) Other – includes

government (local, county, state, federal) or educational (school, university, or technical institute). In reviewing the number of received nominations since 2015, there have been fewer nominations received especially in the Other/Employer award category. The recommendation is to remove the "Other" category and have nominations incorporated into the other two remaining categories of small and large employers. If there is consensus to move forward with this recommendation, the two nomination forms would be updated, and the 2022 solicitation would reflect the changes. Input is also being sought from the SILC and Board of SBVI regarding possible changes. Eric spoke to reviewing the awards and how to improve things each year. He noted the ability to nominate an employer to either the small or large category and not lose nominees. He also mentioned the possibility of removing another category due to few nominations being received as well. The recommendation would be to remove the Outstanding Individual with a Disability award category and try to incorporate nominees under the Distinguished Service Award category. Vicki asked questions about an older category and recognizing the work/volunteer of an identified person. This award category was renamed the Outstanding Individual with a Disability a few years ago. There was mention of the Distinguished Service award and the timespan referenced on the nomination form of contributions spanning 10 or more years. Feedback is also being sought from the SILC and B/SBVI. A suggestion was made to convene a meeting with the representatives of the review committee to discuss it in further detail. Eric brought up another possible change of inviting the top three award finalists for each category and announce the winner during the ceremony. He noted that the ceremony is well done with very few glitches but wanting more exposure of the individuals and employers being recognized. Some concerns were raised regarding the reaction of the finalists if not picked and need for travel to the event. Some members liked the idea of having more than one individual or employer being recognized at the same time and generating interest in more communities. For those being nominated but not picked as the winner it provides recognition for their work/efforts. A suggestion was made that if a change is made with the presentation of the awards that all finalists would know who the winner would be and who the two finalists would be so there are no surprises/emotional reactions when the winner was announced.

In light of time and continuing the conversation, it was recommended that these proposed changes be brought back to the full review committee for discussion and finalization. Again, the three points brought up for consideration: 1) remove the "Other" Employer award category/incorporate employer nominees into the Small and Large Employer categories; 2) remove the Outstanding Individual with a Disability category, incorporate nominations into the Distinguished Service Award category; 3) and changes to the presentation of the award to the winner and inviting finalists from each category to the ceremony. Staff reviewed the Governor's Awards Review Committee:

BVR/Vicki, Jolleen, Joe; SILC/CJ, Patty, Mark S and Catherine; and B/SBVI/Cole, Ryan, and Tammy Francis.

Budget: A copy of the most recent budget was forwarded to the members prior to the meeting. The budget reflects expenditures through the end of October. Expenditures reflect the majority of NDEAM expenditures as well as expenditures for the 2021 Governor's Awards Ceremony. It was noted that member and staff travel related to the 2021 Fall Conference are not reflected in this report, as these will show up during the month of November. Budget line items reflect expenditures to date for Board member travel, meeting expenses, strategic planning, and Board staff travel. There were no questions regarding the budget.

OTHER BUSINESS: There was no other business.

CLOSING ACTIONS: Cole thanked members for attending today and noted the extra time committed to the meeting. Future Agenda Items: State Plan related items to include the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Schedule Next Meeting: Staff will disseminate a doodle poll with possible dates to members to identify a date that works for the majority of members. Adjournment: **MOTION TO ADJORN THE MEETING, MSC.** YEAS: Vicki, Beth, Lisa, Joe, Brad, Peter, Kevin, and Chris. NAYS: None.