

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**Employment Committee Meeting Minutes**  
February 27, 2018

**Members Present**

Nikki Jeffords\*  
Terell Welch\*  
Kevin Foster\*  
Tanner Gers\*  
Jordan Moon\*  
Bea Shapiro\*

**Members Absent**

Jim Strohacker

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers, Council Liaison  
\*Teleconferenced

**Guests Absent**

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Nikki Jeffords called the meeting to order at 9:02 am in the DERS Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made a quorum was present.

Nikki Jeffords stated that she accepted a Research Associate position and noted that she would still be able to participate with the GCBVI, but she would have some limited availability. Ms. Jeffords stated that Terell Welch as the Co-Chair of the Employment Committee had agreed to Chair some of the committee meetings as needed.

**Approval of the January 23, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

Terell Welch motioned to approve the minutes from the January 23, 2018 meeting. Jordan Moon seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**E75 Event Follow Up Discussion**

Nikki Jeffords stated Kevin Foster, Marc Ashton, Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) Director, and Tucson Electric Power (TEP) provided great presentations at the event. Ms. Jeffords stated that she did receive feedback regarding some of the comments made at the end of the event, and noted the event was not the ideal place for that discussion. Jordan Moon stated the committee members could encourage individuals to reach

out to a committee member with any suggestions or comments at future events. Kevin Foster stated that he felt the event went well and he was pleased with the employers that attended the event and with TEP's thought process in hiring blind and visually impaired individuals. Nikki Jeffords stated Marc Ashton had attended all E75 events in the past, and indicated that the event was great, although he advised the committee against asking for questions at the end. Jordan Moon suggested the committee not play videos during the lunch portion of the event, because it was difficult to hear the video over the conversations. Tanner Gers stated he had difficulty in locating the event conference room and suggested the committee include signage or individuals to help direct attendees to the location. Jordan Moon stated that Employment Committee members could stand outside and help direct attendees to the location. Tanner Gers stated he had difficulty making eye contact with individuals at events and conferences, although his Aira glasses could assist with taking the initiative in approaching individuals. Bea Shapiro stated larger conferences such as CSUN offered volunteers to assist individuals when navigating the conference.

### **Future E75 Event Discussion**

Nikki Jeffords stated that the committee had previously discussed holding four E75 events, although she suggested the committee hold three events, which would be more manageable. Ms. Jeffords stated the committee held the E75 Diversity Builder Award Event in January and could hold a breakfast in Tucson and an event surrounding the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE). Nikki Jeffords stated the committee could develop an employer panel that could speak at VRATE, an Assistive Technology presentation, and a debunking myths presentation. Jordan Moon stated that VRATE would be a great opportunity to reach out to employers attending the event. Tanner Gers stated there were power in numbers when many individuals from a population attended an event. Jordan Moon suggested the committee partner with Terell Welch and Tim Stump, Employer Coordinator, in reaching out to employers to attend VRATE. Nikki Jeffords stated that she was the Chair of the VRATE Committee and Jordan Moon was the Co-Chair, and noted the committee was interested in making the next VRATE a great event.

Nikki Jeffords inquired whether the committee would like to hold the TEP sponsored breakfast in late May or in June. The committee members agreed to tentatively schedule the breakfast in Tucson for June 8, 2018. Nikki Jeffords stated that TEP had agreed to sponsor the breakfast and would provide the food and the meeting location. Nikki Jeffords suggested that committee members think about potential keynote speakers at the event.

## GCBVI Strategic Plan Discussion

- BEP remains stable, protected by legislation, and continues to create opportunities for blind VR consumers

Jordan Moon stated the Governor was in support of the privatization of the rest stops, which would commercialize the rest stops and include a restaurant such as a McDonalds instead of a rest stop run by a Business Enterprise Program (BEP) operator. Nikki Jeffords stated the rest stops were federally operated, which gave BEP operators the priority to provide the vending machine services. Ms. Jeffords noted that approximately ten operators would be affected, which could affect the whole program. She stated that she would contact Nathan Pullen, BEP Manager, and aid and support to BEP.

- Pre-ETS and Comprehensive Services preserve specialized quality training for blind VR consumers. Skill and employment growth outcomes are increased

Nikki Jeffords stated that Pre-ETS referred to Pre-Employment Transition Services for youth Transition students transitioning into adulthood. Jordan Moon stated that SAAVI Services for the Blind was awarded a contract with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and was offering Transition services to students. Nikki Jeffords stated the state awarded approximately 25 contracts to vendors in the state to expend 15% of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) budget on Transition services, and SAAVI was the only vendor that works with the blind and visually impaired population. Terell Welch inquired whether the vendors had started to offer Transition services to students. Jordan Moon stated SAAVI was in the process of developing workshops and would begin offering services within a couple of months. Nikki Jeffords suggested that a committee member be responsible for following the implementation of each Strategic Plan outcome. Ms. Jeffords agreed to be the lead committee member for the outcome involving BEP and inquired whether Jordan Moon and Terell Welch would be willing to be the lead committee member to follow the Pre-ETS outcome. Jordan Moon and Terell Welch agreed to be the lead committee members for the outcome.

- Implementation of an ongoing employer education campaign

Nikki Jeffords stated that the goal of the E75 events were to provide ongoing education to employers regarding hiring blind and visually impaired individuals.

- SBVID best practices are revised with collaboration with GCBVI and blindness stakeholders- Lead Committee: Legislative and Public Policy Committee; Support Committee – Employment Committee

Nikki Jeffords stated the Employment Committee would offer support to the Legislative and Public Policy Committee.

- Implementation of mentoring program pairing successfully closed VR consumers with new VR consumers

Tanner Gers stated that a mentoring program would be beneficial for a mentor and a mentee. Mr. Gers noted that a mentor could develop leadership skills and guide other individuals to achieve employment outcomes. Tanner Gers stated the success of the program would depend on the individuals chosen to be the mentors. Nikki Jeffords stated that FBC had a similar program, which was quite effective. Tanner Gers suggested a program include some type of oversight or evaluation process in selecting the mentors. Nikki Jeffords stated that Ability 360 had a peer mentoring program and suggested the Employment Committee collaborate with the organization. Tanner Gers agreed to be the lead committee member on the outcome.

- Implementation of best practices for AIB and community partners using GCBVI and blindness stakeholders

Nikki Jeffords stated that Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) Director, Dick Monaco, would be retiring soon, and the organization intended to hire a blind or visually impaired individual. Nikki Jeffords stated the new Federal regulations under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provided some challenges to VR working with AIB, because the job placements were not considered integrated employment. Nikki Jeffords stated that some visually impaired individuals excelled in that working environment and some individuals used the experience as a stepping stone to other employment. Nikki Jeffords stated the committee should have a relationship with AIB. Kevin Foster agreed that the committee should have a relationship with AIB and agreed to contact Dick Monaco.

### **Agenda and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Employment Committee will be on March 19, 2018 from 10:30 am to 11:30 am in the RSA Conference Room, at 1789 W. Jefferson Street, Phoenix, AZ. Agenda items are as follows: Agenda items are as follows:

- E75 Event Discussion
- GCBVI Strategic Plan Discussion

### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **Public Comment**

A call was made to the public with no responses forthcoming.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Tanner Gers motioned to adjourn the meeting. Bea Shapiro seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m.