

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Employment Committee Meeting Minutes
August 8, 2018

Members Present

Nathan Pullen*
Nikki Jeffords*
Terell Welch*
Jordan Moon*
Bea Shapiro*
Kevin Foster*

Members Absent

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers, Council Liaison
*Teleconferenced

Guests Present

Julie Oliver*, FBC
Brooke Voss*, FBC

Call to Order and Introductions

Nathan Pullen called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm in the DERS Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made a quorum was present.

Julie Oliver stated that she was the new Adult Services Director at Foundation for Blind Children (FBC). Ms. Oliver stated her work experience included healthcare and data outcome analytics, YMCA, Medicare and Medicaid. Brooke Voss stated she was a Job Developer at FBC in the Employment Services Program. Nikki Jeffords stated she worked with the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State. Nathan Pullen stated he was a member of the GCBVI for approximately eight years and was the Program Manager of the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). Bea Shapiro stated she was an Assistive Technology (AT) Consultant for Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and worked with blind and visually impaired clients and staff. Terell Welch stated he worked with the Employment Engagement Administration. Kevin Foster stated he worked with Motorola for 25 years in Operations, Mergers, Acquisitions and large-scale program and project management.

Approval of the July 12, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Nikki Jeffords motioned to approve the minutes from the July 12, 2018 meeting. Terell Welch seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Employer/Community Partner Survey Discussion

Nathan Pullen inquired whether there were any updates regarding the Employer/Community Partner Surveys. Kevin Foster stated that he and Tanner Gers had attempted to distribute surveys in the past but received a low response rate. Kevin Foster stated that he suggested developing a survey with three questions that would allow the committee members to have a discussion with the stakeholders and garner relevant information.

- What works well?
- What does not work well?
- What can we do to help you or make improvements?

Terell Welch stated that the surveys were a great approach to obtaining information, although his concern was that the committee had waited too long after the E75 Diversity Builder Event to distribute the surveys.

Nikki Jeffords explained that the Employment Committee developed the E75 Diversity Builder Event as a branded concept and a way to recognize employers that hired blind and visually impaired individuals and to bring awareness of creating an inclusive environment. Ms. Jeffords stated that the E referred to Eliminate, Empower and Employ. Nikki Jeffords stated the committee invited employers to attend the luncheon and had developed a follow up survey to understand the needs of the employers that attended the event. Julie Oliver inquired whether the committee had any data that she could review to assist the committee. Nikki Jeffords stated the event had evolved over the three years. She noted that Marc Ashton, FBC, helped the committee to narrow the focus of the event, and included three keynote speakers. Julie Oliver inquired whether the goal of the event was to build awareness or to identify Best Practices. Nikki Jeffords stated the committee was interested in raising awareness that there was an untapped pool of talent that employers were not aware of. Julie Oliver stated she was researching employers nationally to identify whether there were Best Practices for hiring blind and visually impaired individuals, which could be used as recommendations for local companies. Julie Oliver stated that any relevant data could help the committee to promote the employment of blind and visually impaired individuals. Nikki Jeffords stated that in her experience, employers were reluctant to share their experiences locally and nationally and noted that the blind and visually impaired population was a low incidence population, which limited the available data. Jordan Moon stated another challenge to obtaining data was that employers were reluctant to share information that would go against the Americans With Disability Act (ADA). Julie Oliver stated she would think about different methods for building awareness within the community and with employers.

Brooke Voss stated that a goal at FBC was to introduce employers to blind and visually impaired job seekers and to think about the individuals as potential job candidates. Jordan Moon stated the committee was interested in developing events such as job symposiums and job fairs where employers could interact with blind and visually impaired job seekers.

Job Symposium Discussion

Jordan Moon stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) Conference was held annually and included Legislative Seminars, presentations from Blind Rehabilitation Professionals, and AT. Jordan Moon stated that the Employment Committee was interested in holding a Job Symposium at the conference from 9:00-12:00, with time at the end for individuals to network with employers. Jordan Moon stated the seminar would include a panel of employed blind and visually impaired individuals, Orientation and Mobility (O & M) Instructors, and a panel of employers that would speak about the qualities of an ideal employee. Jordan Moon stated the seminar would include an hour at the end for the blind and visually impaired job seekers to network with the employers and perform mock interviews. Nikki Jeffords suggested the job seminar include a discussion regarding the importance of soft skills, which was an important aspect in obtaining employment. Jordan Moon stated the seminar would include discussion regarding job readiness, although he agreed that soft skills were important. Nikki Jeffords stated that individuals in the Adult Comprehensive Services Programs could attend the NFBA Conference. Jordan Moon stated that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) would pay the registration fees for any student that would be attending the event for the first time. Julie Oliver inquired regarding the location of the conference. Jordan Moon stated the NFBA Conference would be held at the Hyatt Regency in Phoenix on August 31, 2018. Nikki Jeffords stated that SAAVI Services for the Blind and FBC had different methods for providing services, although she encouraged all organizations to work together and to partner for the greater good of the blind and visually impaired population. Julie Oliver agreed that every learner was different and would benefit from different approaches, although each organization had the same goal. Jordan Moon stated he would send information regarding the conference to Lindsey Powers, to be distributed to the committee members. Jordan Moon stated he would appreciate assistance in recruiting employers that would participate in mock interviews or resume writing.

Terrell Welch inquired regarding the number of employers that had been invited to participate on the employer panel. Jordan Moon stated that approximately three employers had expressed interest in participating on the panel, but he needed more employers to participate in mock interviews.

Terrell Welch stated he would contact some employers that could potentially participate on the employer panel. Nathan Pullen stated that he and a BEP operator would be pleased to participate on an employer panel. Nikki Jeffords stated that Dan Martinez or Carlos Paraskevas, Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) would be great employers to have on the panel as well.

Future Events Discussion

Nikki Jeffords stated the Employment Committee was interested in holding a Reverse Job Fair at the upcoming Vision and Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) on November 16, 2018. Nikki Jeffords stated the Job Symposium could assist job ready clients to become more familiar speaking to employers. Ms. Jeffords stated the Reverse Job Fair could be held in the afternoon. Terrell Welch stated the Reverse Job Fair was a great opportunity for the job ready candidates to showcase their skills, and the employers were not pressured to set up tables.

Nikki Jeffords stated she was concerned that the committee had not started planning the next E75 Diversity Builder Event and inquired whether the event should be held at the same time and at the same location. Nathan Pullen stated he would contact Ability 360 and inquire whether they would donate the use of the Conference Room. Nathan Pullen inquired regarding the date for the E75 event. Nikki Jeffords stated the event was typically held on the last Friday of January, which would be January 25, 2019. Nathan Pullen inquired regarding how the committee was able to purchase the food for previous events. Nikki Jeffords stated the committee obtained donations from different employers to help cover the cost of food. Nikki Jeffords stated the committee should begin thinking about the program for the next E75 Event as well. Jordan Moon stated the committee had discussed holding the event at a hotel and suggested the committee members try to secure a donated space. Nikki Jeffords stated that hotels would charge more for food for the event. Ms. Jeffords stated if the event was smaller, the committee could consider holding the event at the Flinn Foundation. Nathan Pullen stated the Flinn Foundation had preferred caterers that they worked with also. Nikki Jeffords stated the large training rooms at AIB would be large enough to accommodate the attendees, although the Ability 360 had kitchens. Nathan Pullen noted that not all the rooms at AIB had screens and audio for videos. Terrell Welch stated that AIB also frowned on food in the rooms. Mr. Welch stated that Ability 360 was a great location for the event. Nikki Jeffords stated she liked the overall format of the event the previous year, which included three speakers. Nikki Jeffords stated that Donald Porterfield, Rich Sorey, or Amy Porterfield would be great speakers. Terrell Welch stated that Peckham had the highest hiring rate of clients, and suggested the committee recognize their successes.

Nikki Jeffords stated the committee could begin thinking about the employers that should be recognized at the next E75 Event.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Employment Committee will be on September 5, 2018 from 3:00 am to 4:00 pm in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Agenda items are as follows: Agenda items are as follows:

- Employer/Community Partner Survey Discussion
- Job Symposium Update
- E75 Event Discussion
 - Program and Outreach Efforts

Announcements

Nathan Pullen stated he contacted some community and public leaders in Human Resources, such as an Executive with Monster regarding participation on the Employment Committee.

Public Comment

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

Adjournment of Meeting

Nikki Jeffords motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jordan Moon seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.