**MassMATCH Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**

**September 16, 2015**

Members in Attendance: Tory Dixon, Les Cory, Owen Doonan, Jeff Dougan, Peter Gefteas(by phone), Karen Janowski, Susan LaSante, Jonathan O’Dell, Randi Sargent, Ann Shor, Jeanette Spalding, Alexander Pooler, Maxine Knight, Tom Mercier, and Karen Langley

Members Not in Attendance: Kevin Hatch, Paul Remy, and Linda Landry

Program Staff in Attendance: Kobena Bonney, Kim Shaw, and Tanya Bombard

Representatives from Provider Agencies: Cindy Aiken, Leo Tonevski, Cash McConnell (by phone), Jeff Harrington (by phone), Cathy Bly, and Eric Oddleifson

Introduction and Communication Protocol: Ann Shor was meeting chair in Jeanette’s absence for first half of today’s meeting.

Discussion and Approval of Minutes: The June minutes were approved with minor change: Karen Janowski was inadvertently omitted from those who requested an extension of term for Advisory Council, so she was added to that list.

Program and Committee Updates:

***AT School Share*:** Kobena Bonney

As previously mentioned, AT School Share has partnered with Tech Access Of RI to bring ATSS to RI. As a reminder, AT School Share is a website where members can upload their inventory and track it, much like a lending library. Recently added on the site on the main page is an option to choose your state, either MA or RI.

Karen Langley asked about how and in what context are other entities other than schools brought in when they are not “schools”. Kobena answered that this is something that needs more consideration in the future.

There are currently 20 entities that are registered and/or have inventory uploaded on the site.

Owen Doonan recommends that the business world, such as entrepreneurs with disabilities and large businesses be invited to participate in the AT School Share program since they would likely have much to offer as well as a good source of funding.

Kobena answered that though this is a good idea, there needs to be caution here since this is essentially focused on schools, hence the name AT School Share. However, this does not end the idea, it only prompts future consideration for perhaps an additional program or another aspect of the current program.

Karen Langley added that it would be a good idea to use the AT School Share model to carry out similar efforts geared towards small businesses.

Randi added that as a longtime board member of Federation of Children with Special Needs, she would be happy to brainstorm on how this organization might fit in to the AT School Share framework.

Alexander recommended that this AT School Share program would be useful in the higher education realm, partnered with the elementary schools.

***MassMATCH Outreach Efforts:*** Kobena Bonney

Kobena requested that members should notify him if and when they learn about upcoming events or opportunities for outreach. This would be helpful in expanding the scope of the program through new organizations and new people. Though many of the conferences and expos that are attended year after year are good outreach opportunities, because they tend to be the same organizations and people, sometimes there isn’t much new to offer. As far as types of events, and making the most of limited resources, we try to focus on audiences that work with people with disabilities or the elderly.

Regarding funding, as the fiscal year gets close to the end and if there appears to be additional funding available, we try to free up these funds to give to the providers to purchase devices on their waitlist.

***Other Program Announcements and Updates:***

***MCB:*** Alexander Pooler

“Tech Tuesdays” will be relaunching beginning September 29th at 600 Washington Street. Vendors do hands-on demonstrations of items of assistive technology. Starting on the 29th is Freedom Scientific. Still figuring out the rest of the vendors for the fall and then take the winter season off.

These events will need to be limited as far as outreach to MassMATCH members and our partner agencies due to space limitations.

***Orientation to the MassMATCH Council:*** Ann Shor

MassMATCH program is funded through the federal AT Act. The amount of grant funds each state receives is based on the size of its population, average income and other factors. Currently our funding is just under $500,000. As a program MassMATCH is required to get information to people, such as what types of technology is available, how to get it, funding sources that may be available. Then take action to get AT into the hands of people, through getATstuff website, REquipment, DME ReUse, AT SchoolShare, AT Loan Program. These are all programs that put AT in the hands of individuals.

The Purpose, Role and General Guidelines of the Advisory Council can be found in the Attached document: [Principles and Procedures of Advisory Council](file:///%5C%5Cmrc-pcomm%5Cindliv%24%5CILAT%20Dept%5CMassMATCH%5CAdvisory%20Council%20Documents%5CPrinciples%20and%20procedures%20revised%20September%202012.docx)

As a group, we can make revisions to these principles as long as we follow the federal guidelines.

Specifically, in regards to membership, the primary requirement is that at least 51% of members must be people with disabilities or family members of people with disabilities. In addition, there must be a representative of MRC, MCB, State Workforce Investment Board (need) and State Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education (need since Susan Hargrave retired), representatives of other state agencies and other public or private entities. The Advisory Council must also be geographically representative. The diversity of the state must be represented in such categories as types of disabilities, race, age, ethnic group, and the types of services that a person with a disability might receive.

The Advisory Council provides guidance concerning the following AT grant- related state level and leadership activities.

State Level Activities State Leadership Activities

State financing programs Public Awareness

Device reutilization programs Information and Referral

Device demonstration programs Training

Device loan programs Technical Assistance

At least 60% of the federal grant for MassMATCH must be spent on State Level service type activities and 40% or less on state leadership activities.

***State Plan Update***: Ann Shor

What is our group’s overall general purpose? To get AT into the hands of users across the spectrum.

When developing a new state plan, feedback and suggestions from the group are needed regarding the particular ways that we are carrying out requirements of each program. Are there better, different, more effective ways to carry out these requirements? All AT Act programs are required to serve AT needs within the realms of education, community living, and employment .

There are currently 56 peers nationwide carrying out similar AT State Plans. There is a listserve that all of the programs use to keep the group connected and informed as a whole.

AT Act programs in New England and and New York have our own regional group. The group Partners will be having a conference call on September 29th. Arlene Lugo of CT is passing on the Lead for this group and Kobena is considering taking on this new role. Work on Annual Report for FY15 will begin soon. Later this year results will be shared and at that time, suggestions and changes from the group will be needed.

***MassMATCH Website Update***: Eliza Anderson and Kobena Bonney

Jeanette Spalding presided over the meeting from this point forward.

The first step was to set-up a Website Review Committee to develop a usability survey with help from MRC’s Research Dept. The results were then compiled and analyzed. The next step is in progress and involves input from this group on how to use the information going forward.

**[See Survey Results in Detail Here](../../MassMATCH%20org%20Survey%20Detailed%20Report.docx)**

The main issue has been less about accessibility but rather about usability in terms of finding helpful information.

Changes made:

* Removed AT in News
* Removed “For Providers” section
* Changed “For Educators” to “For Educators/Parents”
* AT & Apps search tools added under find your AT
* “What’s New” and “Events” tab have been removed
* Embedded Keith Jones video

Suggestions:

* Increased font sizes beyond home page
* More articles on different topics related to AT
* How to get AT evaluations done at school
* Add a donation tab to the website
* Less clutter on homepage
* Add “sitecues” to the website to enhance accessibility
* Text blocks should be larger and within a display box and more contrast colors in general
* “Massachusetts” needs to be mentioned earlier on the website for better search-ability
* Change links to color red
* Color changes should be available to be made based on individual’s needs rather than static changes
* Combine Display Options Box: audios and visuals together with a plug from widgets that uses symbol sticks conversion option
* General content and organizational changes
* More extensive Reuse Program options
* Training on various different browsers would be useful

Membership Subcommittee Update: Jeanette Spalding

Requirements of Membership:

Review of Representation in Race, Ethnicity, Age, Geographic, Gender Identity to broaden the scope and answer the question: Why be a Member?

Reporting Statistics:

Gender: pretty even

Race and ethnicity: pretty white

Age: Mostly 25-70; could use more in the younger and older generation

Need for more Cape and Islands, and Central MA representation

Language and cultural sensitivity need more representation outside of English speaking

Need more people with disabilities or family members

Outreach Ideas:

* Reach out to universities and colleges
* Easter Seals and CLW in Central MA
* Increase outreach to Black and people of color
* Parents of children with disabilities
* People whose primary language is not English
* LBGT population
* Lower socio-economic population

***Additional Comments and Questions:***

Alexander Pooler recommended outreach to people with PTSD and to veterans.

Karen Langley suggested making changes to include in the nomination form categories such as socioeconomic status.

Kobena added that the question of membership terms should be addressed. Having a council is the main requirement and then that the people with disabilities and their family members must be the majority. Regarding the term limits, they were not enforced strictly. The requirement around this is to extend anyone interested as long as they request this extension to show that they are still interested. This group is in charge of the decisions that are made here and membership can change so participation is important.

Cindy Aiken said she would be happy to post the application for membership as well as information on the council to the Easter Seals Youth Leadership Forum Facebook page.

AbleGamers who will be attending the Abilities Expo are a group of programmers and gaming folks who make games more accessible for people with a variety of disabilities.

Randi Sargent said she is happy to share more information on the AC membership if someone could write something up for her.

***REquipment Update:*** Randi Sargent

* FY15 Annual report:
* Went Live halfway through FY14 so those numbers are lower
* Last yr, reassigned 225 items value of $210,000
* Funding last year $110,000 provided by MRC, DDS & private grants
* $250,000 through MRC for FY16

Main Goals going forward:

* Expand with more partners
* Expand quality and training initiative

For other REquipment statistics in detail:

Karen Langley added as a final note on REquipment that within 5 years the program will likely have expanded to all AT, modeled after the Kansas system.

Les Cory added that Rehab Center at UMass Dartmouth has been involved with the recycling of AT equipment for the past 30 years. Primarily communication devices but most recently more environmental control units have been recycled.

The meeting was brought to an end at approcimately 2:30 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for 12/16/15 at the same place and time.