



**Idaho State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting
Tuesday, October 24, 2023
8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Mountain Time)**

Location: Springhill Suites, 424 E Parkcenter Blvd, Boise, ID 83706

MEETING MINUTES

Chairperson Darin Lindig called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. as posted in the Public Notice.

Members Present:

Darin Lindig, SRC Chair,
Business, Industry and Labor
Representative

Tim Blonsky, SRC Vice Chair,
Disability Group Representative

Pamela Harris, CRP
Representative

Stephanie Taylor Thompson,
Former VR Recipient
Representative

Mark Reinhardt, Former VR
Recipient Representative

Diana Colgrove, Business,
Industry and Labor Representative

Ramona Medicine Horse, Native
American Tribal Representative

Jami Davis, State Independent
Living Council Representative

Nancy Grant, Client Assistant
Program (CAP) Representative

Sarah Gornik, Parent Training &
Information Center Representative

Jane Donnellan, IDVR
Administrator

David White, IDVR Counselor

Guests present:

Teresa Pitt, IDVR Planning and Evaluation Manager, **Nanna Hanchett**, IDVR Deputy Administrator, **Matt Markve**, IDVR Program Evaluation Analyst, **Rhonda McFarland**, IDVR Fiscal Manager, **Jeff DeForest**, JR Simplot Company, **Angie Tuft**, Create Common Good

Members Absent:

David “Max” Maxwell, James Pegram, Randi Cole

Chairperson Darin Lindig reviewed the agenda for the day.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION

The July 25, 2023 Meeting Minutes were reviewed by the Council. Vice Chairman, Tim Blonsky made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes as presented. Pamela Harris seconded the motion. All members present voted and unanimously approved the July 25, 2023 Meeting Minutes.

Membership

IDVR Administrator, Jane Donnellan announced that David White will be stepping down from the council due to his new position as a supervisor.

The nominations recommended by the Membership Committee were reviewed with the Council members as follows:

Emily Flynn’s application was presented to the Council for consideration of appointment. **MOTION:** Vice Chair, Tim Blonsky made a motion to approve Emily Flynn, IDVR General Counselor for Council representation. Jami Davis seconded the motion and the Council voted unanimously to approve the nomination for consideration by the Idaho State Board of Education.

Kent Ireton’s application was presented to the council for consideration of appointment. **MOTION:** Vice Chair, Tim Blonsky made a motion to approve Kent Ireton, IDVR PreETS Counselor for Council representation. Diana Colgrove seconded the motion. All voting members approved the nomination for consideration by the Idaho State Board of Education.

Lucas Rose’s application was presented to the council for consideration of appointment. Lucas has been nominated as a representative of Business, Industry and Labor. **MOTION:** Pamela Harris made a motion to approve the nomination, Mark Reinhardt seconded the motion. All voting members approved the nomination for consideration by the Idaho State Board of Education.

Jeff DeForest's application was presented to the council for consideration of appointment. Jeff has been nominated as a representative of Business, Industry and Labor. **MOTION:** Mark Reinhardt made a motion to approve the nomination. Jami Davis seconded the motion. All voting members approved the nomination for consideration by the Idaho State Board of Education.

Angie Tuft's application was presented to the council for consideration of appointment. Angie has been nominated as a representative of Business, Industry and Labor. **MOTION:** Vice Chair Tim Blonsky made a motion to approve the nomination. Pamela Harris and Mark Reinhardt seconded the motion. All voting members approved the nomination for consideration by the Idaho State Board of Education.

SRC/IDVR 2023 Combined Annual Report

The 2023 Combined Annual report was reviewed by the council members present. There was a suggestion to include additional language to the Annual Report indicating that students eligible for an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 can receive pre-employment transition services (PreETS). There was a recommendation to consider areas where the language can be improved, and it was encouraged that council members provide suggestions as to where the language can be improved. It was agreed that "Students who are eligible for and receiving special education or related services or is a student who is an individual with disability aware of the purposes of section 504" will be inserted on page 15 of Pre-Employment Transition Services, after/part of the first paragraph. There were various questions and comments on areas of the Annual Report that will be updated accordingly.

Jami Davis made a motion to approve the 2023 Annual Report with the pending edits. Sarah Gornik seconded the motion approving the Annual Report with pending edits.

Agency Updates

IDVR Fiscal Report

Rhonda McFarland, IDVR Fiscal Manager, presented the IDVR Quarterly Budget to Actual Report. The first quarter for State Fiscal Year 2023 shows four columns:

- Appropriation
- Expenditures
- Balance Remaining
- Percentage Expended

VR Total of All funds show the entire appropriation and how much was spent in the first quarter. VR has spent \$6.1 million this year, compared to last year, where \$5.7 million was spent. That is a positive indication and represents that the agency is on a good path.

Grant information lists the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY), last quarter. FFY23 funds are now being spent. Total grant award for FFY 2023, was 20.6 million. It was estimated that the funds would not be completely spent. The funds were reallocated and the new award total for FFY 2023 is \$16.2 million. As of 9/30/23, \$6.1 million has been spent with a balance of \$10 million to be spent. Carry over funds were explained, in FFY 2024, current spending FFY 23 because the agency was able to spend the nonfederal required amount.

VR match requirement (\$4,404,595.60) is the portion that the agency is required to match in order to carry over into the next year. The amount spent was slightly higher than needed, indicating that the match was met.

PreETS is required to spend a minimum of 15% of the federal grant (\$2.4 million). As of September, \$2.9 million was spent, exceeding the required amount.

The various budgets were explained as follow:

- Personnel is related to salaries and benefits.
- Operating Expenses are those that are ongoing such as rent, office supplies, janitorial services, etc.
- Capital Outlay are larger purchases such as computers or facility projects, vehicles, some of the rent expense falls under this category.
- Trustee & Benefit are direct expenses to VR customers.

LUMA is the accounting system the State of Idaho is using to track the expenses. Ms. McFarland assured council members that multiple checks are being done to ensure that reporting and processing of expenses are

accurate.

The SRC Budget for FFY 2023 was reviewed. The FFY 2022 budget was \$27,100. To date, \$15,600 was spent. The 4th quarter detailed expenditures were provided to the council for review, \$6486 showing has been spent. There are no current changes to the bottom line. There were adjustments to certain categories based on previous expenditures.

It was explained that if there was a government shutdown, the system used to request federal funds will still be functional. IDVR is on a reimbursement system, meaning funds must be spent before they are requested. Carry over funds from the 2023 grant will be beneficial in the event of federal government shutdown. If there was protracted government shutdown the FFY 2024 grant proceeds would not be available. There is no concern at this time that IDVR would be impacted.

The 2024 Legislative Session will begin the first Monday of January. The appropriations of budget meetings have not yet been scheduled. The Joint Finance Appropriations Committee (JFAC) will review the budget. There will be one line-item budget request specific to four (4) senior counselor positions. The agency will continue to educate legislators on this topic.

Council members will be encouraged to talk with local legislators to educate them on the importance of VR, who is served and the return of investment to the State of Idaho.

There was a council member question as to where the funds come from for VR customers to complete additional schooling/trainings. It was explained that training is paid out of Trustee & Benefits Category (T&B).

SFY 2020, 2021 and 2022 are being audited by the State auditors at this time. There was a finding around the FFY 2021 grant. The report had a calculation error, which indicated that the 15% PreETS reserve was not expended, although that was not correct. The agency is working on avoiding this calculation error within the federal report in the future.

Sending a VR customer to an accredited program, what is the percentage of completed degrees. There is a credential accreditation rate that is tracked through Measurable Skill Gains Rate (MSGs). Documentation is required to document the data. The current rate is approximately 56%,

which is fairly high compared to other states in the nation.

IDVR Deputy Administrator Nanna Hanchett explained the challenges with recruiting counselors, which requires a strategy of hiring individuals and offering a Comprehensive System of Personal Development (CSPD). The current criteria for hiring counselors were explained to the council members. The agency is looking to expand options to get counselors to a CRC level to include Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), to increase counselor levels.

A council member asked what the counselor's knowledge of disabilities are or if the counselors only have a general knowledge of disabilities. Ms. Hanchett explained that counselor's knowledge must include knowledge of disabilities and the related functional limitations.

There was a question as to whether there have been RSA initiatives or legislation to make the process more effective to hire qualified counselors. It was explained that personnel compensation is dictated at the state level.

Vice Chair, Tim Blonsky is the president of the Idaho Association of the Deaf. He would like to advocate to remove the agency requirement for using a certified sign language interpreter be re-considered to allow a VR counselor to serve the specific disability group that includes individuals with deafness and/or hard of hearing diagnosis.

There was a question if an individual comes in as a VRS, is there assistance with tuition? It was explained that VRS are encouraged to apply for colleges where there's an RSA Scholarship (compensable benefit) which covers the tuition and cost of books (all or a part of the cost). IDVR would pay for remaining tuition and cost of books. There was also a question as to what surrounding states pay. The answer was. It was explained that one of the challenges is that Idaho cannot compete with other states throughout the country.

There was question around CRP requirements for credentialing. The answer was provided that rate methodology will look at how services are delivered and how the agency can partner with the CRP partners to ensure that they are adequately reimbursed for the service delivery and that the individuals providing the services have adequate training.

There was a question as to how the SRC can provide assistance to help resolve the issues related to recruitment of counselors. It was emphasized that council members can educate legislators more about the types of individuals the agency serves, the value, importance, return on investment of the VR program. Council members were encouraged to refer individuals that have a minimum of a bachelor's degree to contact Nanna Hanchett directly and she would like to have the opportunity to share information with those individuals that may help them to consider employment with IDVR.

Area population is considered when location placement of counselors is determined. There must be a sufficient number of team members to cover the rural areas of the state.

There was a question related to whether there has been outreach to local universities, to create VR programs, to make it easier for students to complete the requirements of the program. Ms. Hanchett explained that the known issues are more related to the low salaries. Internships have been implemented but are very challenging to train in areas that have staff shortages, which is why interns are encouraged to work for the agency, so the impact has results of placements.

There was a question as to whether services are impacted by monetary investment. Ms. Hanchett assured that team members work very hard to provide the best service. IDVR provides upper-level management supervision to team members if they do not meet the minimum standard.

A council member shared that it is challenging to pay employees the same rate regardless of where they are located within the state. This could be addressed when talking to legislators.

Recruitment and retention will be addressed in the CSNA. Council members were encouraged to continue to offer suggestions.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

IDVR Transition Manager, Alison Lowenthal presented the pre-employment transition services (PreETS) update to the Council which including:

- **Paid Work-Based Learning (WBLE)**
40 School Districts provided WBLE to students in Program Year 2022. Idaho Parents Unlimited (IPUL) had 6 WBLE's, Community

Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's) 12 WBLE's in addition to employer run work-based learning around the state. 1430 students participated in WBLE's. Students who participate in the Paid Work Experience program, are usually students who will go into competitive employment or post-secondary education.

- **Counseling on Post Secondary Education**

This service is provided when a VR team member meets with a student or group of students talking about various opportunities. Students can participate in higher education programs including BSU Prep, ISU Academy, NExT, or U of I Vandal Academy. 914 students participated in counseling on post-secondary education.

- **Job Exploration**

Students can participate in one of the Career Technical Education (CTE) Programs. These programs run during the school year as well as throughout the summer. 1,333 students participated in job exploration.

- **Work Readiness Training (WRT)**

WRT can be provided in the classroom by interacting with employers, developing resumes, interview skills and various other experiences. They can practice the skills they learn through WRT can be applied in an authentic work environment. Students also participation in Reality Town is included under this service. 1,907 students participated in Work Readiness Training.

There was a financial literacy course introduced by the Legislature however, IDVR has been providing this service through a separate curriculum that has involved local banks as well as college students that study finance to provide that curriculum.

There is one school district that has had a CTE program related to law enforcement, but it was more about exploring opportunities as a possible career in that field.

Report from IDVR Administrator

IDVR Administrator, Jane Donnellan shared updates on:

- The Agency structure changes:

- Customer focused strategy
- Internal drive/satisfaction of IDVR team members
- The strategies for staff efficiencies:
 - Including increasing the counselor spending authority
 - Eliminating signatures on Certificate of Eligibilities
 - Suspension of the Financial Participation Assessments (FPA)
- Improved technology including Adobe Pro, speech to text, automation systems, phone centralization.

Council members who attended IDVR's in-service training in September 2023 shared their experiences and were appreciative of the opportunity to interact with team members and shared their experience.

Administrator Donnellan and Deputy Administrator Hanchett recently visited team members in the northern locations. Team members were provided the opportunity to share their ideas further and provided additional ideas for efficiencies within the agency processes. Incrementally the efficiencies being implemented are having a positive effect.

Cultural awareness is a training that council member Nancy Grant will be assisting the agency with to ensure that all individuals are making decisions that are equally represented.

VR Success Story featured Tim Rednour and his counselor, Emily Flynn, who traveled to Washington in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act. Tim was one of two customers chosen nationwide out of all VR programs. Ms. Donnellan included this honor to the State Board of Education in her annual report.

IDVR Business Services

Ms. Hanchett shared that through WIOA, – employers became an equal partner in the IDVR process. Business services have been developed with the support of team members however it put a greater demand on counselors and various VR team members. Business services coordinator positions have been placed within each Customer Support Center. Business services are not intended to be a placement service. Various services can be provided to businesses including providing resources and training to employers to support them in employing individuals with disabilities.

Member Updates

Darin Lindig shared that they recognized within the company that they didn't have stock images of individuals with disabilities, and they don't do external marketing to individuals with disabilities. They asked marketing to include more images of individuals and they agreed but didn't have access to them. A project was developed to address this issue.

Tim Blonsky shared a project related to salary transparency, unemployment rates and where a woman goes around the country asking questions and they would like to include individuals with disabilities.

Diana Colgrove shared that her experience has been that PreETS information and benefits aren't being communicated well to parents. She suggested IDVR outreach could include outreaches to parents. She recently heard about the Idaho Launch Program thought this would be a good resource for students with disabilities as well. Ms. Colgrove had the opportunity to speak with a legislator on a recent flight and provided some information about VR.

Angie Tuft shared that she recently attended a conference with non-profit groups that do workforce development. She talked with people from all over the country about accessing resources through Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education. She had the opportunity to share the services in Idaho and how we are partnering with agencies to leverage what is in place rather than "inventing the wheel".

Sarah Gornik stated that IPUL has started the second round of Work of Art program entitled "Pivot Movement" reaching out to students throughout the state. They are partners with the State Department of Education and VR, who hosts the Transition Institute. The goals within their state team are for parents to be involved, which can be challenging. Their program is tasked with outreach to parents sharing resources and available services.

Mark Reinhardt is about to graduate, and his plan is to go into freelance journalism with the intent to write about law enforcement interactions with individuals with disabilities.

Pam Harris shared that she encounters students within the WBLE and WRT program. One of the things that council members can do is outreach

to businesses to provide work experiences for students with disabilities. Developing job sites is challenging.

Jami Davis shared that she was on the Idaho Family's adults with disabilities and asked them if they knew about ABLE accounts. She conducted an open house Zoom Meeting and from that there have been approximately 35 employers who have contacted her about how they can get the information out to individuals about work opportunities for SSA beneficiaries.

Ramona Medicine Horse shared that a lot of what they do is to get information out to the community. They are having a fun run/walk called the Zombie Stomp. They hand out flyers and brochures about their program in addition to creating awareness of invisible disabilities. The Consortia of Administrators Native American Rehabs (CANAR) is having their conference in Costa Mesa, California. They do a lot of outreaches during the holidays when it is slower.

Ms. Donnellan shared that Ramona's employment specialist reached out to her and Ramona on how to increase collaboration with the tribal VR programs throughout the state (121 Programs). For state cultural awareness, Ramona and her colleague will take the lead on how to move forward by developing a survey to collect information on how IDVR can collaborate.

Matt Markve, IDVR Program Evaluation Analyst, explained that they are conducting public comment at the conclusion of the meeting to suspend the financial participation assessment. Taking this step will not put the agency affect the budget negatively. Currently, a majority of customers are not financially obligated to participate financially, and this will be beneficial to IDVR team members and customers as it will reduce the amount of paperwork required to complete the FPA process.

This was added to the SRC agenda as recommended by RSA to educate SRC members and provide them the opportunity to ask questions.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair, Tim Blonsky motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m. Mark Reinhardt seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.