

Coordinator's Report February 6, 2020

Greetings SRC Members,

How quickly my first two months have flown by in my new role! I am grateful for the time spent with Debra, along with the patience and support of VR staff during my training period. And I am grateful that I had the opportunity to have conversations with many of you.

When I served as a Peace Corps volunteer years ago—a 20-year-old fresh out of college—I was perplexed and frustrated by the requirement that we weren't allowed to start any projects our first three months in village. Instead, we were told, our job was to ask questions and listen. For months I felt like I was spinning my wheels, sure I was wasting my time and that of others, *talking* instead of *doing*. But looking back, I now realize the inherent wisdom in this requirement as what I learned from those conversations, and the relationships I built, enabled my work to be successful in the long term. (And I haven't had a job since that I didn't start this way!)

My learnings from these one-on-one SRC member phone conversations are included below and were shared with the Steering Committee last month. I know they will serve me well in this position and help to guide my work in the year ahead. Thank you!

I am also happy to share the news of six new appointments. Please join me in welcoming our newest members to the SRC:

- Ana Kolbach
- Danielle Dubois
- Gina D'Ambrosio
- Helena Kehne
- Kristen Carpentier
- Patricia Wehman

When I started back in December, I found myself wondering what my work as the SRC coordinator would look like. Today I'm finding truth in this dictionary definition:

“Coordinate: to bring the different elements of a complex activity or organization into a relationship that will ensure efficiency or harmony.”

As such, please don't hesitate to pick up the phone or shoot me an email or text if there's something I can do to make your participation easier- that's my job 😊



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Member Phone Conversation Learnings



What We Most Appreciate About SRC Membership

- Love getting to know and work with other members of the group (who are passionate, inspiring, and tireless advocates)
- Excited about contributing towards the SRC mission
- Impactful work that directly helps Vermonters
- The ability to work with the dedicated, talented, and responsive VR leadership
- Learning more about the work and resources is helpful to own life and/or work
- The fact that people work together towards a common goal
- That it serves as an independent voice when it comes to advocating for funding and policy change, and it is a collaborative and valuable partner
- How inclusive, welcoming, respectful, and thoughtful they are
- The focus on continuous improvement



Gifts We Bring to the Table

- Empathetic and skill in building interpersonal relationships
- Good listener
- Intelligence
- Excellent writing skills
- Experience facilitating training and ensuring all can engage in meaningful ways
- Lived experience as a VR consumer, person with a disability, or parent of a child with a disability: “I’ve been there”
- Depth and history of professional and personal expertise

- Prepares for meetings by reading all materials and making a point to not miss any meetings
- Advocacy
- Humor
- Skill in identifying and addressing barriers to employment
- Compassion
- Strong desire to help
- Ability to write in plain language
- Marketing, social media, and publicizing events
- Recruitment
- I'm rehabilitative employment ambassador and salesperson to the business community
- Knowledge of WIOA and other federal programs
- Passion for providing excellent customer service



Suggestions Made

Participating Beyond Meetings:

- People shared their desire for hands-on, active participation beyond just meeting participation: “I want to engage, but am not sure where to plug in.” “I would love to be involved in project-based work.”

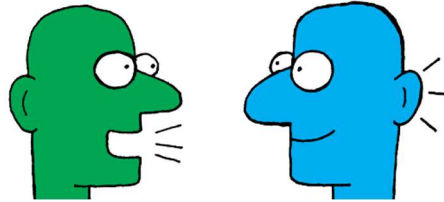
Transportation:

- Across the board, people shared that transportation needs to be better addressed to increase meeting participation (people offered it or shared that they needed it). People both using and listening to the conference call option said engagement is harder on Skype vs. in-person participation.

Accessibility:

- Making sure everyone has opportunity to contribute and can provide input based on the method that works best for them. This includes accommodations, time built-in to council and committee agendas, and meeting facilitation to support this (e.g., “Let’s hear from someone we haven’t yet. Who else would like to speak on this item?”), jargon busting, and keeping speakers to times listed on agenda.

- Have the chair of the meeting sit in front of a microphone and pass it around as needed to be near people who are speaking. Remember to periodically invite input from the phone as it is hard to jump in to conversations when not physically present in the room.



Member Orientation/Retention Ideas Shared

- Periodic updates on the appointment process as it takes a long time
- Bring back the new member orientation sessions
- Consider having ongoing training throughout the year vs. just a one-time orientation
- Having an introductory meeting with SRC or committee chair or coordinator (what they envision for the SRC, where their strengths fit in, what to expect at the first meeting, etc.)
- “First meeting felt very formal...how might we get these to feel more welcoming?” (Several people mentioned shyness, social anxiety, or that additional opportunities to get to know their fellow members would help with an even warmer welcome as they join the council.)
- “A debrief after attending the first meeting would have been useful”
- Content provided in a way that meets a range of learning preferences
 - Historical overview of disability rights movement
 - The national handbook
 - Updated list of acronyms
 - What VR does, what SRC does, how they are interrelated and different
 - Mission and vision of the SRC and what do we want to accomplish in next 2-5 years, etc.
 - A “road map” of external/community partners
 - An overview of SRC decision making authority
 - Expectations of being a council member, voting, our work as a group
 - The different roles of board members and the importance of the different perspectives they bring to the table (i.e., business/employer, parent, individuals with disabilities, state agency, etc.)
 - Roberts Rules refresher
- Consider quarterly check in phone calls: the coordinator could reach out to members via telephone to see how things are going, address any needs, and answer any questions.



Questions Posed

- *“How can I contribute the most?”*
- *“Are people feeling safe enough to talk about different experiences and share diverging viewpoints on an issue?”*
- *“How might we further increase the diversity of SRC membership?”*
- *“How can we create materials that are more accessible (for example, plain language, options beyond just reading, etc.)?”*
- *“How can we ensure a balance of all voices being heard: people who do this work, and people who live this work?”*
- *“What are the barriers to participation and what can we do to address them?”*
- *“What can we do to ensure member retention and engagement for the long-term?”*
- *“We have tried to make meetings as interactive as possible...what else can we do create more opportunities for interactivity and input?”*