

D. Suggestions for FFY 2025 Meaningful Careers Activities

Michael Leyva offered suggestions for activities to be considered in FFY 2025

Project SEARCH is for youth and young adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

- It includes a 1-year internship with three different rotations.
- Project SEARCH participants learn competitive, marketable, and transferable skills.
- 71% of interns who have graduated from Project SEARCH have obtained competitive, integrated employment.
- There are currently six Project SEARCH sites including four Arizona High School Transition Model sites, and two Arizona Young Adult Model sites.

Michael suggested providing funding for a new Project SEARCH site in a rural/tribal community, preferably at a hospital on the Navajo Reservation in Tuba City. The suggestion was for the Council to provide funding for the Project SEARCH licensing fee which is approximately \$18,000. The licensing fee includes technical assistance, materials, and ensures program fidelity.

Kristen Mackey shared VR typically supports a Project SEARCH site. VR is currently providing funding (salary) for the Project SEARCH coordinator at the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities. Kristen asked if it would be a requirement that participants are VR clients. Either through Section 121 programs or state VR as that is how ongoing costs would be paid. It takes quite a bit of time to ramp up, identify participants and partners to establish a new site.

Another idea for a new Project SEARCH site is the new Taiwan semiconductor plant in Northwest Phoenix.

Kristen shared it would be advisable to see if the schools in that area (Deer Valley and Peoria) are already working with Taiwan semiconductor. She shared VR has TSW programs with Peoria and it would be advisable to connect with Project SEARCH and VR staff to explore the possibility.

Ramp up Webinars. Suggestion to ramp up webinar series moderated and organized by a nationally recognized trainer and facilitator. Allan Bergman has provided more than 200 keynote addresses and conducted over 150 workshops to over 50,000 individuals in all 50 states. Allan Bergman organized North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) webinar series and did a phenomenal job. NCCDD invested \$25,000 in their webinar series.

J.J. Rico inquired about ADDPC staff level involvement and hosting capacity, in other words does ADDPC have the bandwidth, and what would Allan Bergman's role be in coordinating and organizing. It's good to have nationwide speakers but it's important to have an Arizona focus because Arizona is different from North Carolina. J.J. wants to ensure that the speaker and the webinar series meet the needs of our state.

Kristen Mackey confirmed the need to keep it Arizona centric, to focus on our policies and where we are. She supports the idea of having nationally recognized presenters to share

what other states have done because we may be behind of moving in that direction. The presentations may spur our stakeholders to support what we want to do.

Michael shared if we are to work with Allan Bergman, it would require a sole source contract. Michael will reach out to Allan Bergman to see if he is interested and if so, what the fee would be. Michael will report back to the Committee.

Communities at the Center the Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) in partnership with Arizona Town Hall (ATH) would like to continue the working relationship with the Council and is proposing conducting three to four Community roundtables with the focus on parents and families, including geographic diversity to solicit perspectives from rural, urban, and suburban communities. CFA and ATH would facilitate polling and post-conversation surveys to deepen the understanding of the concerns, priorities, and opportunities for action that emerge from the Community roundtables.

Melissa Van Hook envisioned more conversations with the community would be held, with more families involved, and people sharing what they are doing day-to-day, how they are living day-to-day. Also, hearing what the professionals have to say and the challenges they face. It's always been about the families and how to reach them. Finding out what information would have been helpful and if they had it sooner, what messaging would have been helpful. It's still Melissa's hope that having further conversations with more of the actual families in person, maybe we can deepen the conversations and expand them.

Kristen Mackey shared her concern if we bring folks together will we hear the same and will it be different?

Discussion centered on its always difficult getting families to the table. The hardest part is always getting to the people that are living this day-to-day, and we never have enough information from them. Perhaps we can reach out to organizations, our disability network, and request to share at their regular meetings and engage with folks who are there. There are transition points throughout a child's life that the parents must navigate and so there is something that we could learn to put together and maybe have that the results then are a kind of a trajectory of all those transition points, what can you expect, and have someone assist with the development. That would be a tangible outcome.

A suggestion was made to ask CFA if they could collect that information from families. To gather families from different age brackets, different transition points. What do you wish you would have known after they completed that age bracket? What would have been helpful for you to now before your child turned three, what would have been helpful for you to know before your child went to school?

Jon Meyers raised an important point. Many times, we are trying to educate families, parents, other caregivers at the same time we are asking for their input. We are not turning parents and students into advocates for themselves and to advocate for what they're looking for. In the Meaningful Careers work, we're trying to get people to take advantage of programs that exist and we're trying to give them opportunities, but we're not turning them into advocates for themselves or advocates for people with disabilities. They are caregivers for individuals and just because something doesn't exist doesn't mean that it can't someday exist. If something is missing from my family's life, or if something is missing from their education or

employment experience, what's stopping them from asking for that or doing the work to bring that about? So much of disability work is about advocacy and self-advocacy. Why isn't it a major component of what we're doing in the employment arena.

Melissa Van Horn agreed with Jon's important point and said it's something we should discuss further with the Committee and see what we want to do.

Michael Leyva will talk to CFA about the points that were brought up, see if they are up to the task, and share his findings with the Committee.

E. Call to the Public

No members of the Public were present.

F. Adjourn

Chairperson Melissa Van Hook adjourned the Meaningful Careers Committee Meeting at 2:06 P.M.

Dated this 16th day of April 2024
Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council