



**Employment First Committee Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2023**

Attending Members

Wesley Witherspoon (SA)
Sarah Issacs (DRC)
Michael Luna (DDS)
Steve Ruder (UCD)
Nick Wavrin (CDE)
Larry Yin (USC)
Nancy Wentling (DOR)
Christine T. Moody (UCLA)
Julie Gaona (SA)

Members Absent

Cathay Liu (FA)

Others Attending

Aaron Carruthers
Tania Morawiec
Bridget Kolakosky
Veronica Bravo
Mary Ellen Stives
Robin Maitino-Erben
Victoria Schlussler
Suza Szewiola
Santiago Vazquez-Garcia
Charlotte Emerson
Brian Weisel
Carol Asch
Michelle Cave
Tiffany Ponchon
Pat Engle

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Wesley Witherspoon (SA) called the meeting to order. He introduced Julie Gaona who will be the new Chair of the EFC after shadowing Mr. Witherspoon today. Ms. Gaona gave a brief summary of her experience

2. ESTABLISH QUORUM

A quorum was established.

3. WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Members and others introduced themselves.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

5. **APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 2022 MEETING MINUTES**

It was moved/seconded (Yin/Ruder) and carried to approve the October 2022, meeting minutes with an amendment to correct Larry Yin's affiliation from UCLA to USC. Wavrin, Issacs, Wentling, and Gaona abstained. Moody was not present for vote. All other members approved. See page one for members in attendance.

6. **CIE IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORTS UPDATE**

Deputy Director Tania Morawiec informed the group that SCDD, with the support of DOR and DDS, received a grant from the Office of Disability Employment Policy under the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) initiative.
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/neon>

The grant will give the State of California technical assistance hours with Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) national Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who will address some of the challenges encountered when trying to achieve Employment First. Interagency collaboration is one challenge that will be addressed. The SMEs targeted to help the State are Rick McAllister and Bill Hudock.

Through SCDD's application to the Administration on Disability (AoD) Employment Technical Assistance Center Grant
<https://aoddisabilityemploymentcenter.com/aod-grantees/> SCDD was able to secure national SME Lisa Mills to help explore funding opportunities in California.

7. **STATE LEGISLATION UPDATES**

Bridget Kolakosky and Veronica Bravo presented a PowerPoint titled, "State Council on Developmental Disabilities: Review of 2022 and Priorities for 2023."

A brief background on the Bill Ideas Contest was given. The first Contest was held in September 2021. Three bill ideas from that contest successfully made it into legislation in 2022. They resulted in the following:

- AB 1663: Conservatorship Reform passed
- AB 1092: Fair Hearing Reform passed in the budget
- AB 2547: Housing Subsidy did not pass but just got reintroduced this year as SB 37.

In 2022, SCDD received over 100 bill ideas, 11 of them in Spanish. Ideas were submitted by self-advocates, family members, professionals, and community members.

Bill Idea trends for 2022 include:

- Safety
- Access to transportation
- Equal opportunities in higher education and employment
- Affordable housing
- Access to services

2023 SCDD Priorities are:

1. Employment
2. Safety, Abuse, and Neglect
3. Rental Assistance for Aging and Persons with Disabilities

The creation of a new Employment First coordinating office in the Health and Human Services Agency has been proposed. SCDD is working with Disability Rights California, California APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First), and other entities to make it a reality.

A strong outreach campaign is being conducted in order to increase the number of organizations/entities that support an Employment First office as well as to ensure funding. The proposed funding for the office is \$750,000 annually.

Steve Ruder and Sarah Issacs expressed excitement at the idea of a coordinating office and master plan that can help people navigate the system and ensure implementation of the Employment First statute.

Mr. Ruder pointed out that many Regional Centers support day programs over employment programs. Especially considering that California is an Employment First state, he would like to see SCDD strongly recommend that Regional Centers talk to families about employment preparation.

Mary Ellen Stives pointed out the need to encourage the Regional Centers to direct more funding to employment—particularly to dedicated employment staff.

Tiffany Ponchon, a member of the public, stated that she has not been able to find her daughter a day program or employment. However, she is glad these issues are being worked on by the EFC.

8. **EFC ANNUAL REPORT – TIMELINE**

Ms. Robin Maitino-Erben reviewed the Draft Report of the EFC for 2022. The updated report will be released in July 2023.

The following sections were added:

1. DDS Incentives and Grants
2. Interagency Collaboration
3. SB 639 Report Recommendations
4. Education and Training for Employers and Employees
5. 1 Best Practice Recommendation: Individualized Plans

Deputy Director's Morawiec and Kolakosky emphasized that legislators are looking for actionable and achievable solutions and ideas. The EFC report needs to be a guidepost in a language that legislators speak. The legislature is eager to engage. However, they need more guidance. Existing programs should be used to build capacity. A change in law or guidance for a department are examples of possible EFC recommendations

Ms. Bravo stated that the report writing process will differ from the previous year's report. She presented the timeline to members. To summarize: EFC Members will write their sections from February 2nd to February 28th. During March, Ms. Bravo and Council staff will collect information from members and write the report. After the report is written, EFC members will be given time to review, amend, and approve by May 4th. The Final Report and Final Draft to Formal Report Template will be due June 23rd and will be submitted to the Legislature and distributed to stakeholders in July.

Lunch Break

Ms. Maitino-Erben led the group through the Draft EFC Report for 2022. Listed below each section are committee/staff members assigned and commentary:

Executive Summary

TO BE UPDATED ONCE REPORT IS COMPLETE

Veronica Bravo, Sarah Issacs, Tania Morawiec.

Impact of COVID on Employment

NEEDS UPDATING – Leave this section in to continue tracking continued and emerging issues related to the pandemic

Tania Morawiec will add new information. If it is no longer relevant, it can be removed. Will monitor and assess later.

Federal Trends and Policies Impacting CIE in California

NEEDS UPDATING – expanded to include trends to reinforce policies

Tania Morawiec, Bridget Kolakosky.

State Policies Impacting CIE in California

NEEDS UPDATING

Nick Wavrin, Robin Maitino-Erben

Data Trends in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

NEEDS UPDATING

Larry Yin, Michael Luna

Internship and Employment Success Stories! (Have photos of participants too)

NEEDS UPDATING

Steve Ruder and Christine Moody. Gathering stories/interviewing/ perhaps video of person talking depending on comfort level. Ms. Bravo suggested stories include the lifecycle of employment—challenges job-seekers have faced, not just how happy they are now. Feature diverse people with diverse backgrounds.

Since SCDD lacks funds for video editing, etc. look to students studying videography for help.

State and Local Implementation of Policies for CIE

- **California CIE Blueprint for Change**
NEEDS UPDATING
Nick Wavrin, Michael Luna, Nancy Wentling
- **SB 639 Implementation**
New Section—NEEDS DRAFTING
Sarah Issacs, Tania Morawiec, Bridget Kolakosky

New Legislative Efforts in 2022

NEEDS UPDATING

Bridget Kolakosky, Veronica Bravo, and partners that may have CIE-related legislation. Will include all efforts positive or negative on CIE. Even if the legislation did not go forward, it will provide information for the EFC to analyze for future successes.

EFC's Activities and Accomplishments in 2022

NEEDS UPDATING AND ADDITIONS TO INCLUDE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Robin Maitino-Erben, Tania Morawiec, all partners on EFC.

DDS INCENTIVES AND GRANTS

New Section – NEEDS DRAFTING

Michael Luna

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

New Section – NEEDS DRAFTING

Veronica Bravo will ask partners to provide input.

Disjointed services make it difficult for people to transition into CIE.

SB 639 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS – Summarize Challenges of Transition and Recommendations - (Background Section)

New Section – NEEDS DRAFTING

Veronica Bravo, Bridget Kolakosky, Tania Morawiec, Sarah Issacs.

This will tie into recommendations and work EFC has done.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

New Section – NEEDS DRAFTING

Sarah Issacs, Julie Gaona, Steve Ruder.

Tied into target priorities that the EFC has worked on the last three years.

Important to highlight that we may not have all the answers.

Recommendations. Providing training for providers, professionalizing and standardizing training throughout the State.

Mr. Ruder requested that the EFC use a copy of an SCDD/DOR training as a positive example of how employers are making things work.

Ms. Bravo will gather information. Ms. Issacs will provide some context.

1 BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION: INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS

New Section – NEEDS DRAFTING

All members share their choice for best practice. Something they have learned about Individualized Plans.

9. **2023-24 TARGET PRIORITIES EXERCISE**

Sarah Issacs, Christine Moody, and Michael Luna lead an exercise to determine what priorities the members would like to work on in 2023-24. This exercise was presented as a PowerPoint using SMART Goals principles. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.

The presenters pointed out that the EFC repeats many of the same Employment First recommendations in the annual report each year. SMART goals can help the group stay focused in taking actionable steps to reach long-term goals.

Two SMART Goals were discussed under the Headline Goal. The Headline goal is that the EFC act as subject matter experts who provide valuable information, expertise, guidance, and insight to the legislature.

SMART Goal 1 – New Members:

- Invite 4 new members to the EFC with one member representing each of the following: 1) employers, 2) providers, 3) advocates, 4) postsecondary education.

SMART Goal 2 – Member Expectations:

- Create EFC member role description

Feedback regarding Goal 1 was requested from the group. Steve Ruder mentioned that it may be hard to get an employer to dedicate the time needed to be an EFC member. He suggested a few solutions such as modifying membership requirements for businesses so that they could either join for a shorter period of time or not have to stay for the entire meeting. This strategic use of time would still allow them to see the fruits of their efforts. Mr. Ruder emphasized it is important and attainable to bring in one or more employer members. But, they may need an alternative way to participate.

Ms. Moody noted that SCDD staff has a list of possible employers which will be shared with the group. Mr. Luna suggested that the EFC could double up on a category of member if employers not interested. Ms. Issacs noted that it was important for the EFC to truly reflect the diversity of

California. Nick Wavrin suggested that family empowerment centers could be considered (under the advocate category).

Ms. Moody asked that each committee member suggest one member possibility (in any category) with a brief description of why they would be a good choice within the next two weeks. A meeting will be scheduled for EFC members to vet the candidates.

In discussing Goal 2: Member Expectations—creating a role description, Ms. Moody noted that in searching for new members, it would be helpful to have a clear description of what the role entails and involves. Additionally, the EFC could explore the idea of different roles for different members. This would address Mr. Ruder’s concern regarding employer/business member time constraints.

Ms. Moody, Ms. Issacs, and Mr. Luna will work on the role description with a goal to vote on it at the May 4th meeting. Member input is welcome.

Julie Gaona stated that, while the group needs to focus on employers, they also need to focus on those who want jobs. She recounted the 4-year journey of a friend who sought to work at Universal Studios. His persistence was the major factor in getting his dream job. Ms. Gaona emphasized that it is important to educate and encourage jobseekers.

Ms. Morawiec suggested that adding a Regional Center representative to the new members could result in great recommendations and examples coming out of the EFC. Ms. Issacs and Mr. Ruder agreed. It was suggested that a fifth category be added for Regional Center. Arturo Cazares (of Orange County RC) and Katherine Sanders were suggested as possible Regional Center members.

Bridget Kolakosky suggested a 15-member cap on the EFC due to the tendency for productivity to drop if committees are too large.

Future EFC meetings will continue to include SMART Goals for discussion. Additional Headline Goals from past reports will be in areas of Data, Media Campaigns, Education and Training, 639 Implementation, Identifying Best Practices, and Systems Change.

10. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DATA SHARING LEGISLATION

Nancy Wentling stated that DOR and DDS are currently executing a data exchange in accordance with their data sharing agreement.

11. UPDATE ON CIE BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION

Nick Wavrin, CDE, updated members while sharing the written outline on screen. (See SCDD EFC Blueprint Update 2/2/2023).

Nancy Wentling stated that the Department of Rehabilitation has a new Chief Deputy Director, Victor Duron. He was appointed January 17, 2023. She briefly summarized his background and said that he has a commitment to advance equity in addition to his strong belief in the talent and potential of individuals with disabilities.

In December 2022, the CalDOR consumer payment card was introduced. It is a streamlined payment option for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumers to purchase the authorized goods and services they need to obtain and keep employment. Previously, these consumers needed to use paper vouchers. Use of the new card is quick, easy, and confidential. It gives consumers more control and independence and eliminates service delays.

The CalDOR Payment Card is the first of its kind in the nation. Currently, 1,489 cards have been set up. DOR has a goal of distributing 50,000 consumer payment cards by July 2023.

Ms. Wentling went on to review the *Pathways to Success Project (PSP)* which focuses on advancing VR participants in high-demand, high-wage careers (including STEM). It will target underrepresented communities. PSP is funded by an 18.3 million dollar, five-year Disability Innovation Grant. It is currently in year two. The goal is to engage 1,400 participants. Success will be measured by individuals completing training, achieving competitive integrated employment, entering the high wage/high skill positions, increasing hours worked, increasing earnings, access to employer paid benefits, and a reduction of the reliance on public benefits.

In October 2022, another Disability Innovation Grant, *The California's Sub-Minimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Project (CSP)*, began. This 13.9 million dollar grant is in its first year. The grant funds a

demonstration project to develop and test effective evidence-based practices that will be used to inform the DOR, its partners, and the national Vocational Rehabilitation Program. It is a multi-agency collaborative.

CSP will serve Californians with the most significant disabilities (including transition age youth) who are currently, previously in, or at risk of being placed in subminimum wage employment and/or those who have tried and been unsuccessful in attaining competitive employment. Services will be provided at two community college locations: one in North Orange County and one in San Diego County. Specific services include career exploration, employment preparation, training, benefits advisement, providing resources to participant's families, intensive employment services, including customized employment. The project proposes to serve approximately 400 participants. Interventions and lessons learned from the study will inform the coordination and delivery of services leading to CIE across a range of systems.

On January 1st, DOR launched Student Services through fee-for-service providers, expanding the opportunities for community rehabilitation providers to offer a range of pre-employment transition services. The intent is to ensure that services are available to as many individuals as possible, and that all individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to be exposed to and benefit from real work and real pay as early as possible. Services include work experience, job exploration and counseling, workplace readiness training, instruction on self-advocacy.

There is a lot of interest for the CSP from providers. Three providers have been certified to provide DOR Student Services at this time.

Demand Side Employment Initiative (DSEI). In the 2021-22 State Budget prior to the passage of SB 639, DOR and DDS received a one-time appropriation of 20 million dollars to implement strategic initiatives to increase the employment of individuals with disabilities.

DOR is using their portion of the DSEI appropriation to influence key players in the employment landscape who are not typically included in DOR spending.

- Media campaign and business incentives will be directed to small and medium-sized business owners promoting employment of people with disabilities.

- Guiding HR professionals to include working people with disabilities in their professional training programs. This is to remove stigma and increase competency in disability employment inclusion beyond just the legal compliance.

12. MEMBER UPDATE

There were no member updates, questions, or comments.

13. 2023 MEETING DATES AND ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting will occur in May. The meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.