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## Draft Minutes

Name of Organization: Nevada Statewide Independent Living Council (NV SILC) Integrated Workforce Development Subcommittee (IWD)

Date and Time of Meeting: Tuesday, September 28, 2021  
1:00 p.m.

This meeting will be held via videoconference only:

In accordance with NRS 241.023 with changes made based on AB 253 during the Nevada 81<sup>st</sup> Legislative Session, Subcommittee Members must participate using the video conferencing option and have their cameras on while the meeting is in order.

The public may observe this meeting and provide public comment on Zoom.

### **To Join the Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9299041434?pwd=NmM5Tk1Od3ltRzg1enhRYTU3WDdUZz09>

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Meeting Materials Available at: <https://www.nvsilc.com/meetings/>

1. Welcome, Roll Call and Introductions  
Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Members Present: Cindi Swanson, Ace Patrick, Robin Kincaid, Sondra Cosgrove, Raquel O'Neill, Bryan Hilbert, Char Frost, Vickie Essner, Tracy Brown May  
Guests: Steven Cohen, Dora Martinez  
Staff: Dawn Lyons and Wendy Thornley

## 2. Public Comment

Members of the public will be invited to speak; however, no action may be taken on a matter during public comment until the matter itself has been included on an agenda as an item for possible action. Please clearly state and spell your first and last name, if unique or otherwise unfamiliar to the Subcommittee. Public comment may be limited to 3 minutes per person, at the discretion of the chair. Agenda items may be taken out of order, combined or consideration by the public body, and/or pulled or removed from the agenda at any time. Pursuant to NRS 241.020, no action may be taken upon a matter during a period devoted to comments by the general public until the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an item upon which action may be taken.

Dawn Lyons: Reminded members to turn on their cameras during the meeting, this is a requirement according to Open Meeting Law.

## 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from 4/29/2021 & 5/20/2021 **(For Possible Action)**.

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Raquel O'Neill motioned to approve both sets of minutes. Ace Patrick seconded. Members voted and both sets of minutes were approved.

## 4. Discussion and Make Recommendations Regarding NV SILC Providing a Letter in Response to The National Governors' Association Report **(For Possible Action)**.

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Sondra Cosgrove: Many things that this group has talked about, were included in the Report. Sondra Cosgrove and Dawn Lyons drafted a rough draft including suggested edits from Tracy Brown May. The letter was in response to the National Governors Association report. This was the report that came out from the National Governors Association, Governor Steve Sisolak is a part of that association. Dawn drafted a letter in response to that and then it was circulated with the committee to ask for recommendations for any changes. Dawn started an initial draft and would like suggestions about phrasing the part about Vocational Rehabilitation. This report shows that many people are thinking in the same way about opportunities right now for remote learning, lots of different types of opportunities for working at home or being able to work in a way that's meaningful.

Raquel O'Neill: Thanked the group for opening this conversation. She is the Chair of the Rehab Council. She read the letter and asked for more information regarding highlighting Vocational Rehabilitation in the letter.

Dawn Lyons: The draft letter was written with current information she had, and she would like suggestions on the phrasing in the letter. From the lens of the governor, he knows that the Vocational Rehabilitation is appointed as the main contact for persons with disabilities, for employment in Nevada. She is trying to portray to him that there are other people who choose not to engage in Vocational Rehabilitation, or who choose not to follow the federal guidelines of Vocational Rehabilitation so they're not able to participate, that there is still a gap of people who don't report having disabilities or don't get SSI or SSDI. There is a whole population that need to be reached out to.

Mechelle Merrill: Vocational Rehabilitation does take federal funds. There are many visually impaired people who are not looking for employment. The primary rule being that all Vocational Rehabilitation's efforts, must be toward people who are seeking employment. There is

a percentage of the population that's under the age of 55 and does not have a visual impairment, that Vocational Rehabilitation cannot serve because employment is not the prime motivator and they could be new onset disabilities, there are many reasons why they are not looking at employment right now. And yet Vocational Rehabilitation must be very cut and dry in the way they approach it and so it looks very limiting on paper. It is not an opinion; it is just the way it works when taking the federal funding.

Dawn Lyons: She will clarify the second bullet in the letter and send out to the group. She asked for the others in the group to give her feedback so that she can forward the draft letter to the SILC. Even though the SILC is going to be pushing this letter towards the Governor's Office because the Governor's Office is recognized as a responsible entity. The letter may still come back to the subcommittee if the Governor does elect to move forward with this suggested template.

5. Discussion and Make Recommendations Regarding a Stakeholders' Event in Las Vegas to Discuss Integrated Employment in Nevada **(For Possible Action)**.

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Sondra Cosgrove: Feels that there is an increase in awareness of inclusive language by local government. She is grateful to the members of this group for their efforts in using inclusive language, she feels it is making a difference.

Dawn Lyons: Several partners have gotten together to present a film about a company called Vertical Harvest. The film is called "Hearts of Glass", that will be shown on October 13<sup>th</sup> with a panel discussion afterwards. Dawn Lyons will be posting the event on the SILC website shortly. October 13<sup>th</sup> will be Day 1 of the upcoming two-day SILC quarterly meeting. October 14<sup>th</sup> will be the second day of the quarterly meeting and the normal Council meeting structure will happen on that day.

Vertical Harvest hires both people with, and without disabilities, in an integrated setting to create a vertical farming industry within their locality. They serve their local restaurants, many of whom, have a great reputation.

The "Hearts of Glass" film will be available online to view, starting on October 7<sup>th</sup>. People can go to the registration site anytime, sign up and watch the trailer.

On October 13<sup>th</sup>, the film will be presented for those in attendance and through Zoom, at 1:00pm. The panel discussion will begin at 2:15pm. There will be cookies and drinks.

They have three panelists from Vertical Harvest, who are going to join the gathering, virtually. Sabra McWhirter Clark will be moderating the panel discussion.

A representative from Sephora will be an employer panelist, and Dora Martinez has offered to be a consumer panelist. Everyone who participates, will be allowed to ask questions when recognized by the moderator.

After the panel discussion, there will be a small survey that they would like people to fill out and if they do, they can be automatically entered into a drawing for prizes.

The event will take place at Betty's Village, which is next to Opportunity Village in Las Vegas. Opportunity Village was able to get the funding for the building and operation of Betty's Village, which is a small community of apartments, a community center, buildings, and grounds,

set up as a model for an Independent Living community. The community has support services for the residents.

It was decided to have a separate stakeholder mini conference to get the message out to local business restaurants on the Strip in Las Vegas, due to the big names in the food industry, being in the southern part of the state. The Stakeholders' Mini-Conference will be an hour long, on October 19<sup>th</sup>, at a place called The Space. This is where they have an event time called Mondays Dark. There will be refreshments and door prizes for this event as well.

As many stakeholders as possible, will be invited. This has been organized by, and will be facilitated by, Dawn Lyons, the Executive Director of the SILC, Catherine Nielsen, the Interim Executive Director of the DD Council, and Raquel O'Neill, the Executive Director of the Rehab Council. Invitations will be sent with the link to register to watch the film. They will preview the trailer during the mini conference for those who have not had a chance to watch the film. Next, a discussion will take place about what Vertical Harvest is about and what is possible to be accomplished in Nevada.

Raquel O'Neill: She, Catherine, and Dawn have been invited to the upcoming Las Vegas Chef's Board meeting. The Chef's Board and many culinary and industry people are getting together. This will be their first meeting after their busy summer season. This is a promising time to get in front of the industry.

Dawn, Catherine, and Raquel will be sharing about the need for participation from businesses across the Las Vegas Strip, not just with a model like Vertical Harvest, but also inviting them to participate on the Rehabilitation Council, and in other ways if they are interested.

The head of diversity in HR for MGM, will be attending. Dawn is hoping to meet these individuals in person, get them on board and excited to collaborate.

Sondra Cosgrove: This Board meeting will be a good opportunity to show that this film illustrates what happens when the ideas this group has been talking about, come to fruition. In this instance, using vertical farming done with hydroponics. This will start the conversation. She thanked Dawn Lyons and this group for putting everything together.

6. Discussion and Make Recommendations Regarding Future Legislation Impacting Integrated Employment in Nevada **(For Possible Action)**.

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Sondra Cosgrove: The interim study on Workforce Development and Community Colleges, was Assembly Bill 450. They have not completed any of the Interim committees' legislative assignments. This is because everyone is busy with redistricting and probably will be busy and registering for at least two months. She recommended that when opportunities come up soon to provide public comments redistricting to participate, people do so, because this is where they get fair representation, and to make sure that the people that they vote for, sees them. In normal times during the interim, legislators are assigned to the committees. The committees then put together an agenda. Advocates talk to legislators and go through several hearings to get bills drafted, and then get ready for the upcoming legislative session.

Due to times of crisis, there is not time to wait to go through the whole legislative process to address problems.

She has seen that the business community has stepped in to fill voids that are left when waiting for legislation, such as when students needed laptops for remote learning that would have waited for the legislative process while the students went without.

Bryan Hilbert: Organizations are having trouble recruiting qualified candidates. He thinks if that continues much into the new year, it is a significant opportunity for individuals with disabilities to talk about the untapped pool of talent that they represent, and people who, by means of their benefits or their health may only want and need to work part time.

His office at the university, has almost 200 positions currently open. There's going to be space to approach employers and discuss either having job positions stay vacant or work with persons with disabilities for job placements.

It is going to be a once in a 10-year cycle that there is a labor shortage like this, that was started by the Pandemic. Much of what is happening right now has been endemic and underlying in the workforce for quite a while, and it has been accelerated by the Pandemic.

He complimented Vocational Rehabilitation. He works with their team that works with people in college programs and knows that their counselors have been encouraging people to get part time jobs and work experience while going to school. Entering the workforce for the first time is hard for anyone, and it's 10 times as hard if they are on benefits and they are a person with a disability. Vocational Rehabilitation has been innovative in how they spend money to serve pockets of those populations, very well. He is a prior client of Vocational Rehabilitation and is grateful. He also works with college students who are involved with Vocational Rehabilitation.

Mechelle Merrill: Vocational Rehabilitation is doing a lot and refining their process. When they have an individual that wants to seek higher education such as a bachelor's or master's level, Vocational Rehabilitation is requiring that they get some practical experience in a profession that leads to that field. This way, they are not going in with zero knowledge or experience and can make the most educated choices for themselves.

Vocational Rehabilitation is preparing for the upcoming legislative season to acquire funding.

7. Discussion and Make Recommendations Regarding a Strategic Plan for Workforce Inclusivity (For Possible Action).

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Dawn Lyons: The group has not revisited this subject since the last meeting. It can be put on the next agenda.

Ace Patrick: Agrees and feels that this agenda item can wait for a while.

Sondra Cosgrove: The Great Basin Institute, just announced that they received a \$160,000 grant to employ people locally to start talking about tourism in Nevada's rural areas to attract people who want to do birding, hiking or explore what Nevada looks like. There are employment opportunities happening in the North.

Mechelle Merrill: Vocational Rehabilitation being a statewide program, everything they do is done with statewide emphasis so everything she has said, applies to all three regions of the state. Recently, Vocational Rehabilitation has lost employee, Wesley Martin, who has passed away. Vocational Rehabilitation only has two main offices, everything else that they do in their

other eleven offices, are all collaborations with Job Connect offices around the state. Employment Security staff are busy doing unemployment claims and they are coming back into the offices on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Job Connect will be reopening around the state, October 1<sup>st</sup>. Mechelle expects it to be a transitional opening because Job Connect has had an enormous change in staff.

Many people that were pulled away from their pre-Covid jobs to do Unemployment Claims, ended up leaving the agency and Job Connect has replaced staff that now have to be trained to do their new jobs

Bryan Hilbert put the Bloom Consulting link in the chat: <https://www.bloomconsultingco.com/cc/>

Sondra Cosgrove: One of the issues that she has heard about, especially in the rural areas, is that much of the new economy is based on internet access. It is known how bad that access is, out in Nevada's rural areas. With new Federal funds focused on infrastructure, the rural areas will get connected.

Ace Patrick: Asked how young adults with degrees are getting jobs and job training.

Sondra Cosgrove: They already need experience and a degree. The College of Southern Nevada's workforce training side of the house, just got a large Federal Department of Labor grant to provide internships. For example, when someone comes in and wants to go into Behavioral Health, Nursing, etc. the college approaches employers about hiring for internships for people with no experience. The college will pay the employee's salary.

Mechelle Merrill: Vocational Rehabilitation wants people to get their feet wet. Someone who wants to get into nursing who does not have a nursing degree, can get a job in the medical field doing related work. This experience enables them to make the most educated choice. Vocational Rehabilitation can do community-based assessments so that people can try things on and see how they fit, internship apprenticeships.

Ace Patrick: Stated that there is a huge need for more Personal Care Assistants (PCAs) and that they do not need to have degrees to become PCAs. She mentioned the possibility of advocating to pay for training for PCAs.

Mechelle Merrill: Vocational Rehabilitation has applied for the largest grant it has ever applied for. It was a federal offering, in collaboration with CSN and Great Basin. It is an opportunity for working with a group called Nevada Hope. It is going to give Vocational Rehabilitation the ability to work with young people who are coming out of high school who show interest or aptitude or both in medical professions, to help them get certified to be CNAs.

To provide the structure in the funding to help them build stackable credentials so that if they want to be perhaps, a Pharmacy Tech, work in a doctor's office, or to become a nurse, they can build upon and change their futures. Vocational Rehabilitation wants to emphasize getting young people from rural and small less-populated communities, bring them into the cities, get them the training they need and then facilitate them going back to their home communities where they are so needed. Vocational Rehabilitation has not heard yet if they got the grant.

Ace Patrick: How closely can Vocational Rehabilitation work with the Centers for Independent Living?

Mechelle Merrill: Sometimes better than others. Sometimes Vocational Rehabilitation is seen as the employment resource and the centers are seen as the community resource. Collaboration could always be more and better.

Sondra Cosgrove: Outreach would be a good discussion to be brought up in the interim Committee on Workforce Development.

Dawn Lyons: Agrees that it is a good thing to bring up. There needs to be more of a connection and collaboration.

Sondra Cosgrove: Another important topic is incentivizing PCAs to get that certification, offering them a pathway into the medical field that offers better pay and counts towards credits in a CNA program or other profession.

#### 8. Member Announcements and Upcoming Events Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Dawn Lyons: Reminded the group that the Quarterly SILC meeting will be on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mechelle Merrill: Vocational Rehabilitation will be doing its comprehensive statewide needs assessment, which is a prescriptive evaluation that they pay for. They have an outside party, San Diego State University that comes in and they speak with stakeholder groups, internal staff members, clients, and community partners. Mechelle will be reaching out to get members of the public and community partners to speak at these roundtables with the reviewers to give some reflections from the community about Vocational Rehabilitation. She will share the information with this group.

The Needs Assessment will be on November 15<sup>th</sup>, in Las Vegas with a meeting in Reno as well.

Dawn Lyons: Disability Awareness Day will be happening on Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, at Lorenzi Park in Las Vegas. The SILC will have a booth, and the Youth Leader will attend because she is recruiting for Youth Action Council members.

Raquel O'Neill: October 15<sup>th</sup> is National White Cane Awareness Day. It is a group of blindness organizations and services to the blind, that are getting together at Cornerstone Park in Las Vegas from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm. It is a celebration and a chance to share resources. Anyone interested, can contact Raquel.

Tracy Brown May: She and Assemblywoman Collins have been working with one of Tracy's colleagues in the Assembly. They are working to finalize dates for a Disability Forum, which will include members from all the disability groups, to gather to discuss important issues and begin to draft legislation in the Interim.

They are currently waiting for committee assignments that should be out within the next week or so. The Interim committees that would have typically been staffed, don't exist anymore. The committees that existed during session, are now functioning in the interim.

They are expecting dates from the Treasurer's Office. They are anticipating a proclamation from the Governor's office in the next day, recognizing October as Disability Employment Awareness Month, talking about the state's perspective regarding the importance of engaging

the Disability Community and employment. Almost everything is dependent on people having good access to high quality internet.

9. Approve Next Meeting Agenda Items and Meeting Dates **(For Possible Action)**

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

Sondra Cosgrove: Wants a process for members of the public to join this subcommittee.

Dawn Lyons: They can reach out to any member, who will then reach out to the Chair.

People can reach out to Dawn for ideas for the next agenda.

Cindi Swanson: People in the state of Nevada, maintaining their SSI Medicaid and SSDI benefits when working. Nevada apparently does not have a Work Incentive Planning Administration, which is a tremendous loss.

Sondra Cosgrove: That is one of the most important things.

Bryan Hilbert: The Federal Government wants this program to exist to give people benefits training. They typically do an RFP, and organizations submit for that contract. Many people do not work due to fearing losing their benefits, especially students and younger adults. Perhaps Dawn could write to both the Centers for Independent Living and see if they would be interested in seeking this grant because he thinks the benefits training goes hand in hand with the independent, self-directed philosophy.

Mechelle Merrill: The RFP went out and it was granted to a Colorado organization, that involves several states. It's a challenge, the grant is only \$150,000. By the time they get their computers and training from Social Security and access that they need, a good chunk of their grant time would be already expired by the time they were up and ready to provide the services and then it's a statewide program.

Vocational Rehabilitation is trying to work with independent people who have gone through the Virginia Commonwealth process to become benefit planners. They are certified, and Vocational Rehabilitation is going to pay them with Vocational Rehabilitation dollars to do it on an individual basis.

Dawn Lyons: Will invite the WIPA representative to these subcommittee meetings to work on disseminating information on the Disability Forum.

Tracy Brown May: Opportunity Villages was not able to refer people to Vocational Rehabilitation unless they already had a job offer and then, it was often too late, they were no longer considering employment.

She met with Senator Sherrod Brown from Ohio, who is carrying a bill in the United States Senate called the Social Security Restoration Act, and his goal is to raise all the limits so people can have a little bit more money in their bank accounts, they can make more money, they can go to work, and not have an adverse result. The goal is to make sure that people can still maintain Medicaid benefits, so they can still have their medications, even though they're being employed. There are national initiatives that are happening while we are having this conversation on a statewide level as well.



Cindi Swanson: She is concerned about getting good medical care and maintaining Medicaid and Medicare benefits for her 34 yr. old son who has Down Syndrome. Earlier in his life, she focused on assisting him with employment to get enough Social Security credits for him to become eligible for Medicare. She feels more parents need to get this kind of information early on in their children's lives.

Sondra Cosgrove: Agrees that this information must start out early in these families' lives. She would like this to go on the next agenda.

Tracy Brown May: The Opportunity Village team is currently at the Arbonne Roundtable on Workforce Development. They are communicating with the Governor, who is also attending. Tracy has let them know that there is a need for disability and benefit planners to assist with people getting jobs to grow the workforce for persons with disabilities. She mentioned working to access funds for this.

Sondra Cosgrove: If a person does not have access to technology right now, they are not in any of the conversations that are happening. She would like this on the next agenda as well.

Tracy Brown May: When we talk about doing these types of forums, traditionally we're meeting during the workday, but it can be very problematic for attendance. Does it make more sense to do a disability form on a weekend or after hours?

Ace Patrick: It might be better to hear from people during the week.

Dawn Lyons: People might be available during the weekends, maybe one in the morning and one in the evening.

Ace Patrick: Likes the idea of offering two options.

There will be a Doodle poll sent out for scheduling the next subcommittee meeting.

## 10. Public Comment

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Dora Martinez: Today is National Voter Registration Day. She thanked Tracy Brown-May for her work with Assemblywoman Cohen and Dora. Dora's group, Disability Action Coalition, also worked on voter registration and the Secretary of State's website accessibility.

Sondra Cosgrove: She put the link to register to vote, in the meeting chat: <https://registertovote.nv.gov/>. She tells her university students to go online to confirm their voting information before going to the voting polls.

11. Adjournment

Dr. Sondra Cosgrove, Subcommittee Chair

**NOTE:** We are pleased to make reasonable accommodations for members of the public who have disabilities and wish to attend the meeting. If special arrangements for the meeting are necessary, please notify Wendy Thornley at (775) 687-0551 as soon as possible and at least five days in advance of the meeting. If you wish, you may email her at [wthornley@adsd.nv.gov](mailto:wthornley@adsd.nv.gov). According to NRS 241.020, supporting materials for this meeting is available at: 3416 Goni Road, #D-132, Carson City, NV 89706 or by contacting Wendy Thornley at (775) 687-0551 or by email at [wthornley@adsd.nv.gov](mailto:wthornley@adsd.nv.gov).

***Agenda Posted at the Following Locations:***

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