

DakotaLink Advisory Council

Quarterly Zoom Meeting

Meeting Notes

March 20th, 2025

The DakotaLink Advisory Council meeting on March 20th covered key legislative updates, advocacy efforts, and upcoming activities. The President is expected to sign an executive order affecting the Department of Education, but funding for low-income families and special education remains intact. The grantees requested \$42 million for fiscal year 2026, with \$500,000 allocated to South Dakota. The upcoming Assistive Technology Awareness Day is set for April 30, with a major media blitz planned. The council also recognized the contributions of various agency representatives, including Sandy Neyhart, who is retiring. The next meeting will be held in Sioux Falls and Rapid City on June 25 as well as on Zoom.

Welcome and Roll Call

- Page welcomes everyone to the Spring 2025 DakotaLink Advisory Council meeting, mentioning legislative updates, advocacy efforts, and upcoming activities.
- Richard conducts the roll call, confirming the presence of Brett, Burden, Page Hudson, Richard Moeller, Kendra Gottsleben, Morgan Beckman, Kayla Kane, Amy Scepaniak, Mollie Keating, Bill McEntaffer, Beth Schiltz, Konnie Ellis, Tana Zwart and others.
- Morgan Beckman introduces herself as the new quality assurance and support specialist, replacing Jessica Sehnert on the council.
- Richard continues with roll call, confirming the attendance of all present.

Approval of Previous Minutes and Agenda

- Richard calls for a motion to approve the previous minutes, with Bill moving and Amy seconding.
- The minutes are approved without any changes.
- Richard asks for a motion to approve the draft agenda, with Sandy moving and Konnie seconding.
- The agenda is approved without opposition.

Legislative Updates and Advocacy Efforts

- Page discusses the President's upcoming executive order to close the Department of Education, ensuring continued support for low-income families, Title One funding, and special education services.
- Page emphasizes the importance of the Assistive Technology Act (AT Act) as a law, not just a grant, and the need for advocacy efforts for additional funding.
- The return on investment documentation for the AT Act is mentioned, highlighting its impact on the educational system and workforce.
- Page shares details from the leadership symposium, focusing on brainstorming and collaboration among program managers to improve the implementation of the AT Act.

Assistive Technology Awareness Day and Media Blitz

- Page announces Assistive Technology Awareness Day on April 30, with a major media blitz involving social media, advertising, and highlighting key talent within the DakotaLink Advisory Council.
- Page encourages members to share success stories and impactful stories for the media blitz.
- The importance of showcasing the talent within the council and the agency representatives is emphasized.
- Page mentions the upcoming in-person meeting in Sioux Falls and Rapid City, with options for Zoom participation.

Funding and Legislative Updates for Fiscal Year 26

- Page discusses the request for \$42 million for fiscal year 26, including \$2 million for program efficiency.
- The funding breakdown for South Dakota is approximately \$500,000.
- DakotaLink's dual role in providing nonprofit AT Act services and fee-for-service activities is explained.
- The importance of the return on investment documentation in presenting the case for increased funding is reiterated.

Hill Visit Strategy and Legislative Support

- Page outlines the strategy for virtual visits to the Hill, emphasizing the need for open communication with policy makers.
- The efforts to support Senators Markey and Kramer in their bipartisan efforts on the AT funding act are mentioned.

- The process of sending "dear colleague" letters to legislators to request meetings and support is explained.
- Page highlights the importance of having success stories and data-backed success stories to present to legislators.

Recognition of Agency Representatives

- Page begins recognizing the contributions of agency representatives, starting with Lyle Cook, Director of the Oyin Aya Kay Indian Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Lyle's extensive experience and advocacy for assistive technology are highlighted.
- Bill McEntaffer from the Department of Labor and Regulation is recognized for his 30 years of experience and contributions to employment initiatives.
- Kayla Kane, Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, is recognized for her support to individuals with disabilities and community involvement.
- Mollie Keating from the Disability Rights Advocate is recognized for her advocacy and direct service to individuals with disabilities.
- Matt Cain, CEO of Independent Living Choices, is recognized for his leadership and contributions to independent living services.
- Beth Schiltz from the Department of Education is recognized for her work in disability services and accessibility.

Page thanks all agency representatives for their contributions and dedication to assistive technology and accessibility in South Dakota.

Next Meeting Plan and Adjournment

- Page proposes the next meeting date as June 25th, at approximately 10am Central, 9am Mountain. This will be an in-person meeting if you can make it to either Sioux Falls or Rapid City on your own or you can Zoom in with an invite coming closer toward the meeting date.

Richard calls for a motion to adjourn the meeting, which is seconded and approved by all members.