

# **KATS Network Advisory Council Minutes**

Date: September 7, 2022

Time: 9:37 – 11:23 AM, Eastern Time

Place: Harold R Benson Research and Demonstration Farm, Kentucky State University, 1525 Mills Lane, Frankfort KY

## **Welcome & Introductions – Mindy McGirt**

### **Advisory Council Members**

Present: Mindy McGirt, Kevin McCormack, Samantha Farthing, Nancy Perry, Joe Cowan, Lisa McKeown, Alyssa Whitis (proxy for Andre Ryssemus), Bill Titus – Zoom participant

Absent: Gerry Gordon-Brown, Melanie Peskoe, Suhas Kulkarni, Jessica Endler Smith, Nicole Maher

### **KATS Network Coordinating Center and ATRC/Project CARAT Staff**

Pat Kitzman (Hazard), Darrin Breeding (Carl Perkins), Jocelyn Warren, Alison Amshoff (enTECH), Betsy Eiserman, Julie Roell (Redwood), Jana Billingsley (Wendell Foster), Christina Espinosa-Bard – Zoom participant (HDI-CATS), Carol Weber, Lisa Staub, Alex Ingram, Jimmy Brown (KATS)

### **Others in Attendance**

Tracy Lundergan (Captioning and CARAT Services), Chelsea Naugle, Tara Eversole (ASL Interpreters)

### **Approval of Minutes from Past Meeting(s)**

Kevin McCormick motioned for approval of the June 9, 2022 meeting minutes. Mindy McGirt provided a second. Motion carried.

### **Old Business:**

#### **Project CARAT Paducah Closure – Lisa Staub**

- On June 9th Terri Ross, who ran the Paducah Project CARAT center, found out that their building was being sold and they had to be out by the end of

July. We looked at different options to see if there was any way that they could move, but ultimately, they decided that they would not reopen and would donate their inventory to the other programs. Lisa went to the center, and the majority of the items were loaded into a trailer and moved to Louisville. At the same time as this move, the flooding happened in Eastern Kentucky. Most of the items were taken by moving truck to Hazard. Some items were picked up by enTECH. There are still some items in storage at McDowell that will be given out to other sites. Some of the ramps from Paducah went to the CAL sites in Murray and Bowling Green.

## **New Business:**

### **Updates of KATS Network Coordinating Center Activities**

- Review of State Plan – Carol Weber
  - The report was submitted at the end of June for fiscal year '19 and fiscal year '20. Current KATS staff were not involved at the coordinating center at that point in time. The main reports are financial expenditures. We are required to spend at least 60 percent of our money on state level activities and the remaining on state leadership activities. The money spent on state leadership must have at least five percent spent on transition, either technical assistance for transition or training for transition. While we are fairly confident that the five percent was spent on those activities, there was not enough documentation available to report this. We claimed comparability for state financing activities due to alternative financing with the KATLC. We show loans out there in 2019, and although the KATLC is not currently active, we hope they will be again soon.
- New Roles for Coordinating Center – Carl Weber
  - Alex Ingram has joined the KATS Coordinating Center. Specific job responsibilities are still being determined.
- Opening of New ATRC in Hazard – Carol Weber
  - The KATS Network has a new ATRC, the Appalachian Center for Assistive Technology (ACAT), in Hazard. The director for the center is Pat Kitzman. They have been very busy recently getting items out to people in the flooded areas.
- Program Updates – Lisa Staub
  - The nominating committee has been active, and the advisory council now has two new members. Joe Cowan is a returning member. He is

replacing another individual, so his term will expire next spring, so he will need to update his application to apply again. The other new member is Melanie Peskoe who will be serving through August 2, 2025. She had hoped to attend virtually today, but she was not able to. The remaining members who needed to apply for reappointment were all reappointed. There is one other application from the parent of a child with a disability from the Northern Kentucky. We are waiting to hear on this

- One issue in our reuse program is that people wish to donate power wheelchairs and scooters, which are not in working condition. Worked with HDI to contact some organizations to see if they would donate batteries. No progress in this area, but Wayne Grau, with MK Battery in Louisville, is willing to set up a time to meet with the centers and provide training on ways to test batteries and do some diagnosis to determine the condition of these items.
- Another issue involves options for hospital beds, as most centers do not have the space to store them to have available for reuse. We receive a number of calls and e-mails for potential donations, along with requests for hospital beds. Considering working more with exchanges on the website to help these individuals.
- Pick-up of items, particularly larger items like power wheelchairs and scooters that donors have difficulty transporting continues to be a challenge. Looking at possibly approaching some of the vendors that work with Voc Rehab around the state to see if they could help with this.
- A lot of requests are made to KATS for assistance with hearing aids. Starkey has a new program called Neighbors in Need which we will add to our resource list.
- Social Media – Alex Ingram
  - Using social media as a cost-effective way of marketing the KATS Network. Facebook site is becoming a lot more active. Please be sure to follow the KATS Network and Project CARAT. Working on getting our Twitter back up. Plan to start a LinkedIn and TikTok, so look out for these.
- Invoicing Portal for ARTC – Carol Weber
  - Ryan Creech has been working on a web portal to enter invoice information. This will give ATRCs a way to enter the information we

need and provide a record of it for when we do our next state plans. Ryan will demonstrate later in the meeting.

## **Updates on Regional AT Resource Centers/Project CARAT Sites:**

### **Carl D Perkins – Darrin Breeding**

- Did not move a lot of equipment in second quarter, possibly due to folks are hanging onto their items for possible future needs. Reutilized 49 items valued at \$3,080 and loaned eight items. Reports on 15 demonstrations and about 25 information assistance. Using Facebook for public awareness. Dalton, an assistant at the center is leaving at the end of September. Working on incorporating training with their students. In the past the students did work within the work adjustment program by helping clean and refurbish the equipment. The teacher for the program has resigned and moved out of state, and they are working on filling that position and training the new person to help work with CARAT. It will difficult to deliver or pickup items. Recently folks have been bringing items in and picking up the items they need, so CARAT is still very successful at the site. Even though the last quarter was a little low, the current quarter has been busy. Numerous items have been sent out due to the flooding, Some sites were set up to take equipment, so these items were picked up and dropped off. Having a tough time getting ramps returned. Some have been out since 2019. Calls are made every few months, and they are using the ramps, so Darrin requested to move ramps to reutilization.

### **enTECH – Alison Amshoff**

- Numbers are reported in the packet. enTECH was a little bit lower for the last reporting month and hit pretty hard with COVID as well. A bit backlogged as a number of therapists and support staff were out with COVID. enTECH has experienced some changes. May have heard conversation that enTECH is closing, but it is not closing. The outpatient rehab therapy program at Spalding closed in the summer. Some people may have become confused because they saw enTECH as a therapy center and it was kind of interchangeable. The outpatient therapy program is now being operated by a third party, so there is another agency on Spalding's campus that is operating the outreach therapy. EnTECH is still there operating as it always has been, with some staffing changes. Jocelyn

Warren, occupational therapist at Spalding, and Alison, speech-language pathologist are working at enTECH. Basically, wanted to have a sustainable model. Before were operating based on a lot of insurance funding, and having difficulty with this, so the university moved to have enTECH restructured. Notified in the middle of June that the outpatient therapy clinic was closing, and it closed within a month. Have been meeting with university staff for social media, branding, and announcements that enTECH is still around, and providing services. In the past two or three weeks have probably received more calls about services and assistive technology and various questions than had in a month or two. Working on getting the word out that enTECH is around and able to offer more services, so it won't be confused with direct therapy versus assistive technology.

### **Redwood – Betsy Eiserman**

- Redwood has had a high number of reutilization and a high number of device loans, to carry through the past three months. Received a giant donation from Amazon of gloves and masks. Able to use approximately \$80,000 worth of materials from that donation in Redwood. The rest was reutilized to other organizations in Northern Kentucky, which helped create more connections and outreach with those different community partners. In addition to the donation helping with public awareness and outreach, also had several meetings with an organization called May We Help. Looking to more partnerships with them as they are in Cincinnati, and reutilize mobility equipment to children and adults. Provided training at University of Cincinnati in one of their master's level speech classes, on augmentative and alternative communication. This has led to more contacts from referrals with people in those organizations, and expectation that reutilizations and loans will increase. On August 1st Redwood merged with Easter Seals Greater Cincinnati, which has made Redwood grow by about 66 percent. Allows for a bigger reach across the river. Realize that KATS equipment can't go across the river, but has helped people know that they can access programs and services in Northern Kentucky as well as right across the river.

### **Wendell-Foster – Jana Billingsley**

- Has received a lot of reuse items. Given a couple manual wheelchairs to the coordinator at the opportunity center who lives in Owensboro, and has

been facilitating transport of those items to the Eastern Kentucky area. Received a power wheelchair in working order and able to reutilize to someone who had a stroke whose power wheelchair had suddenly stopped working. An 11-month-old in a body cast from two broken legs needed help participating in her Head Start program. Family given rental of a high/low chair, that allowed her to continue participating with her peers. Had about \$26,000 in reuse items. Collaborated with therapy department and 3D printed picture symbols for one of Wendell Foster's speech therapists. This was used for outpatient with a vision impairment, which saved the department a lot of money. Advertising AT awareness day on social media with the video of the center.

### **Hazard – Pat Kitzman**

- Expanded role in July from just being a Project CARAT site to now being an ATRC to help serve Eastern Kentucky. Extremely busy with Project CARAT for the last four or five months, especially since the flooding. Breathitt County and Perry County were ground zero for the flooding. Over just the last three or four weeks reutilized over \$9,000 worth of equipment. Extremely thankful for the big donation from Western Kentucky. It was more than expected, especially the adult diapers. Hazard is one of the sites that goes through a lot of them, so that has been a Godsend. As an ATRC, Hazard is in the process of hiring someone to help Pat and Keisha Hudson. Moving space around to accommodate new roles, continuing to work within the community, and excited to take on new role to serve the folks in Eastern Kentucky.

### **Updates on ACL Public Health Grant – Lisa Staub**

- Met with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to discuss the grant at the end of May. Had some problems connecting again but are moving forward. Identified Ryan Creech with the Voc Rehab AT Branch as the person with the expertise work on accessible websites and information. Project this as a two-year process, so Ryan will split his duties between Voc Rehab and KATS.

### **Invoicing Portal for ATRC – Ryan Creech**

- This is a portal on the KATS website for the ATRCs to input monthly invoices. Each ATRC director will have an account and be able to create accounts for other people that work at their center. Site designed with

accessibility in mind, and easy to tab around. As you go through, there is an indicator to show exactly what you're doing or clicking on. Demonstrated sample invoice, for a made-up ATRC called Ryan's ATRC. Date presented for September 22nd with each of the line items, which are the actual budget items from ATRC extended budgets, and space to give the total amount being invoiced. The indicator is visible in red to show where you're at, and to add percentage for leadership versus state level activities. There is a button to add notes, if selected allows edits to the information. Can add descriptions or whatever is needed in the box. Everything on the portal saves automatically when the information is entered, and it keeps it all up to date. Can add attachments with the attachments button. Can also add a description to show what that looks like. Example demonstrated for Redwood data. When move to the attachments, can see a file attachment entered. If a receipt or other document needs to be uploaded, this can be done. Can go to the dashboard on the menu which shows the center permissions and allows each center to see their data including the invoices, current status, dashboard, and new invoice. The dashboard shows the most recent five invoices and in invoice history all invoices submitted are visible. The MOA button will look different for an administrator, who can see all the active MOAs for the centers, the most recently filed invoices, and depending on your permission level, allows the user to either view or edit the MOA. View shown of an MOA and the breakdown of all the advanced budget items at the bottom. This is what populates the invoices to allow entry of amounts for each item. Within ATRCs can see a list of everyone attached to that center, their access level, add or edit the list, send a reset password or edit information. It should be a simple way for everyone to report their invoices. Training will be provided when this is ready to go.

### **KATS Advisory Board Committees – Mindy McGirt**

- Strategic Planning/State Plan for Assistive Technology - This committee identifies and explores new opportunities to grow and enhance the existing programs for the KATS Network including Project CARAT. It will explore opportunities for new and innovative programming to reach underserved populations and/or regions of the state.
- Program Marketing/Awareness – This committee is responsible for assisting with marketing the KATS Network and its affiliated programs such as Project CARAT, SHARP, RampUP! and regional ATRCs.

- Assistive Technology Conference Planning – This committee helps plan the AT conference, share connections and suggest training topics.
- Nominating Committee - This committee is responsible for identifying and recruiting potential candidates for appointments to fill the KATS Network Advisory Council vacancy.

## Updates from Agency Representatives

- Kentucky OVR, Alyssa Whitis (proxy for Andre Ryssemus) – No updates.
- State Independent Living, Lisa McKeown work for CAL, Center for Accessible Living. CAL has helped coordinate cleaning supplies and resources. They took walkers, wheelchairs and other items to Hazard to assist with the flooding. Had a lot of resources from when the tornado came through in the Bowling Green area last year, and these were reshared. Continuing to do different things in the centers, including several different ADA celebration events. The Louisville office had about 10 or 15 events. Esther from the Statewide Independent Living Council led a focus group at the center with about six consumers and four staff members to work on a three-year plan for Independent Living.
- Education Cabinet, Kevin McCormack - Department of Education. Getting accustomed to the new school year, and into the new rhythms, as the new school year has begun.

## Open Discussion from Advisory Council

- Kevin McCormack – The AT Lending Library for the visually impaired has received some recent donations of items that are no longer made. Their lending library is used for teachers in the state to borrow equipment, so these items don't serve the purpose of their lending library. Offered these items for donation to Project CARAT. One of these devices is an OCR reader, which can read, scan, and verbally tell you what is on a piece of paper placed on the device. The other is a magnifier, or CCTV. It has about 17-18 inches of a screen, and you put items under this, and it will make it as big as is needed. Please let Kevin know if you are interested in this donation.
- Lisa McKeown – Requested updates on the new loan program? Recalls conversation on Pennsylvania loan program.
- Carol Weber – The Pennsylvania Assistive Technology loan program was unsuccessful in their grant. Continued interest in working with Kentucky but



does not have the additional money at this point, so it is still being worked on. Heard from Dave Matheis, Center for Accessible Living, with request to update the KATS funding book. Provided update from KATLC, the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation. It has been granted an exception, and can now go out and solicit banks individually, as they were unable to get any responses to requests for proposals. Sarah Richardson, with OVR, is in charge of that program, so she will be trying to find a new bank partner for KATLC. The bank partner can be anywhere in the state. If anyone has contacts at banks or ideas on banks, please share the contacts.

- Jimmy Brown – Reports a relative that is in charge of the Kentucky Credit Union League and may be able to get some information out to some interested parties.
- Nancy Perry – Reported on DeafFest, in Danville, with thanks to KCDHH. Large turnout, good weather, and performers, including singers, comedians, and magicians. Included a theater component, booths, and crafts for sale. Had a foundation sponsor, Julie Beth Hayden, from VR, who had worked in the Danville area, but passed away. A tent was set up with VR staff and booths staffed by different employers, and opportunities for work. Another tent was set up to provide services for deaf and hard of hearing. This included people that were in wheelchairs and had visual impairments, and Nancy talked with them and reported they were in need of socialization after being stuck at home. Appreciates that ongoing education can be provided by KCDHH to the deaf and hard of hearing community, deaf-blind, low vision.
- Carol Weber – Reports that the week before the meeting Alex, Lisa, Carol, Pat, and Keisha met with Kentucky Emergency Management and the federal emergency management to look at some temporary housing trailers in Hazard. It was reported that they had about 800 applications for temporary housing, with about ten of those being from individuals or family members with some mobility needs. Currently looking at the accessibility of those trailers and trying to work with them to make sure that they can provide housing for people with mobility impairments. There's a lot to consider. These trailers have very narrow doorways, small bathrooms, and not a lot of open accessibility type things. It was reported that in Western Kentucky, following the tornadoes there were plenty of hotel rooms and state park lodges which could better accommodate individuals with mobility impairments. It is more difficult to find these accommodations in Eastern

Kentucky. Hoping to use these trailers whenever possible. The first barrier is a 36-inch rise from the ground level to the level of the door. Another barrier is nothing can be attached directly to the trailer itself. Requested that if anyone has had some experience with this or has any ideas about how to help make these trailers accessible to tell Carol, Alex, Lisa, Pat or Keisha, who will include this in the information that is passed on to Kentucky Emergency Management.

- Nancy Perry – Suggested contacting Tractor Supply, a supply center that makes ramps, to see if they have a platform to donate, or a possibly a metal ramp.
- Carol Weber – Agreed to look into this option. Noted that the ramps have to be really long, at least 36 feet, which means there has to be a landing in the middle, probably switchback.
- Julie Roell – Suggests working with high school students to 3D print a slope, that could be attached to the steps for a slope. Possibly on a smaller scale, like bricks, attached together on a slow slope and then to the steps.
- Nancy Perry – Mentioned colleges and universities that teach students how to build. Possibly Habitat for Humanity, who uses some of the colleges and universities to build things. Another suggestion was People working cooperatively to help with an entrance into the trailer.

## **Announcements – Mindy McGirt**

- The conference starts at 1:00 and goes until almost 4:00. It runs Thursday from 9:00 to 4:00 and then Friday morning as well. Excited to find out what the presenters have to say about technology and how they can improve lives. The next meeting date is December the 8<sup>th</sup> at enTECH.

## **Next council meeting dates:**

- **Thursday December 8, 2022**  
**Time: 9:30 am-11:30 pm, Eastern Standard Time**  
**Location: enTECH**
- **March 2023**
- **June 2023**
- **September 2023**

## **Adjournment: 11:23 PM**

Motion called by Kevin and Lisa M. provided the second for the motion.