# Missouri Assistive Technology Council

# 9 June 2023

# Columbia

## Call to Order

Chairperson Emily Hartley called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

1. Introductions

Members in attendance: Paula Darr, Sarah Becker, Camille Anderson-Weddle, Rachel Baskerville, Chad Rohr, Gary Wunder, Samantha Marsicovetere, Beth Dauber, Aaron Luna, Shari LaRoussa, Andrew Lackey. Staff in attendance: Kristy Summers, Kara Adams, Brenda Whitlock, Scout Merry, Stacy Brady, Brenda Whitlock and David Baker. Guests: Angelina Alpert and Lainie Strange.

1. Approval of June Agenda

The June agenda was approved as submitted (Motion: Rohr; Second: LaRoussa).

1. Approval of March Minutes

The March minutes were amended to reflect the correct date of the last meeting and approved (Motion: Wunder; Second: LaRoussa).

## Directors Report

1. Council Update
2. Council Membership Update

Four consumer slots are currently open on the Council and in need of attention. Individuals with disabilities and/or family members of an individual with a disability qualify as consumer representatives under Council rules. Individuals from the northwest, northcentral, northeast and southeast areas of the state are of particular interest to help provide geographical distribution. In addition, an email blast will be prepared and sent out encouraging individuals interested in being on the Council to submit an application. Finally, the idea of approaching the Boards and Commissions Office to gauge the possibility of decoupling the Council from the requirement to be governor approved is under consideration.

1. Executive Board Election

The June meeting is the final meeting of the current Executive Board. Shelly Summers will be moving off as an agency representative and Andrew Lackey will complete his current term as a consumer representative. In addition, Chad Rohr will move to chairperson and Emily Hartley will move to past-chair. The annual election will occur in late July. All officially appointed members to the Council are eligible to be on the Executive Board and were encouraged to let David know if they are interested.

1. Administrative Issues
2. State Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request

In early May, the Missouri Legislature passed the state budget for state fiscal year ‘24. MoAT’s budget request is approved as originally submitted, including an increase in capacity for the Show-Me Loans program.

1. Submission of State Plan to ACL

Each of the 56 Tech Act Programs is required every three years to submit a state plan about its activities and expenditures. The submission process has been perpetually behind schedule at the federal level. States were notified that they needed to submit their state plans for Federal Fiscal Years 2021-2023. Missouri’s plan was prepared and submitted. The process is fairly straightforward and consists of providing information on the program’s lead agency, the composition of its Council, how it spent its federal funds over the past two federal fiscal years and to list its current activities.

1. Current Initiatives
2. Power Up 2023

Brenda shared a number of highlights about Power Up 2023. Overall, this year’s conference was a fabulous success and in several respects exceeded expectations. The final participant tally was 609 attendees, a new record. In addition, the previous record number of exhibitors was eclipsed with the 77 in attendance this year. In reviewing the post-conference data, several noteworthy items were identified, including:

* Nearly 60% of attendees noted this was their first Power Up Conference
* Over 85% of attendees felt that their skills and knowledge about AT were increased as a result of attending.
* 71% participants recorded overall being very satisfied with the conference.

Both sessions presented by guest speaker, Sam Seavey, creator of the Blind Life YouTube channel, were highly enjoyed, as was the closing session given by Brendon Hildreth. More sessions and speakers were cited for their excellence in the post-conference survey this year than in previous years, which was encouraging. Similar reflections about the exhibitors were also received. Unfortunately, issues with the hotel’s AV system and the quality of the food were numerous in the attendee comments and will be the focus of increased cooperation with the location in future years. A hope going into the conference this year was that the energy and buzz noted last year could be replicated despite being in a larger space and there being more attendees. Comments collected during the conference, in the post-conference survey, and during the staff debrief strongly indicated it was. Plans for the 26th Power Up Conference will commence later this summer.

1. TAP-T Request for Proposal

Every five years the Telecommunications Access Program for Telephone and Wireless (TAP-T & TAP-W) has to be put out for competitive bid. Staff have been working with the Office of Administration in the development of the new RFP and expect that it will be put out for response within the next couple of weeks. Once the application period ends, staff will work with OA to review submissions and select the program’s vendor for the next 5-years.

1. ATR 2022-2023 School Year

Kara provided an overview of the ATR program for the 2022-2023 school year. A total of 301 applications were submitted by public, charter and state schools for the severely disabled this year. Of that total, a preliminary count shows 276 were approved for funding and a total of $576,510 was provided to 98 different districts throughout the state. In terms of disability, the largest number of applications funded were for students with an autism classification and students with visual impairments were the second largest group of applicants. Speech communication devices and vision assistive devices were the two largest categories of AT funded this year. ATR has been funded again for the 2023-2024 school year and staff are preparing to make an announcement about the application process hopefully in late July/early August.

1. Digital Days

As part of its work with the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council to help close the digital divide for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), two upcoming Digital Days have been scheduled, one in St. Louis and one in Jackson County. Digital Days focus on issues such as digital literacy and digital safety, introduce participants to assistive technology, and outline and encourage sign up for the Affordable Connectivity Program. The target for these efforts are individuals with I/DD, their family members, and professionals who work with them. Plans are underway to offer Digital Day activities in multiple locations statewide in upcoming months.

1. MOD Series

Scout reviewed the Missouri Open Door (MOD) series MoAT has been hosting in collaboration with the Institute for Human Development at the University of Missouri - Kansas City (IHD-UMKC). Each session melds assistive technology into the Charting the Life Course framework and is designed to provide practical and applicable assistive technology ideas centered around a monthly theme. Upcoming sessions include wellness and self-care, home safety, and universal design. Past sessions are archived and can be viewed on the [Charting the Life Course YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqDgK9f5WVqQ4gQEVHkUyFHx8zeOa2pMe). Started during the pandemic, the series has exceeded initial expectations and is now entering its third year.

1. St. Louis Area Demonstration Center

The provision of device demonstrations is a required activity under the Tech Act legislation and toward that end MoAT has supported a series of demonstration centers around the state that allow individuals, family members and professionals to engage in hands-on exploration of assistive devices and to learn about related services.

Staff are working to enhance demonstration activities in the St. Louis area and are collaborating with Paraquad (where the current demonstration center is located), the ARC of St. Louis, and the Productive Living Board to test a new multi-agency, multi-county demonstration model. The ARC of St. Louis and Paraquad will partner to share devices and provide demonstrations, while PLB and MoAT will collaborate to provide devices and financial support.

1. Training and Outreach Activities

Training and outreach activities over the last few months have been numerous and varied and have ranged from participation in senior outreach fairs, to presentations at state conferences to participation in national webinars to hosting visits from school districts and service providers.

1. Partner Update
2. Lainie Strange, OA Web Accessibility Coordinator

Ensuring that all users are able to interact with technology in ways that work best for them (a.k.a. Information and Communication Technology) is a key area MoAT focuses on and in its efforts works closely with the state to help educate employees and implement opportunities to improve knowledge and application on issues related to ICT.

Lainie Strange, OA Web Accessibility Coordinator, shared from the state’s perspective additional information on work to improve accessibility, especially of on-line content. Among items touched on were:

* An update on the use of the Siteimprove accessibility checker that the majority of state departments/agencies have collectively purchased to help identify accessibility issues. Now in its fourth year of use, Siteimprove’s benefits are evident in the increased accessibility scores departments/agencies are showing via the data the tool collects.
* A current focus on eliminating accessibility issues within the many PDF files uploaded by departments/agencies.
* The ICT focused learning path created and uploaded into the states learning path for employees.
* The development and distribution of 3 assistive technology device testing toolkits that will provide content developers the opportunity to use assistive technology devices directly with their developed content to further ensure that it is accessible across the many forms of assistive technology.
1. AT Spotlight
2. ATR Devices: Top Items Requested (Kara)

Postponed until September meeting

1. Informational Items
2. Master Plan on Aging

In January, Governor Parson signed Executive Order 23-01 to establish a Master Plan on Aging designed to address a variety of issues faced by Missouri’s aging and disability population. The cross-sector, state-led strategic resource to help transform the infrastructure and coordination of services for our rapidly aging population. Missouri Assistive Technology is serving on the Housing and Aging-In Place committee. As the committees identify issues and seek recommendations for addressing, the aim is to get the value and need for greater emphasis on assistive technology incorporated into the final aging plan submitted to the governor.

1. ADA Symposium: Accessibility Lessons Learned

At the end of May, both Scout and Brenda were able to attend the national ADA Symposium held in Kansas City and shared with members highlights from several of the sessions they attended. Accessible meetings in particular was an area of interest that Brenda attended sessions on and shared the lessons learned.

1. 2023 Legislative Session in Review

HB 317 that proposed the establishment of a technology task force was introduced during the legislative session. The bill was of particular interest to MoAT since it contained a reference to assistive technology. David reached out to the bill sponsor, Representative Riggs, during the session to make sure Missouri Assistive Technology was on his radar screen, as well as to offer any information or assistance the representative might need. Unfortunately, the bill did not make it out of committee.

1. Program Data and Updates
2. ETC

Kara noted that with a month to go in this state fiscal year, the number of devices loaned and the number of borrowers has increased significantly. In SFY ‘22 1,833 devices were loaned and 714 individuals borrowed. Thus far in SFY ‘23, 2,477 devices were borrowed by 830 individuals.

1. TAP for Telephone and Wireless

Stacy is focused on increasing awareness about the availability of both programs and has developed several creative marketing tools that she spoke about.

The number of individuals who have accessed the TAP-T program this state fiscal year has increased slightly, as has the number of devices provided. TAP-W will end the year roughly the same on consumers as it was in SFY ‘22.

1. TAP for Internet / DeafBlind Equipment Program

While in years past, Missouri has been able to receive an infusion of extra funds re-allocated from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for the DeafBlind Equipment Program, Brenda noted those funds will not be available this year. For the SFY ‘the number of applicants is on par with last year, but the number of pieces of equipment is down slightly.

1. Show-Me Loans / KAT / MFP

While the number of loans provided by the Show-Me Loans Program is the same as at this point last year, the number of dollars loaned is up nearly 20% and totals $354,817, Eileen noted.

1. Kids Assistive Technology (KAT) has provided assistance to 31 families. In addition, word was recently shared that the program will be provided some additional funds shortly.
2. Money Follows the Person (MFP) has seen a significant increase thus far this state fiscal year, having doubled the number of recipients. This is due in part to some program changes, but also to an outreach effort about the assistive technology option available to assist individuals transitioning from a nursing home to independent living.
3. Demonstration and Recycling

No report

## 3. Action Items

 None

## 4. New Business

 None

## 5. Announcements

The next Council meeting will be on September 8th beginning at 9:00 AM in Jefferson City at the Courtyard by Marriot.

The use of earbuds with a variety of assistive technologies is often a necessity.. Chip shared information on the Echo earbuds, which he noted might be high quality, but lower cost, alternative to the more expensive options currently on the market.

## 6. Adjournment

 Shari made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:05 PM.