

Access to Justice Commission Standing Committee on Communications & Outreach
November 24, 2014, 1:00 P.M.
Via Teleconference

In Attendance: Matt Dale, Lisa Mecklenberg-Jackson, Casey Stephensen, Melanie Reynolds, Michele Robinson, Christine Mandiloff, Jennifer Brandon, Iris Marcus, and Kate Kuykendall.

Call to Order: 1:03 p.m.

Discussion of the Gaps & Barriers Study summary drafts. The committee has not received any further comments on the two summaries. Matt asked if Melanie can bring all things discussed at this meeting to the Commission on December 12. She can.

Matt clarified that the two summaries are to be brought to the Commission for final approval on December 12. We will be asking the Commission to sign off on these as the final version. The Committee agreed that these are the versions that should be presented for final approval.

Melanie suggested enlarging the contact email. Lisa will make that change.

Matt asked if Melanie can bring the Committee's to the Commission on December 12. Melanie agreed.

Website and Committee Email

Lisa talked with the Court IT guy about getting a committee or commission email address. It won't likely happen, and if it is it will cost money and be complicated. Kate's email will continue to be listed as the committee and commission contact.

Lisa noted that the Commission website has been updated to include more documents and is more logical in the way it is presented. Kate and Lisa are working to make sure all documents are current.

Matt asked Melanie to bring notes of the changes to the Commission. The committees have all been pulled out separately with their own sections for minutes. All of the minutes that are available are on the page, as well as agendas and rules and orders. It's a general re-organization change. Melanie agreed to include these changes in the report.

Michele asked for the Commission website's URL:

<http://courts.mt.gov/supreme/boards/a2j/default.mcpix> . Kate will send it out in the minutes.

Melanie asked if there's a way to simplify the URL so that when we advertise we don't have to put the full string down. It could be something really simple related to access to justice.

Lisa said she will ask the state tech people. Matt noted that it might cost something, but that it might be worth spending money on if the change is possible. The simpler the address can be, the better. It's something that could go in print material.

Christine said it should be as simple as buying a domain name, and redirecting to that domain name. It should run around \$60/year. The state would have to redirect to the purchased domain.

Committee Outreach Plan draft

There has been no comment on the plan draft. Matt asked for input and concerns.

Christine noted that eventually we'll want to include things like who does what and give deadlines. Melanie noted that this is really just the bones of an outreach plan. We need to identify priorities. Melanie outlined four strategies, but we need to decide which deserves our first focus. If there isn't a lot of change to it on the committee level, Melanie suggests presenting it to the Commission. We can then take their input and flesh it out. This version is an overall plan rather than a work plan at this point.

Matt agreed that this is a broad structure, which is good because we should include Commission feedback before doing a lot of detail work. We hope that we find out we're on the right track.

Lisa asked whether anyone knows whether the Commission plans to distribute the report to the legislators. Kate responded that the Commission will be looking to this committee for guidance on that issue. The Committee discussed potential priorities and strategies regarding how the study might be disseminated.

Lisa noted that it's important that the legislators receive the study, but that it needs to be framed rather than handed out cold. Melanie suggested sending it with a cover letter from someone strategic. Matt asked Melanie to broach the topic at the December 12 Commission meeting. How we roll the study out needs to work alongside the work that Beth McLaughlin is doing. We want to choreograph how and to whom we provide the message. The Committee determined it will be looking to Justice Baker and Beth McLaughlin for their thoughts on who, when, and how to talk about the study.

Michele asked if we need to apply for time to testify. Matt responded that Justice Baker and Beth M. have a good sense of how this will proceed. The question is how to get it out, and the assumption is that sending it out cold is not the way to go. Melanie suggested stepping back and distributing it discretely as issues come up that it relates to.

The Committee discussed how to present the Outreach Plan to the Commission. Melanie will present it as something the Committee is going ahead with and asking for input on. Matt suggested that the legislation piece is the only one that's really time sensitive at this point.

Lisa said that typically the first few days of the session generally include a lot of information being presented. Justice Baker is probably already aware of this as an opportunity to get this in front of the key committees.

Michele asked how we might identify people who might be right to present or give testimony, and educate them ahead of time. Do we need to have people ready to talk if they're asked?

Matt said that that takes care of itself when legislators ask for information, or when the Commission identifies the point person for particular issues. We'll have a better plan for that when we hear from the Commission on December 12.

Melanie said she might want to run her talking points for the Commission meeting by the Committee. Matt agreed.

MLSA Economic Impact Study

Christine reported that the Commission agreed to sponsor the study. It should be finalized very soon. Christine will ask if we can get a pre-publication version of the study and send it to the Committee.

Matt asked if there is a legislative plan for the economic impact study as well. Christine noted that MLSA is prohibited from lobbying. The study was commissioned for a variety of reasons, including educating the public. It will likely be made available to legislators in some form. Christine is unsure if there is a plan in place for that right now. Matt noted that we don't want people to get confused between the Gaps & Barriers Study and the economic impact study. The study and report should be complete by the end of December.

Impact on Aging Study

Matt asked what the Committee would like to do with this report. It was commissioned by the Department of Public Health. He looked through the report to see if there are recommendations or a map for what will be done with it, and couldn't find any. There's no obvious statement on what's next or how the report will be used. It's not our report, so we should look at how we want to and are able to use it. Matt asked for comment on what the Committee's next steps should be regarding the report.

Melanie noted that this is mostly a data report similar to an assessment. There aren't recommendations included. Matt agreed, noting that the main point is that the need outstrips the resources.

Melanie said that we don't necessarily need to have a role with this. To move forward, we already have enough to keep us busy.

Matt asked if the Committee felt we should be taking a more activist roll with this report. The Committee agreed that it does not.

The Committee discussed including the study in a section on the website as a resource. It could go under the section for Rules & Orders if that section is revised to include other resources. It could also be the first item posted in a new "Resources" section. Lisa will work on creating a new section for resources.

AMERICORPS VISTA

Kate gave a brief summary of the Montana Justice Foundation's AmeriCorps VISTA project. The project involves identification and creation of a clearinghouse or forum designed to act as a central place for sharing information, ideas, and support for all things Access to Justice related in Montana. Iris Marcus, the AmeriCorps VISTA on the project, introduced herself and provided her vision for the project. The Committee agreed to bring the project under its purview and to act as a steering committee for the project. Iris clarified that she sees herself as a resource for the Committee and will support it in the ways it needs, be they networking, researching, drafting, or something else.

Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee discussed its next meeting date, and agreed to look at times on December 18th and 19th. Kate will send out a meeting scheduler.

Meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.