

Background:

Staff coordinated independent review panels to evaluate proposals received this quarter for three (3) Request for Proposals:

- TCDD Public Policy Fellows
- Understanding Employment Options and Supports
- Stakeholder Training for Guardianship Alternatives

Summaries of the recommendations from the panels and staff comments **will be emailed** to Executive Committee members prior to the meeting and included in the handout folder.

The Executive Committee will consider this information and make final decisions about proposals to approve for final negotiations for these projects.

Executive Committee

Agenda Item 9.

Expected Action:

The Executive Committee will consider this information and make final decisions on the project proposals.

Council

Agenda Item 12. B.

Expected Action:

The Council will receive a report of Executive Committee decisions.



TEXAS COUNCIL *for*
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES

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TO: TCDD Executive Committee
FROM: Joanna Cordry, Planning Coordinator
SUBJECT: Summary of Review Panel Recommendations
DATE: November 4, 2015

TCDD staff convened review panels to evaluate proposals for three TCDD Request for Proposals (RFPs):

- Understanding Employment Options and Supports
- TCDD Policy Fellows
- Stakeholder Training on Guardianship Alternatives

1. Understanding Employment Options and Supports RFP Goal: The grantee will make training and information available to people with developmental disabilities and their families so they can continue receiving SSI/SSDI and benefits while increasing income and assets through gainful employment. The effectiveness of the training must be evaluated with target audiences, finalized and packaged for later use by individuals and groups, and made available in a format that allows TCDD to include links to the training on the TCDD website. At least one product must continue to be updated after TCDD funding is completed.

Authorized funding amount per RFP: \$150,000 per year for up to 2 years

Reviewers had concerns about sustainability but found all three fundable if concerns were addressed. **The review panel ranked proposals as follows:**

1. National Disability Institute
1. Community Options, Inc.
2. University of North Texas

The review panel felt that the proposals from the National Disability Institute and Community Options, Inc., were of equal quality. One additional proposal was received but was incomplete and therefore not reviewed.

2. TCDD Policy Fellows RFP Goal: Up to two organizations will each hire and support a TCDD Policy Fellow to develop a deep understanding of policy affecting people with developmental disabilities and the skills to promote self-determination and self-advocacy, thus increasing the number of policy professionals in Texas who have the requisite skills, knowledge, and experience to engage in policy activities.

Authorized funding amount per RFP: \$67,500 per year, per project, for up to 2 years

The review panel ranked proposals as follows:

1. Parent to Parent
2. Easter Seals Central Texas

3. Providers Alliance for Community Services of Texas

Not recommended for funding under this RFP: Texas State Independent Living Center

- 4. Stakeholder Training on Guardianship Alternatives Goal:** The grantee will develop and provide training to promote the informed use of supported decision-making and other services, supports, and existing alternatives to guardianship that assist individuals to make their own decisions, maintain civil rights, and reduce the need for guardianship.

Authorized funding amount per RFP: \$40,000 per year for up to 3 years

The proposal submitted by Disability Rights, TX was recommended for funding.

One additional proposal was received but was incomplete and therefore not reviewed.

Summaries of review panel and staff follow. Summaries or review panel comments for proposals not recommended for funding by the panel are included for information purposes. These are not reviewed by staff.

Understanding Employment Options and Supports RFP

Organization: National Disability Institute (NDI)

Funding Requested: \$150,000

Location of Main Office: Washington, D.C.

Match: \$41,957

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel

- NDI has a comprehensive infrastructure with extensive national partnerships. The leadership, operational staff, and subject matter experts appear dedicated to the project and have exceptional qualifications.
- NDI operates an identical program in Florida that will be adapted to meet Texas' needs.
- NDI provides assistance and support to people with disabilities in saving and building financial supports through the FDIC money smart program, which would be a good support.
- NDI will provide information in "bites-sized" lessons and videos, which may be particularly helpful to people with intellectual disabilities (IDD). They will conduct beta-testing of the program.
- There will be cross-training with other relevant systems and CEUs will be available for professionals. This is an excellent way to promote materials and to sustain the project.
- The Real Economic Impact Network can raise public awareness, increase short- and long-term employment opportunities and supports/resources for long-term services, and improve retention of benefits. Connections made through the network and organizations that serve people should get the project started quickly.

Additional Strengths Noted by TCDD Staff

- In effect the curriculum has been field-tested and issues arising in the Florida implementation could inform the Texas version.
- Provided the project could establish relationships throughout Texas to help promote its curriculum, its reach could be statewide. This may be assisted by its association with 230 NDI Real Economic Impact Network members in Texas.
- NDI has extensive experience across many states and nationally.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel

- It is unclear what role people with disabilities, partners located in Texas, and unserved and underserved individuals will have. Will they be involved in information gathering, in webinars or in short videos? The proposal should include a solid plan detailing outreach and inclusion of people with a range of disabilities and how more grassroots connections would be developed.
- Employers and employed individuals with DD should be included in all aspects of the work.
- Not all people with disabilities have access to technology that they can fully use. This method of providing information and training may not be entirely accessible. Directly reaching out to people with IDD to promote the project may be more effective.
- Materials in Spanish won't be available until year two. It isn't clear they will address other languages (note: translations into other languages is not usually required by TCDD).
- The first phase of the workplan may be too aggressive; NDI may need more time to collect and compile data, share it with the Project Advisory Committee, and prepare a training plan.

Additional Concerns Noted by TCDD Staff

- It is likely that the principal challenge with this project would be maintaining focus on Texas-specific issues and challenges, especially those relating to urban versus rural differences.

- The online course will be updated yearly. Will the videos that are designed to entice people to want to learn more via the online course also be updated so information is consistent?

Other Notes from the Review Panel

Expanding the webinar service to include download-able transcripts; allowing webinars to be downloaded; and having three minute videos in Spanish and ASL are all recommended.

Other Notes from TCDD Staff

- The applicant may consider creating a Facebook page solely for this project. Having a separate page will allow Facebook users to focus on the project and not have to sift through all of the messages of the organization to find relevant, project-focused information. At the conclusion of the project, the likes the page has could be absorbed into a pre-existing Facebook page.
- The applicant must ensure that the Spanish translation is in Spanish as it is commonly spoken in Texas.
- The proposals states 250 Texans receive their newsletter. There should be a strategy to grow this and an outreach plan to ask organizations and state agencies to share the resources they develop.

Understanding Employment Options and Supports RFP

Organization: Community Options, Inc (COI)

Funding Requested: \$149,962

Location of Main Office: Princeton, NJ (sites in Texas)

Match: \$101,917

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel

- The project could reach a large and diverse group of people. The organization:
 - has a national reach and infrastructure and an established network of regional offices;
 - has existing connections to the people they serve in multiple counties in Texas;
 - will work with people in group homes and day habilitation facilities;
 - plans to offer two options to access material (web based and face-to-face); and
 - plans to address the need for Spanish-language materials immediately.
- COI has started preliminary research to look at availability of resources already available.
- COI will develop and test materials and create a curriculum training manual to be shared with human service organizations to ensure continued training for case managers.
- COI has a strong history of service to the employment needs of individuals with disabilities; its staff and board seem qualified and experienced to adequately carry out the project.
- Incorporating peer advisors will enhance training and may impact more people than anticipated through outreach and through involvement of people across the state.

Additional Strengths Noted by TCDD Staff

- For staff training, the project proposes to share resources with the WIPA National Training Center, which provides an online 20-module Community Partner Work Incentive Training Manual for staff.
- Peer advisors who have disabilities will provide feedback and be featured in some of the short videos.
- Project outcomes to be evaluated include whether the numbers of persons with disabilities who retain benefits while working in competitive employment are increased.
- The applicant may be able to promote the Higher Education Guide for Students with Disabilities with the transition specialists it works with.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel

- Time estimates for peer advisors may be inadequate to carry out roles and duties described, and it is not clear if the use of peer advisors is sustainable without TCDD funding.
- It is not clear if the Community Options Board of Directors and national headquarters' decision-makers are committed to this project and its sustainability.
- The first phase of the work may be overly ambitious. More time may be needed to develop the Project Advisory Committee, do a quality assessment, and to submit a report before development of training.
- The assessment should include individuals with developmental disabilities who are employed to ascertain what they need or would have needed to retain employment and benefits.
- It is not clear if people with developmental disabilities and people who are generally unserved or underserved will be involved in beta testing.
- There is no indication of travel reimbursement for Dohn Hoyle, a consultant and advisory board member being paid \$200 per hour and who will be coming from out of state. Will he be getting paid during advisory meetings or only while providing consultant services? This is also the case for Becky Banks.
- There is a lack of good network of partners, such as workforce development and employers of individuals with developmental disabilities.

- There is no description of how training will be marketed to a wider spectrum of agencies and individuals who serve or advocate for employment of people with developmental disabilities.

Additional Concerns Noted by TCDD Staff

- To the extent feasible, appropriate existing materials should be identified rather than creating new ones.
- The applicant states they will ask state agencies to help publicize the survey and the need for participants. Do they have existing relationships with state agencies so they can be confident the agencies will share the survey via their websites, social media channels, and newsletters?
- The applicant may consider the shelf-life of E-learning modules and if they might become outdated. If TCDD oversees the modules, will TCDD be able to easily update/edit them? The applicant should provide the curriculum to TCDD in the file format that it was created in so TCDD can update, edit and print the document.
- Consultants (two) serving on the Project Advisory Committee is not allowable as it presents a conflict of interest. More details are needed on costs for a web design consultant (\$30,000).
- Timeframes must be fine-tuned as they are different in the narrative than in the workplan.
- Five focus groups will be held to determine needs and barriers to address in their online course, but three of the five focus groups will be in Austin.
- There is no clear outline of how they intend to reach individuals in all counties, and TCDD staff recommends reducing the number of counties to be served by the project in year one.
- It is unclear what each person's role will be respective to the project.
- The applicant proposes to waive the course fee for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their family members, but does not state how they intend to confirm who qualifies to take the course for free.

Other Notes from TCDD Staff:

- This proposed project relies on yet-to-be-developed curricula in hard copy and face-to-face training more than internet-based learning modules specifically designed for people with disabilities and their families. The tradeoff is whether "warm" coverage will yield better results than "cool," remote, yet standardized and precise computer coverage in a simplified format. The capacity limitations of the warm approach may or may not be offset by increased engagement of individuals and families with in-person learning.
- The applicant may consider creating a Facebook page solely for this project to allow Facebook users to focus on relevant, project-focused information without sifting through all of the messages. At the conclusion of the project, the likes the page has could be absorbed into a preexisting Facebook page.
- The applicant states it will measure an outcome (increased access to information) by the number of social media hits received, among other metrics. The applicant should have a goal for the number of social media hits and "hits" should be defined (reach, impressions, etc.). A better goal might be for people take action as a result of the social media campaign, such as registering for a training, signing up for emails, or scheduling a face-to-face meeting.

TCDD Policy Fellows RFP

Organization: Texas Parent to Parent

Funding Requested: \$67,500

Location of Main Office: Austin, TX

Match: \$22,500

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel:

- Texas Parent to Parent appears to value and respect the experience of people with developmental disabilities and their family members. Additionally, the proposal does an excellent job promoting the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities as well as promoting self-determination.
- The proposal exhibits a good understanding of introducing a new interested advocate (policy Fellow) to the issues that are important to individuals with developmental disabilities.
- The practices of Texas Parent to Parent strive to involve as many people as possible and utilize their individual talents and life experiences to create strong advocacy.
- This agency has extensive experience and knowledge working with people with disabilities and their families. The agency has also been successful in shaping disability related policy issues.
- The project could directly impact public awareness as well as develop a strong collaborative effort and expansion of long-term employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- The proposal does a good job of outlining the activities directly related to developing the knowledge and skills of a public policy Fellow and has the best plan for incorporating a new person in the field.

Additional Strengths Noted by TCDD Staff:

None.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel:

- The Project Director appears to be the responsible person for almost all of the activities. The Policy Fellow is not being listed as responsible or as a contributor to the responsibilities.
- There are concerns for the budget as currently described and written:
 - The proposal did not indicate a salary for the Fellow but mentions that the Fellow would be paid from matching funds.
 - The budget for the necessary in-state travel appears to be too low.
- The proposal states the Policy Fellow could be "a family member or self-advocates with advocacy experience." The RFP indicates that the Policy Fellow must be graduates of a post-graduate program in law, social work, public policy or related programs, or be a family member or a self-advocate who has demonstrated post-graduate skills and possess public policy advocacy knowledge. Parent to Parent would need to clearly demonstrate the person has the knowledge level expected of a Fellow.
- Although the activity descriptions appear to imply that the organization has a clear picture of how the Fellow will receive support, the Parent to Parent proposal does not address specifics about the organization's qualifications or infrastructure to do so.
- The proposal addresses hiring a Policy Fellow, but the remainder of the goals seem to be focused on developing training for self-advocates.

Additional Concerns Noted by TCDD Staff:

- The applicant states that a TCDD Fellow would "master the continuum of disability policy issues" which is not feasible in a two a year period.

- The proposal notes that the Fellow would work on legislative issue and does not focus on regulatory policy. It is more strategic to provide the opportunity for the TCDD Fellow to be immersed in specific issues and perform activities required to develop and advance policy change, both regulatory and legislative.
- The applicant should limit the Fellow to activities consistent with the positions of TCDD that advance self-determination, integration and inclusion of individuals with disabilities, which may not necessarily be consistent with the interests or desires of parents.
- The applicant mentions that interview time will be arranged between the Fellow and other organizations, but the purpose is unclear. How will the mentor ask the Fellow to use that experience to inform his/her approach to policy work? Some of the organizations named as collaborators promote positions or support models, including segregated/congregate living environments, that are not consistent with TCDD's mission and philosophy.
- There are multiple errors in the budget that will need to be corrected.

Other Notes from TCDD Staff:

- When advertising the trainings, calls, and webinars that the Fellow would facilitate, the applicant may consider asking state agencies to promote these opportunities to the people they serve.

TCDD Policy Fellows RFP

Organization: Easter Seals Central Texas

Funding Requested: \$67,476

Location of Main Office: Austin, TX

Match: \$32,476

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel:

- The staff who will supervise the Policy Fellow, was once a Fellow herself; her experience and knowledge will most likely lead to a successful understanding of successful supervision strategies.
- The proposal does a good job of incorporating the development of the Policy Fellow.
- Easter Seals has organized and actively participated in advocacy efforts. This experience and knowledge should lead to greater success and provide an understanding of some the pitfalls and successful strategies.
- The goals and objectives are clearly laid out in a strategic manner.
- The proposal promotes inclusion of people with developmental disabilities through outreach. The agency serves and supports a variety of people with developmental disabilities from all areas around the state, excluding the San Antonio area.
- Easter Seals has five affiliates that could be involved in this project to better reach and include unserved and underserved people, but the narrative doesn't discuss specifics on this topic. There is no evidence that the affiliates will actually collaborate on the project (see concern noted below).
- This proposal builds on previous successful practices to develop, train and identify advocates.

Additional Strengths Noted by TCDD Staff:

- The Fellow will participate in advocacy meetings with Cover Texas Now, the Disability Policy Consortium and the Disability Advisory Workgroup as well as legislative meetings.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel:

- The job descriptions for the Policy Fellow and the Fellow's supervisor are not well defined. The senior manager will spend 55% of her time supervising the Fellow.
- There is significant discussion about outreach and training activities; this is not the main goal of the RFP.
- There is concern about the likelihood of affiliates communicating and working together on this project.
- The proposal appears to assume that the Policy Fellow would already be aware of issues and methods to recruit and develop advocacy skills. Outreach is not that simple, and the Fellow may not have these skills.
- The proposed program launch is not clearly defined and a particular target audience is not identified. Also, only two months are allotted to develop the training program. Both may need more time.
- There is not enough information and specifics on participant recruitment.
- Easter Seals will collaborate and partner with other organizations that contribute resources but not funding. Additionally, Easter Seals will work with a consultant, but the job description is also undefined.

Additional Concerns Noted by TCDD Staff:

- The project appears to be focused on an advocate training program rather than creating policy change. While the applicant demonstrates a clear understanding of relevant public policy issues, it's not clear that an Easter Seals TCDD Fellow would engage in creating policy change.
- The Fellow is infrequently mentioned in the objective portion of the application, and the proposal does not identify who will provide support to the Fellow as they learn to engage in policy activities benefiting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- There are errors in the budget that will need to be corrected and additional information will be needed.

Other Notes from TCDD Staff:

- There may already be an existing advocacy training curricula that would help the applicant achieve its goals.
- When developing materials to publicize trainings, the applicant may consider digital outreach upfront so fliers are optimized for email and social media.
- If the Fellow creates a monthly newsletter that is delivered to training participants and other stakeholders, how will this endeavor be sustained at the conclusion of the fellowship?
- If the Fellow creates short videos of advocacy tips, they should be captioned.

TCDD Policy Fellows RFP

Organization: Providers Alliance for Community Services of Texas

Funding Requested: \$47,250

Location of Main Office: Austin, TX

Match: \$15,750

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel:

- The proposal describes and include best practices for identifying, recruiting and training advocates, including advocates receiving services in residential and day habilitation settings.
- Partnership with acute care providers is creative and may create a better continuity of care. If successful, this project would positively impact continuity of care for individuals with disabilities, and could impact long-term services such as housing and health care.
- The proposal promotes inclusion of people with developmental disabilities and their families. Provider partners are interested in reaching out to people they serve to teach self-advocacy, who have not typically been included in education and advocacy efforts.

Additional Strengths Noted by TCDD Staff:

- The applicant proposes to engage the TCDD Fellow in a TCDD Public Policy Priority (Long Term Care and Support Services) and identifies the steps to engaging individuals and families in creating specific policy changes, including regulatory and state legislative changes.
- Activities for the Fellow include addressing various issues such as Direct Support Recognition Week and identifying regional family members or self-advocates interested in advocacy activities. The proposal states the Fellow will also assist with advocating the need for quality community services for individuals (specifically policy changes to better support direct support professionals) as well as advocating for improving acute care services received through STAR+Plus.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel:

- Many of the activities appear to be more focused on public outreach and education than teaching and exposing the Policy Fellow to issues important to people with developmental disabilities.
- There is concern for the organization of the job duties and descriptions. Within the proposal budget, there is no designated funding for the supervisor of the Fellow, and it is unclear if the supervisor will have enough time to dedicate to the project. The volunteer board members of the Family Action Coalition of Texas (FACT), a committee within an association, are tasked to provide leadership on operational issues.
- Although the proposal promotes inclusion of a range of people with developmental disabilities and their families, it appears the entire target group of individuals are those residing in facilities.
- The proposal would be stronger if it provided more information as to how it would use the life experiences of those individuals residing in these facilities to inform activities and training of the Fellow.
- The proposal acknowledges transportation as a barrier for individuals with disabilities and their families, especially in the Rio Grande Valley, but does not provide information or a plan as to how it would address these transportation issues for local meetings.
- The timelines present a concern – is four months needed to schedule conference calls with volunteers?
- The proposed milestones appear vague.

Additional Concerns Noted by TCDD Staff:

- Sustainability needs to be further addressed.
- Developing the PACSTX TCDD Fellow's understanding of our core values needs to be further addressed.

- It is difficult to distinguish between what the Fellow would be doing and what FACT/PACSTX would be doing or already does. Will the Fellow be developing a training curriculum? If so, that may be an ambitious goal for a Fellow.
- Some of the duties listed for the Fellow – developing newsletters and maintaining a website – may be more appropriate for communications staff or an intern to do.
- A significant amount of additional budget-related information needs to be submitted.

TCDD Stakeholder Training on Guardianship Alternatives RFP

Organization: Disability Rights Texas

Funding Requested: \$40,000

Location of Main Office: Austin, TX

Match: \$13,333

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel:

- The proposal supports individuals' full inclusion in the community, and it promotes self-determination and person centered planning.
- Disability Rights Texas has a positive reputation, superior talent and leadership, and skilled professionals. Project managers for this project are experienced. The workgroups have experience in addressing complex issues such as guardianship and alternatives to guardianship.
- The provision to provide a toolkit and products for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and families is a crucial component of the plan. The project will develop interactive webinars and videos, including videos for individuals to share their stories.
- This proposal could have a large impact by focusing on a multi-tiered approach: individuals and families, legal professionals, educational professionals, and other supportive entities.

Additional Strengths Noted by TCDD Staff:

- Disability Rights Texas has been fully engaged as a partner with the Texas Guardianship Reform and Supported Decision Making group and TCDD to advance alternatives to guardianship and supported decision-making and began collaborating on training for judges, attorneys, families and people with disabilities as soon as the session ended.
- Disability Rights Texas intends to share the policy and program recommendations and information with TCDD so it can be used to develop policy actions and future projects.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel:

- The project may not be sustainable after the grant ends.
- Addressing diversity and culturally appropriate products could be expanded to include more than Spanish and American Sign Language.
- A more global analysis of legal and educational professionals' perceptions of policy and decision making may be beneficial to inform training and program needs. An example would be a statewide demographic analysis and tracking the level of intervention offered and its result.
- Due to the increase in the percentage of guardianships over the past several years, it might be reasonable to add decreasing the overall percentage be a part of the stated goals of the project.

Additional Concerns Noted by TCDD Staff:

None

Other Notes from the Review Panel

- Recruitment activities seem to draw on previously established pools of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities instead of seeking out new individuals. Education of and outreach to school districts and administration is encouraged if possible due to guardianship discussions in Admission Review and Dismissal meetings.
- The organization could solicit more participation in the training/workshop component to build understanding by individuals, families, and the larger community.

Proposals Not Recommended for Funding by the Review Panel

Understanding Employment Options and Supports RFP

Organization: University of North Texas (UNT)

Funding Requested: \$148,839

Location of Main Office: Denton, Texas

Match: \$176,408

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel

- UNT has the needed experience, infrastructure, knowledgeable partners, and qualified staff.
- The project will have breadth of appropriate representation, including the involvement of an employer of individuals with developmental disabilities.
- The selection of pilot training areas should help distinguish issues in the various communities.
- UNT describes a comprehensive service design that should prove effective. The assessment and modes of training delivery seem to be accepted practices for the targeted audience.
- This is the only proposal to talk about captioning services.
- There is a commitment to involve people with developmental disabilities and UNT certainly seems to understand their needs. Additionally, UNT will involve self-advocates and use recruitment methods to attract people with disabilities and their families to participate.
- UNT plans to publish the materials and make them available outside the window of funding, which will expand the opportunities for training/information.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel

- Evidence of commitment by leadership to the project is unclear.
- The staffing is heavy on administrative positions and short on program staff (especially for training and assessment activities), given this is public education institution with established administrative functions. It is difficult to determine the allocation of time by both UNTWISE and the subcontractor so it is unclear if there is adequate time for paid staff to carry out the activities.
- The role of Imagine and what exactly they are subcontracted to do is confusing.
- The timeline seems too aggressive in the early stages. It often takes longer to set up systems and establish and orient the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) established. There may not be enough time between the assessment and developing the training design.
- While there is commitment to recruiting, supporting and engaging the target audience for the training, more information is needed to ensure that the needs of the target audience are adequately represented in the assessment and review of the materials and other products. Confirming the ease of use of the materials is not adequately addressed in the scope of work.
- The evaluation plan seems to miss the importance of measuring how the training can benefit the long-term employment potential of participants. How will outcomes like employment rates, retention on the job without loss of benefits, and earnings gains be measured?

TCDD Policy Fellows RFP

Organization: Texas State Independent Living Council

Funding Requested: \$67,500

Location of Main Office: Austin, TX

Match: \$17,362

Strengths Noted by the Review Panel:

- Texas State Independent Living Council staff assigned to this project bring a wealth of experience and a rich backgrounds in the policy and advocacy field.
- The proposal describes the creation of a virtual platform to provide additional access to advocacy and training opportunities to people with disabilities and their families who have access to technology. The development and implementation of the virtual platform could promote inclusion of people with developmental disabilities and family members to become active in advocacy training and become more aware of issues that are important to people with disabilities, particularly for those in remote areas or who cannot travel. This aspect of the project is innovative.
- If successful in creating the virtual platform, this project will directly impact the raising of public awareness, and could change the way advocacy training and testifying is done and would be considered an unexpected benefit.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel:

- The proposal's focus on developing a knowledgeable Policy Fellow is missing. It appears to be primarily focused on the goal of establishing a virtual platform than developing a policy Fellow. There is not enough information to understand if the virtual platform will have to be developed or if it already exists and would be accessed to assist with advocacy efforts.
- There is not enough detail pertaining to the design and development of the virtual platform in regards to best practices and remote testifying.
- There is no information provided for the timeline of preparing and training individuals to testify in a remote setting.
- The timeline for activities proposes 5 months to conduct a survey and a year to recruit and hire a Policy Fellow.
- The proposal includes activities that SILC may already be responsible for and/or may provide information regarding issues the organization is aware of, such as surveying 27 centers for independent living to assess the advocacy issue areas of importance and priority to people with developmental disabilities within their service areas.