# Report of the Trustee Advisory Committee

# to the American Printing House for the Blind

# Fiscal Year 2024

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Trustee Advisory Committee (TAC) is:

* To advocate for and support the administration of The Act by APH.
* To advise APH in planning future federal initiatives based on innovative ideas and current trends by helping APH staff keep informed of trends and important discussions/debates occurring in the field.
* To advise APH in establishing priorities, standards, and policies regarding publications and products.
* To advise APH generally on topics relevant to the education and rehabilitation of persons who are blind and visually impaired.
* To review research and development priorities, suggest additional areas of interest, and advise APH staff on the prioritization of needs and projects.
* To review products under development and to consider approval of finished products for purchase with Federal Quota funds.
* To provide oversight and leadership in the planning, evaluation, and delivery of product-related services provided by the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind.
* To assist in the promotion of APH products through services and identify new services needed.
* To advise APH on general operations and communications as they relate to the accountability of services provided.
* To facilitate communications and partnerships between APH and appropriate entities.
* To recommend consumers and professionals in the field to assist with research or field-testing or as project consultants.
* To help keep APH staff informed of trends or important discussions/debates occurring in the field.

## INTRODUCTION

In April 2024, the TAC met in Louisville, KY, at APH, to address the 2023 TAC report and to develop commendations and recommendations for the current fiscal year. To assist with this endeavor, presentations were made by APH’s leadership staff, including progress updates on the 2023 recommendations, operations, and information on new initiatives.

## COMMENDATIONS

**The TAC commends APH for the following:**

* **CATT**: The success in expanding the CATT programs. We support APHs continued efforts to make this type of service and support equitably available to all states.
* **Global Innovation & Strategy, Outreach Services**: The training structure created in preparation for the release of Monarch is amazing and ensures its success. We look forward to seeing how this support is scaled up.
* **Communications**: Efforts to streamline communication to EOTs by decreasing emails and use of meaningful subject lines on email communications.
* **ConnectCenter & Hive**: The Connect Center and Hive content are great resources.
* **Accessible Tests & Textbooks**: Faster turnaround time for large print production.
* **Prison Braille Program**: Increased number of prisons involved in braille and large print production.
* **All departments**: Continued delivery of customer service, product development and ongoing business operation during the massive renovation and addition to the building.
* **Impact & Outreach**: Efforts to advocate for additional funding.
* **Census**: Change of eligibility and efforts to impact the lives of more students, including training.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Consistent with the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind (1879), the TAC recommends that APH:**

1. **Impact & Outreach**:
   * additional funding for additional regional CATT programs, it is critical for teachers across the country to have this support. With new technologies that ensure equal access to education for students who are blind/low vision, every state should have this level of support.
   * Make regional outreach services equal across states and regions, provide EOTs with information on the roles of regional outreach staff. At Annual Meeting, when regional meetings are held with outreach staff provide information to EOTs on what outreach will be doing in the upcoming year, identify training support needed over the entire region, set up regularly scheduled meetings and identify how support is provided. By supporting schools and state level outreach teams the system might be more sustainable, purposeful and equitable.
   * Provide training support on the new IDEA eligibility structure to EOTs. This should include background information on the 2017 OSEP letter and information on the ability of each state to structure how they allocate funds.
   * Support new EOTs with onsite training and during the first day of Annual Meeting hold a conference session or social meetings with TAC and new EOTs to create some initial connections for mentoring.
2. **GPRA Survey**: When soliciting input on Government and Performance and Results Act (GPRA) reporting measures, send out initial surveys in late spring to avoid times when schools may not be in session and provide more information describing why these surveys are important.
3. **Educational Product Innovation**:
   * Utilize standard braille sizing on all braille products.
   * Explore a way to attain more information from EOTs and teachers regarding discontinuation of products and a mechanism for requesting discontinued items be produced again.
4. **Accessible Tests & Textbooks**: Consider providing a session at Annual Meeting on the processes and timelines related to the APH braille production process. Delays in processing braille materials are still occurring, even with some early submitted materials. A better understanding of the process may help EOTs avoid this situation.
5. **Creative Services**: Provide access to an EPUB catalog on the website along with existing PDF format. This would increase accessibility, functionality and allow embedded links to product information and related videos.
6. **ConnectCenter**: To increase participation in the family support calls, make connections through EOTS to link to existing state support networks and professionals.
7. **Finance**:
   * Create a communication method for EOTs so that they can get updated account balance information from the finance department, pending the ability to receive accurate, real-time numbers through the website. This is necessary to ensure quarterly spending goals are met.
   * With the flat funding for this year and increases in census numbers, provide EOTs with an estimated per student amount, as soon as possible after the census is completed.
8. **Communications**:
   * As the rollout of the Monarch occurs, update EOTs on the process by providing information to EOTs on how it will be released, for instance “distribution be based on who orders first” so we can support teacher participation and connect to the unique systems in each state.
   * When sending emails to EOTs, split out information pertinent only to EOTs and information for the field. This will allow easier dissemination of information through forwarded emails.
   * Update the discontinued products page. Add to web site thumbs up, thumbs down, comment section for more communication regarding these products.
   * Include information alignment of products with common core standards on the website. This has been available in the past and is currently available for science. <https://www.aph.org/alignment-of-aph-science-products-with-the-next-generation-science-standards-ngss/> Here is a link to others: <https://learning.ccsso.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ELA_Standards1.pdf> <https://www.thecorestandards.org/about-the-standards/>

Respectfully Submitted,

Trustee Advisory Committee 2024

Leslie Van Orman, Wyoming – Co-Chair

Dawn Soto, Wisconsin – Co-Chair

Patricia Beecher, New Mexico

Lynn Cragg, Oklahoma

Donna Cox, Virginia

Brian Darcy, Idaho

Gregory Gerhart, Pennsylvania

Robin King, Louisiana

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Pamela Parker, Washington

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