# Report of the Trustee Advisory Committee

# to the American Printing House for the Blind

# Fiscal Year 2025

## 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 March of 2025, the TAC met at APH in Louisville, KY, to address the 2024 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 2024 recommendations, operations, and information on new initiatives.

## COMMENDATIONS

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

* **Impact & Outreach, Census Data & Information:** Excellence in customer service and EOT and EOT Assistant training from Cindy Amback.
* **Impact & Outreach and Hive:**
	+ The APH Hive for adding 11 courses over the past year, and for providing a total of 49 courses now in the Hive.
	+ The new APH Hive decision making process, which includes a robust Hive committee including internal and external partners.
* **Impact & Outreach:**
	+ The Outreach team for supporting nationwide training and curriculum development, especially for the Monarch.
	+ The Monarch student pilot program and the Monarch RISE program to ensure the Monarch reaches our states.
* **Family Connect:** The APH Family Connect expansion of website resources and robust connection with EOTs, local education agencies, and families in states, including Spanish language access.
* **Career Connect:** The APH Career Connect expansion of their web content, resources, and other community partnerships.
* **Product Development:**
	+ The release of Treasure Island as the first eBRL download, with embedded graphics, to be utilized for the Monarch.
	+ Dedication, hard work and success in the eBRL file development across agencies worldwide.
	+ The development of the Wing It app to provide interactive tactile real time access with a wide range of professionals and families.
	+ The Monarch partnerships with the PBS Kids game for the Monarch, for building the connections with Microsoft in working on a coding app and for opening the door to begin working with assessment companies related to use of the Monarch to ensure equitable access to tactile graphics.
* **Communications, Creative Services and Website:** The streamlined EOT messaging and for the monthly webinar emails.
* **Product Services and Communication Team:** Excellence in customer service from the product services team, specifically for Dimetre in Product Customer Service.
* **Finance Department:**
	+ With flat funding for the 2024 APH Federal Quota, commendation for applying the hold harmless model.
	+ The Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) procedure to ensure transparency, functionality, efficiency and order tracking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. **Impact & Outreach**:
	* Provide training support at the Annual Meeting on the new IDEA eligibility, including home/private school and students who have other education plans, such as 504 plans. Include information about how each EOT can structure and allocate their funds.
	* Provide a session at Annual Meeting 2025 where EOTs discuss how their states interpret IDEA, including information about the 2017 OSEP memo.
	* Support new EOTs by bringing back the intentional in-person multi-day training regarding the roles and responsibilities of EOTs and education about the APH products and services. Include veteran EOTs, representing the different types of EOT APH Federal Quota accounts, to attend in-person, support their new learning and provide in-person mentorship.
	* One regional breakout session at the beginning of the Annual Meeting where the regional outreach specialists can introduce EOTs within their region to one another.
	* Add one 30-minute quarterly regional breakout session at the end of the regularly scheduled EOT meetings to share upcoming and requested professional development opportunities so regional specialists can support each state and forecast training in their regions. Alert EOTs when Outreach training is requested in our states.
	* Outreach training request process, to more broadly include CATT when related to assistive technology, to provide equitable access to all states.
	* Ensure the Outreach training request form is linked in Student Registration System for EOTs to request training.
2. **Connect Center & Hive**: Include a basic needs assessment in the Hive to ensure that those who take courses can share any gaps in learning and takeaways from their learning.
3. **Communications, Creative Services, and Website:**
	* Explore creation of a digitally accessible app for the APH product catalog which could more easily allow for product updates. Include information linking to Hive and other professional development sessions that APH has created for that product.
	* Explore improvements to the website, to include overall clarity and access to prominent, or most clicked, features, including access to languages offered and more prominent accessibility features. If accessibility cannot be attained, explore new website platforms to meet federal accessibility requirements.
4. **Educational Product Innovation and Communications Teams:**
	* Ensure that every field-testing opportunity is organized and categorized within the EOT news with advance notice. Explore adding field testing opportunities to national events (Abacus Bee, Braille Challenge, etc...) by connecting with EOTs.
	* Utilize more clarity on the discontinued products Excel sheet to ensure that community partners recognize that discontinued does not mean unavailable. Use short explanations to give more detail (i.e. discontinued but in stock for ordering, discontinued by being redesigned and coming soon, discontinued and out of stock, discontinued temporarily due to supply chain, etc. …).
5. **Finance Department**: To ensure access for those with higher needs registered within the Meets the Definition of Blindness and Functions at the Definition of Blindness categories of the APH Federal Quota Program, explore the possibility of a weighted formula.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trustee Advisory Committee 2025

Dawn Soto, Wisconsin – Co-Chair

Beth Pieters, Iowa– Co-Chair

Roxanne Balfour, Michigan

John Davis, Minnesota

Donna Earley, South Carolina

Gregory Gerhart, Pennsylvania

Allen Huang, Tennessee

Marty McKenzie, South Carolina

Barbara Peterson, Pennsylvania

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