

Effective Governance Practices



Learning Objectives

Understand

Understand
Council-led
governance

Clarify

Clarify roles of
Council, staff, and
Chair

Apply

Apply best
practices for
decision-making

Best Practices

Focused on Roles and Authority:

- Define Roles Clearly
- Maintain Appropriate Boundaries
- Decisions Belong to the Council

Best Practices, Operations

Focused on Operations:

- Staff Prepare – Council Governs
- Chairs Lead Meetings – Staff Support Flow
- Support Informed Leadership

Best Practices, How We Do Our Work

Focused on How We Do Our Work:

- Use Partnership, Not Hierarchy
- Build Member Confidence
- Accountability Works Both Ways
- Practice the “No Surprises” Rule

Define Roles Clearly

Council Responsibilities



Set vision, priorities, and policy direction



Approve plans, budgets, and major decisions



Represent community voice and lived experience



Provide oversight and accountability

Staff Responsibilities

- Provide expertise and operational support
- Implement Council decisions
- Manage programs, contracts, and daily operations
- Prepare information for informed decision-making

Member-Led, Staff-Supported Model

By Brent Watkins,
Interim Executive Director



Oregon Council on
Developmental Disabilities

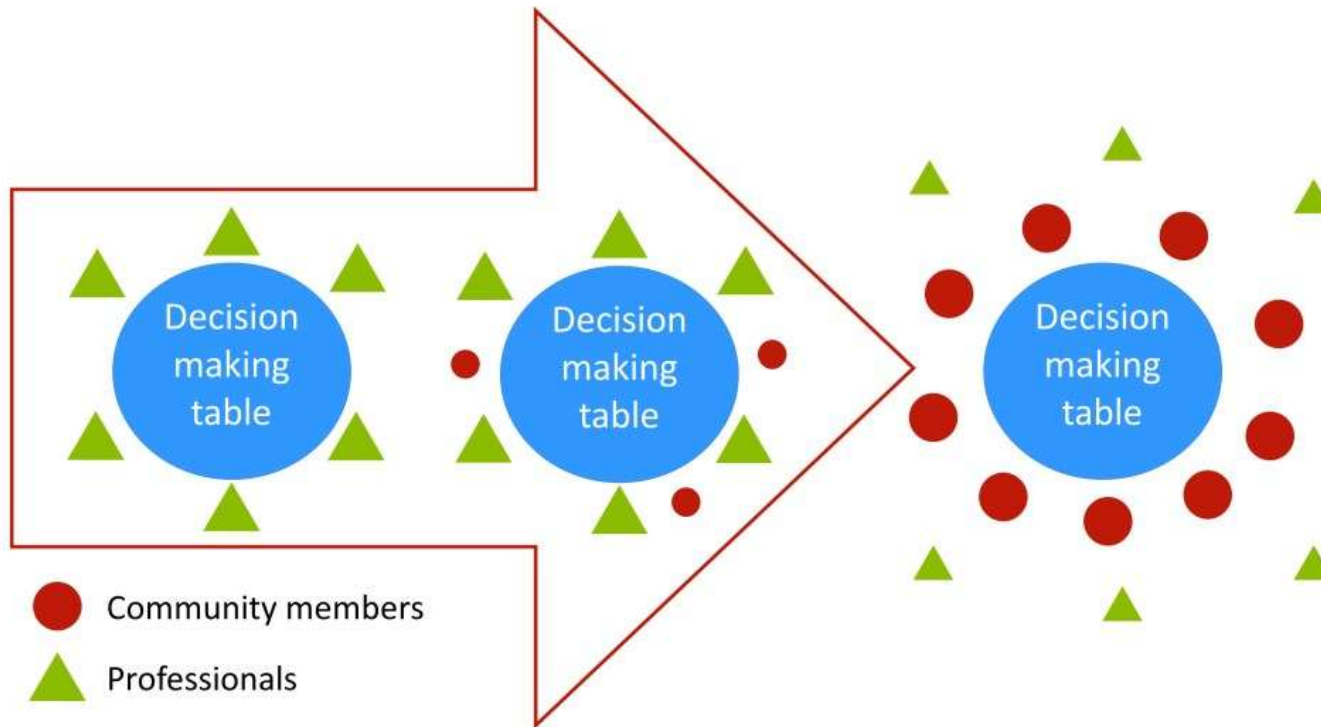
Advancing social and policy change so that people with developmental disabilities, their families and communities may live, work, play, and learn together.

What We Will Do Today

1. Community Building (ABCD Power Dynamics)
2. Core Principles
3. Where We Were: Staff-Led, Member-Informed
4. Where We're Going: Member-Led, Staff-Supported



Community Power Dynamics Model



(Source: [Duncan, 2016](#), p. 4)

<https://clearimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Components-of-Effective-Collective-Impact.pdf>

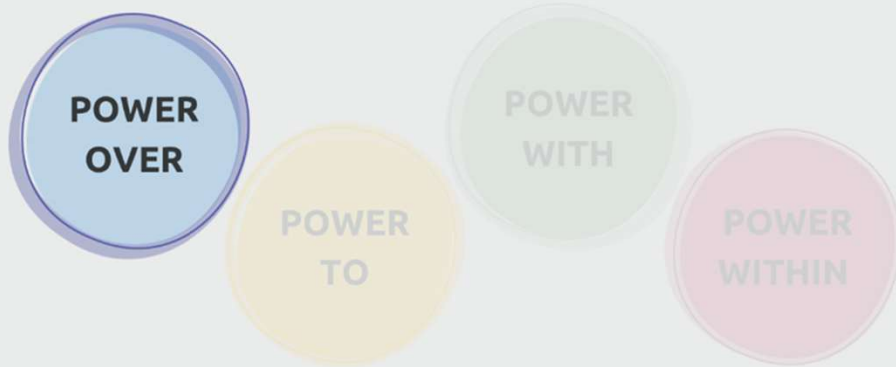


Oregon Council on
Developmental Disabilities

Community Development

ABCD

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Power Dynamics



Source:

<https://www.dandelionphilosophy.com/blog/addressing-power-relations-in-community-development>

“Power Over” is considered the traditional understanding of power. It relies on force, coercion, domination, and control, primarily driven by fear. This form of power operates under the assumption that power is a finite resource, held by certain individuals while others lack it.



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“Power To” highlights the productive or generative potential of power, emphasizing the creation of new possibilities or actions without resorting to relationships of domination. It is grounded in the unique potential of every individual to shape their life and world. This form of power is the ability to make a difference, innovate, create something new, or accomplish goals.

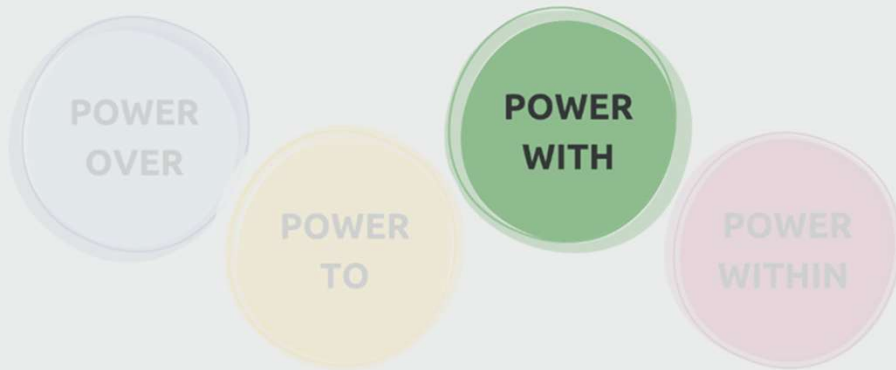


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"Power With" is a shared power that emerges from collaboration and relationships. It is based on principles of respect, mutual support, shared power, solidarity, influence, empowerment, and collaborative decision-making. Unlike domination and control, "Power With" fosters collective action and the capacity to act together.

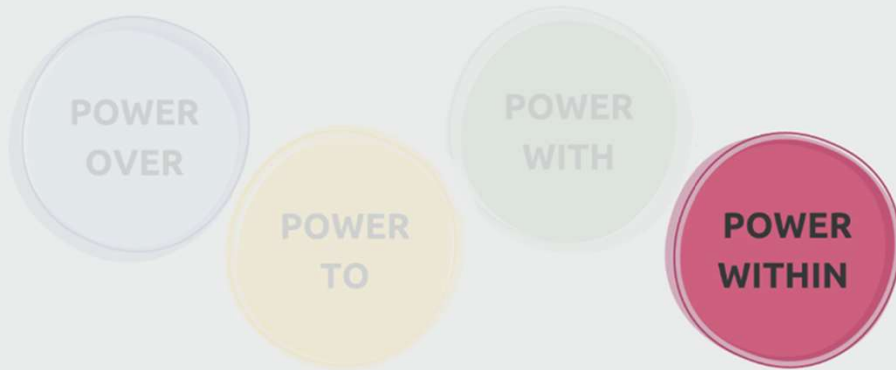


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"Power Within" is linked to a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge, involving the ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others. It entails individuals having a sense of their capacity and self-worth, fostering the belief that they can make a difference.

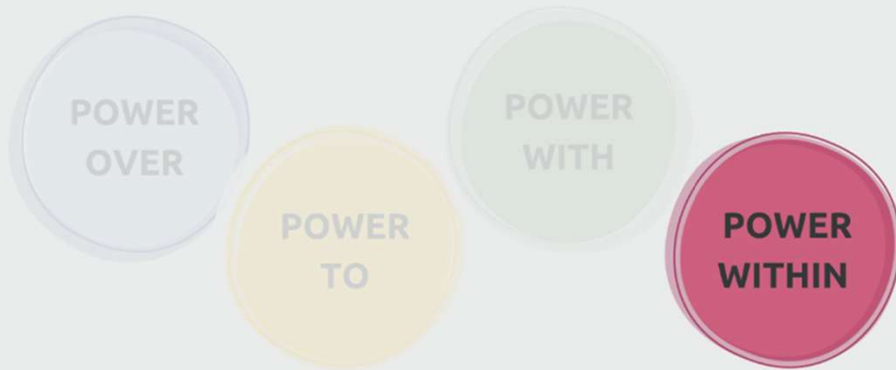


Oregon Council on
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Source:

<https://www.dandelionphilosophy.com/blog/addressing-power-relations-in-community-development>

ABCD is primarily associated with operating in the "Power With" space, centered on fostering relationships and connections within a community, supporting local associations, and promoting collective action.



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Core Principles



**Members own mission,
outcomes, and decisions.**

They set policy, strategy,
priorities, and recommendations
(or decisions, if empowered).



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Core Principles



**Staff enable, ideate, inform,
and implement.**

They provide analysis, options,
public process compliance,
logistics, and execution support.



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Core Principles



Transparency and public engagement are built into the workflow.

Agendas, packets, notices, and records are timely and accessible



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Core Principles



**Clear decision rights
prevent role drift.**

Everyone knows what members
decide vs. what staff manage.



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Roles and Responsibilities

Council (Member Led)



❖ Chair / Vice Chair

Set agendas; preside over meetings; ensure deliberative quality.



Kelly McCauley

Chair



Dr. Jennifer Luebke

Vice Chair

Roles and Responsibilities

Council (Member Led)



❖ **Members**

Set priorities and work plan; debate; vote; form recommendations; oversee committee work.



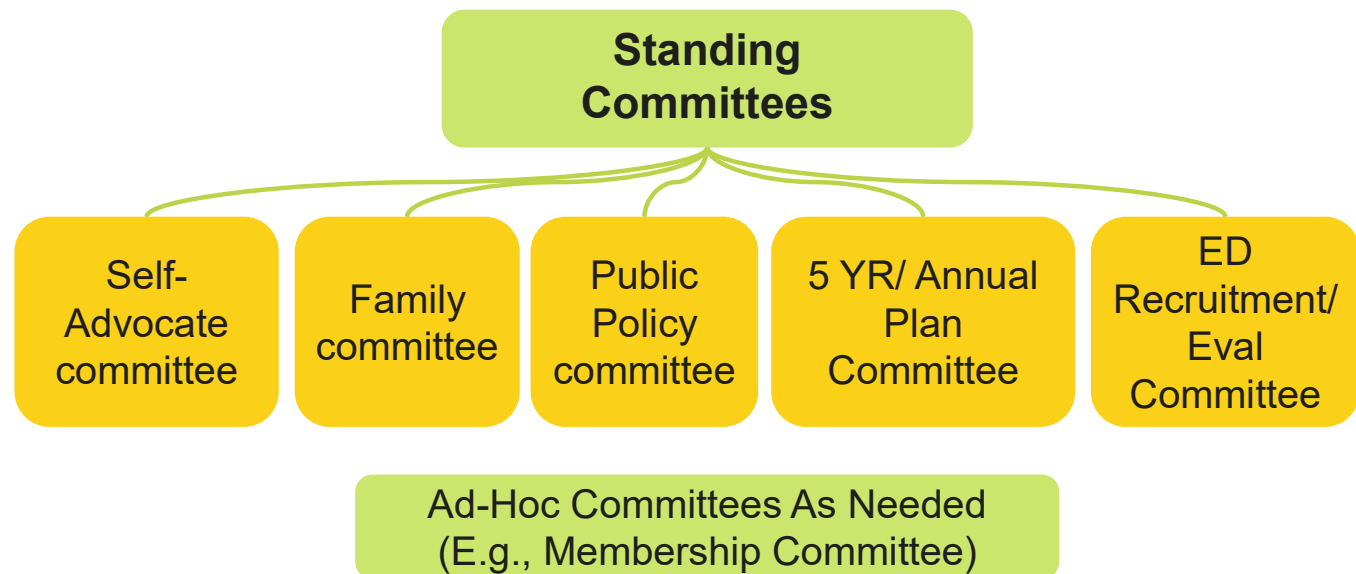
Roles and Responsibilities

Council (Member Led)



❖ Committees

Deep dive on specific topics; Inform full council of discussion, seek feedback, bring proposals and draft recommendations to the full board for vote, when necessary.



Roles and Responsibilities

Staff (Staff Supported)



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❖ **Council Liaison**

Public postings, web updates, stakeholder outreach, meeting recordings/transcripts (if applicable).

❖ **Policy/Program Analyst(s)**

Put together clear information for members; draft options with pros/cons; synthesize input; align recommendations to policy/strategy.

❖ **Operations/Coordinator**

Manage logistics, notices, packets, minutes, public comment process, accessibility (e.g., translation, ADA).

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff (Staff Supported)



❖ **Communications**

Primary point of contact; shepherd agenda; coordinate with Chair and Vice-chair; track work plan; ensure follow through.

❖ **Legal/Compliance**

Ensure open meetings, records retention, conflicts of interest, quorum, and procedural requirements.

OCDD Staff



Brent Watkins
Interim Executive
Director



Matt Serres
Public Policy
Director



Hannah Baker
Advocacy and
Leadership Coordinator



**Johanne (Jo)
Regunathan**
Communications
Specialist



Kate Thompson
Operations
Administrator



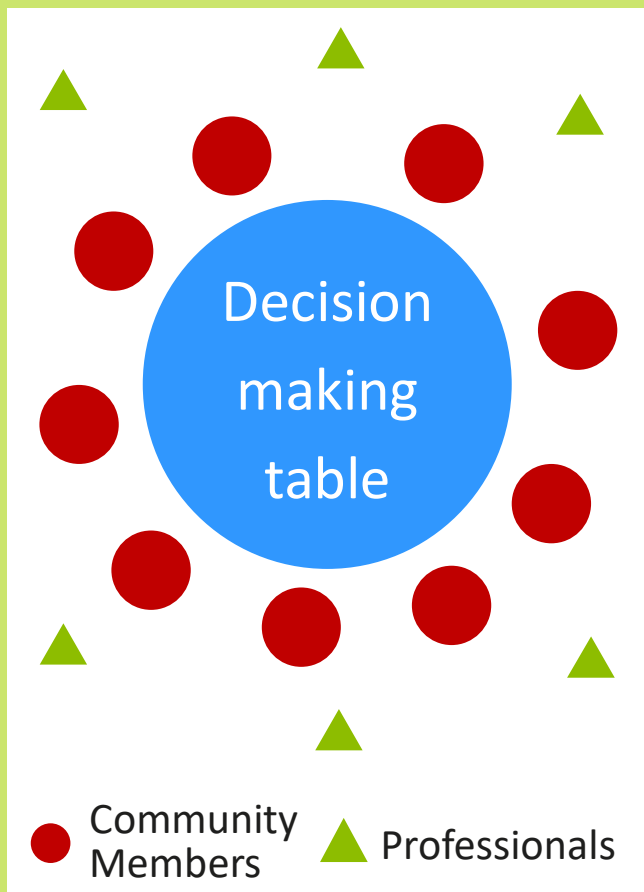
Staff Led, Member Informed Model



- ❖ Opportunities for expanded member engagement
- ❖ Lack of role clarity for two caucuses
- ❖ Staff led membership decisions
- ❖ Council meetings relied a lot on staff presentations
- ❖ Lack of member enthusiasm for participation in Council meetings



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Developmental Disabilities



Process for changing to Member-Led, Staff Supported Model

Governance

(Bylaw Amendments)



- ❖ Creating a more robust standing committee structure (from an executive committee and two caucuses, to an executive committee and six standing committees).
- ❖ Use of ad-hoc committees to obtain information staff need to support the work of the council.
- ❖ Structure of our Council meetings with more time committed to committees to inform, gather feedback, and lead decisions.

Governance

(Bylaw Amendments)

- ❖ Membership process—screened by ad-hoc committee and approved by full council.
- ❖ Changing the power dynamics/less siloing—
More decision-making in hands of full council and not just the executive committee.



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Developmental Disabilities

Accessibility



Responded to feedback on practices that improve accessibility:

- ❖ Revised content and layout of minutes.
- ❖ Added preferred methods of taking votes.
- ❖ Improved budget presentation including adding snapshot updates.
- ❖ Continuous improvement of information presentation.
- ❖ Contract underway to rewrite bylaws in plain language.

Communications



- ❖ **Eliminated lengthy review of work plans during meetings and transitioned to updating/receiving input on selected key projects**
- ❖ Developed community agreements to build trust and improve culture.
- ❖ Member-led community engagement events (e.g., Spanish-speaking Leader led events).
- ❖ Robust Council engagement around five-year plan process.
- ❖ Ongoing listening to Council members and making changes accordingly.

Next Steps/Opportunities for Improvement

- ❖ Chair facilitated council meetings.
- ❖ Developing committee leads to feel more empowered to initiate meetings, set agendas, and hold committee members accountable.
- ❖ Self-Advocate led decision-making within committees/in committee roles.
- ❖ Continued progress toward council engagement in strategic oversight and evaluation/assessment of Council activities.
- ❖ Awareness during hard topics - trauma informed communications and practices.



Questions?



Oregon Council on
Developmental Disabilities

Advancing social and policy change so that people with developmental disabilities, their families and communities may live, work, play, and learn together.

Maintain Appropriate Boundaries

Healthy governance requires role clarity.

Council members should not:

- Direct individual staff
- Manage daily operations
- Interfere with supervision structure

Staff should not:

- Control Council priorities
- Limit discussion unnecessarily
- Substitute administrative preference for Council direction

Decisions Belong to the Council

Staff should:

- Present Options
- Provide data and implications
- Recommend approaches when appropriate



Council members should:

- Discuss
- Deliberate
- Vote and reach consensus



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE PRACTICES HAWAI'I SCDD

Achieve your goals one step at a time
Council-Led, Staff-Supported

Sierra Haunani Whiteside (Chair) & Daintry Bartoldus (ED)



Council-Led

- *Staff-supported*
- *Officers are self-advocates*
- *Strong discussion culture*

A large, vibrant red hibiscus flower with white veins, set against a dark, blurred background of green leaves and a black pot. The flower is the central focus of the right half of the slide.

What
Makes
Hawai'i
Unique

▲

What Council-Led Means



01

*Decisions belong to the
Council*

02

Everyone has a voice

03

Discussion before decisions

04

Staff support (not direct)



How We Structure Decisions

- *Clear agenda with decision points*
- *Motion and second*
- *Decision by vote or consensus*
- *Information shared in advance*
- *Open discussion (all voices heard)*
- *Decisions documented and followed up*



Creating Space for Meaningful Discussion

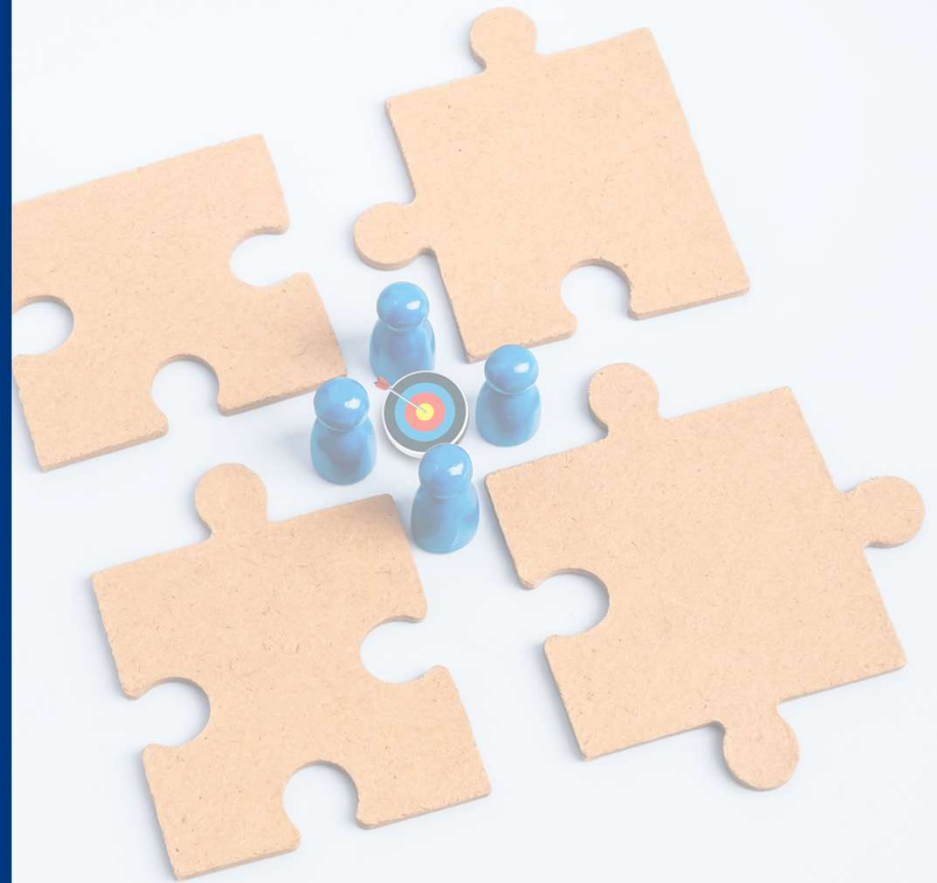
- *Plain language and accessible materials*
- *Questions and Different views are welcome*



- *Time to prepare before meetings*
- *Respectful and supportive facilitation*

Role Clarity

- *Chair facilitates the meeting*
- *Council members discuss and make decisions*
- *Staff provide information and support*
- *Shared responsibility for respectful participation*



- ▲ *Staff provided overview of ABLA (allows savings over \$2,000 without loss of benefits)*
- ▲ *Shared updates on ABLA education and outreach efforts*
- ▲ *Council members asked questions to clarify program details*
- ▲ *Members shared lived experience with income and asset limits*
- ▲ *Discussed policy considerations, including Kal's Law and income/asset disregard options*

Real Example: Hawaii ABLA Savings Program to Medicaid / Kal's Law





▲ Why It Works

- *Centers lived experience in decisions*
- *Builds strong member engagement*
- *Strengthens trust and transparency*
- *Leads to better outcomes*



Key Takeaways

- *Trust council leadership*
- *Make space for discussion*
- *Clarify roles and responsibilities*
- *Support, don't direct*



▲ Mahalo

Questions

Staff Prepare – Council Governs



**Effective Councils
rely on strong
participation**



Staff support includes:

- Agenda development with Chair input
- Background materials in plain language
- Decision summaries
- Follow-up tracking



**Well-prepared
meetings allow
members to focus
on leadership
instead of logistics.**



**If you're not planning for inclusion,
You are preparing for exclusion**

Vermont Council Example

VTDDDC Meetings

- Quarterly.
- Hybrid.
- Location moves around the state.
- Key activities:
 - Usual.... Budget, Five-year plan, evaluate ED, make grants.
 - Adopt an annual legislative platform.
 - Monitor relationship with DSA.
 - Provide input to state officials and lawmakers.
 - Many are highly engaged outside of meetings.

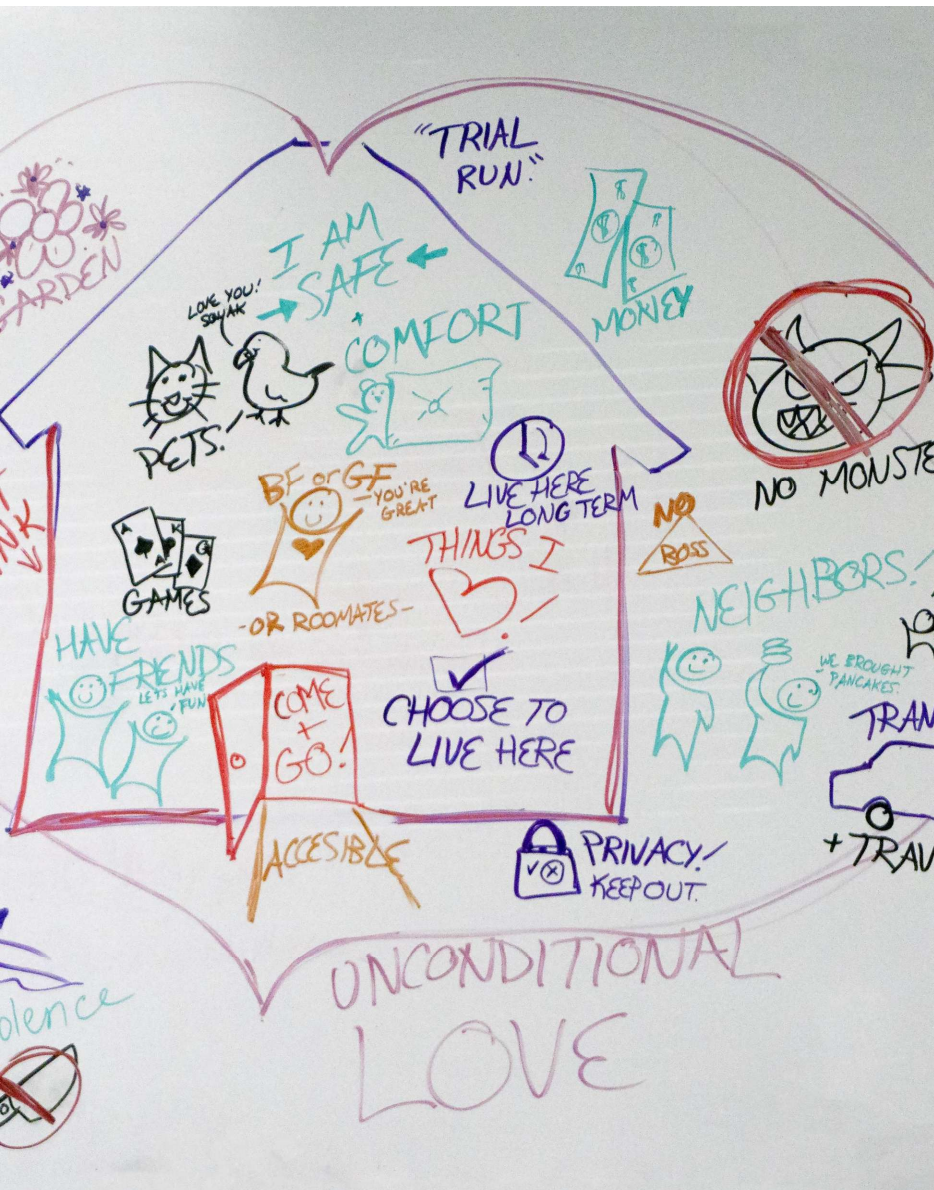




VTDDC's Mantra

*Meetings must be
meaningful,
action-oriented,
and fun.*





Planning for Meaning, Action, & Fun

Meaning

- Ensure information is understandable.
- Give members a chance to share their truth.

Action

- Make at least one important decision.
- Each member leaves with something to do.

Fun

- Multi-sensory activities.
- Bring in important guests: Lawmakers, State Officials.
- Lunch matters....

How VTDDC Prepares



4 weeks before meeting:

Executive Committee sets agenda.



2 weeks before the meeting:

Plain language meeting materials are sent in paper & electronic copy.



Week of the Thursday meeting:

Peer support provider reviews agenda with self-advocates.

Additional Supports



Video version of agenda,
including meeting logistics.



VTDDC staff help arrange rides
for members who do not drive.

Chairs Lead Meetings – Staff Support Flow

Chair



Facilitates discussion



Ensures participation



Guides decision-making

Staff

- Provide technical clarification
- Track action items
- Maintain records

Chairs Lead Meetings – Staff Support Flow

- Chairs Lead the meetings:
 - Facilitates discussion
 - Ensures participation
 - Guides decision-making



Planning, Timing, and Flow

- Chairs Lead the meetings:
 - Be Prepared - Know your agenda
 - Be active in creating the agenda for the meeting
 - Understand what presentations are being made and how long they will take
 - Helps in Time Management - reduces stress
 - Identify potential items that could be moved to the next meeting if a hot topic takes longer than planned
 - Allow time for questions
 - Increases participation and member engagement
 - If your council typically asks a lot, plan more time.
 - Beware of the repeat trap, if questions start to repeat, you can gracefully end the questions and get back on topic and timing. Members love to finish on time.
 - Understanding the timing and flow, along with the topic of presentations will help you be more confident in controlling the flow of the meeting. This will also reduce the reliance on staff to lead the meeting and maintain an advisory or technical resource role.
 - Do your best to start on time and stay on time, if you are running behind because of good participation and questions it is okay.
 - No one is a great leader on their first try. It takes practice, the more confident you get the better it will flow.

Creating Space for Discussion and Participation

- Facilitates discussion & Ensures participation
 - Before the meeting:
 - Prepare some sample questions for the presenters if you have to start the process.
 - Members are more comfortable asking after the ice is broken.
 - If the presentation came from one of your committees, ask the Chair to lead the questions.
 - Day of the meeting;
 - Have conversations with other members about the meeting and the upcoming presentation, make sure they are comfortable with the subject and understand that questions are welcome.
 - Don't put your members in the spotlight during the meeting if you haven't agreed prior to the meeting.
 - At the end of discussion, be sure to thank the members, good discussion and participation is a gift and should be appreciated.

From Discussion to Decision

- Guides decision-making
 - Mark on your agenda which topics need action, rather than just informational
 - Have a summary of the action that is being considered
 - At the end of the presentation and discussion, summarize the action that is necessary or what is being asked.
 - Example: Staff are seeking approval to begin this program; I would entertain a motion....
 - If a motion is made that is not clear, it is appropriate for you to clarify and repeat the motion
 - We have a motion to have staff begin the program; do we have a second?
 - Being prepared for when action is needed and what action is needed will make the meeting flow better and help you guide the meeting and stay on track.

Bringing It All Together

- Summary
 - Being prepared for the meeting is key
 - This is a learning process, the more you do it the more confident and comfortable you will be.
 - Have discussion with the staff prior to the meeting to make sure you know the agenda, flow, and expectations.
 - Have conversations and ask the other members for support by being active and having good conversations.
 - Good meetings are a team event: it takes a lot of teamwork to make them successful.

Support Informed Leadership

Staff strengthen Council leadership by:

Translating technical information

Explaining federal and state requirements

Identifying risks early

Offering implementation realities



Good staff support empowers but does not replace member leadership.

Use Partnership, Not Hierarchy

Council-led does NOT mean adversarial.

Strong governance practices look like:

- Mutual respect
- Shared problem solving
- Transparency
- Early Communication

Build Member Confidence

- Staff and Council Member leadership and Council staff should help members succeed by:
- Arranging and providing orientation and training to Council members
- Offering mentoring support
- Encouraging questions
- Creating accessible materials



Council on
Developmental
Disabilities

Developing an Advocacy Leadership Culture

How can we design a council leadership culture that builds *confidence* as well as improves *competence* in self-advocates?

May 5, 2026

The *grassroots* of Self-Advocacy in NYS



Statewide Board



SA Regions



Self-advocacy Groups



Individual Self-advocates



May 5, 2026



May 5, 2026



NEW
YORK
STATE

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GIFTS



COMPETENCE

AUTONOMY

CONFIDENCE

DREAMS





May 5, 2026



May 5, 2026

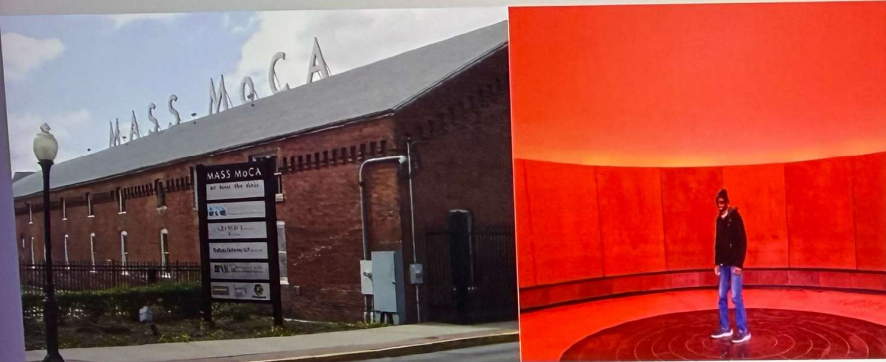
Chair's Corner

Good morning. My name is Xavier, and I am the chair of the CSCC.

Here are some updates from the Chair's Corner:

- I visited Mass MoCA in March. It was my first time visiting.
- I was invited to speak at my Church on April 19, it will be an opportunity to showcase my public speaking skills.
- I volunteer at my church every week. We bag fruit and vegetables to help the food pantry.
- I was invited to join the ARC of Rensselaer County's Board.

CHAIR'S CORNER WITH XAVIER SKEETER



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MEET OUR NEW BOARD NOMINEES:

SARAH BOGGESS

Sarah Metzgar Boggess, a Regional External Affairs Manager at National Grid, has 30-plus years of experience in the areas of public affairs, stakeholder engagement, strategic communications and government relations. She has worked as a newspaper reporter, communications staffer at the New York State Senate, and as a vice president at Hudson Valley Community College, Behan Communications and ReEnergy Holdings. She has a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College and an MBA from Clarkson University. She lives in East Greenbush.

XAVIER SKEETER

Xavier Skeeter has lived in Rensselaer with his family since 2012 and attended high school in Albany. He is actively involved in Macedonia Baptist Church, where he volunteers with the food pantry. Xavier has worked at Regal Theater in Colonie Center for the past two years. He serves as President of the "Citizen Speaking Out Group" with The Arc of Rensselaer County and is an advocate on the Council of Developmental Disabilities Board of Directors. He also participates in The Arc of Rensselaer County's Self-Direction and Without Walls programs.

I was invited to join the ARC of Rensselaer
County's Board.

app.zoom.us is sharing your screen.

Stop sharing

Hide



Self-Advocacy Training for Self-advocates:

- Give them space
- Support them well
- Design training around the person

- Build up the self-advocate to be part of the community

-Mike Rogers,
Western Regional Organizer
Self-Advocate Association of NYS (SANYS)



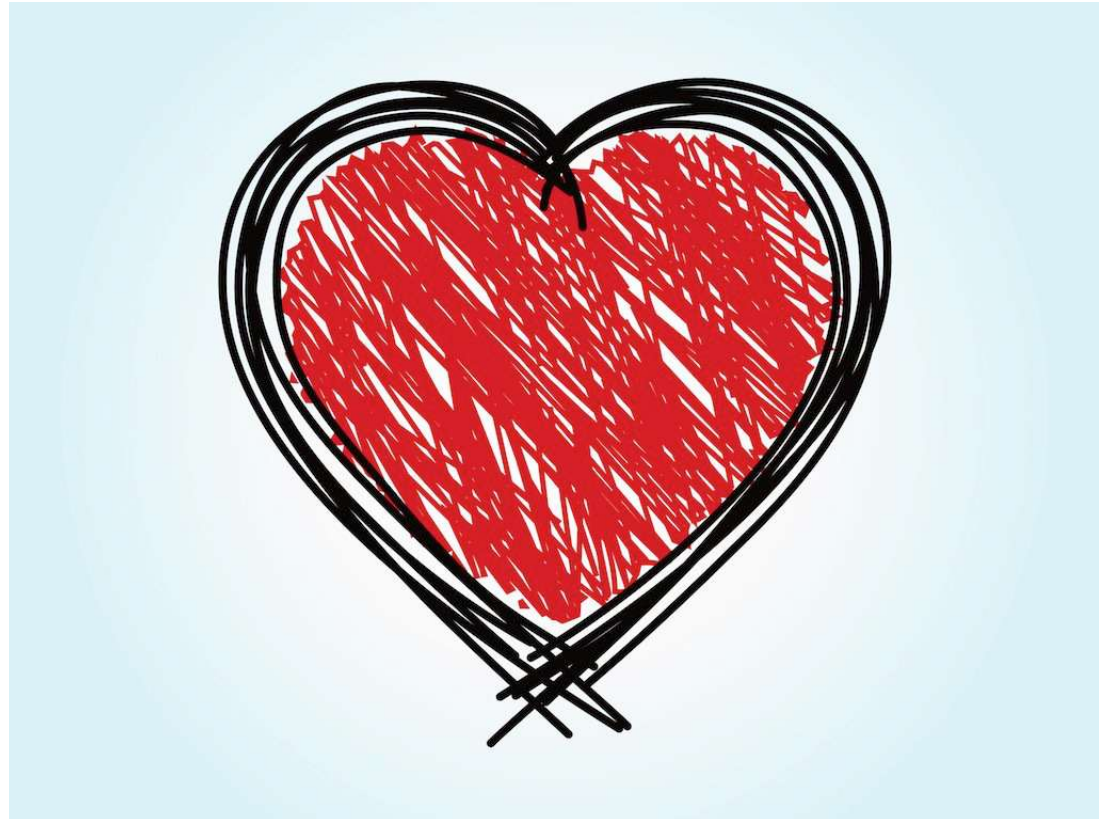
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Disabilities**



“So here’s to changed hearts”

May 5, 2026



**Council on
Developmental
Disabilities**

Dave Deuel, PhD

Chairperson, NYCDD

Ddeuel@joniandfriends.org

518.844.9259 (Phone or text)



Council on Developmental Disabilities

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Register for our Listserv

- [Sign Up for News & Updates](#)
- Over 2000 Individuals, Families and Organizations registered

May 5, 2026

Accountability Works Both Ways

- Council holds staff accountable for results.
- Staff hold Council accountable to law, policy, and timelines.
- **Effective governance happens when:**
 - High-functioning boards embrace a wide range of perspectives and thoughtful debate
 - Governance is most effective when there is open, respectful disagreement.
 - The best governance happens when ideas are tested, not just agreed upon

Practice the “No Surprises” Rule



Best partnerships operate with:

Early notice of challenges
Shared planning
Continuous communication



Surprises damage trust

Quick Check: Are We Council Led?

- Take some time to reflect on one of more recent decisions:
 - Who set this priority?
 - Who made the decision?
 - Who is responsible for implementation?
 - Are roles respected?

If the answers are clear, governance is working!