

SILC Meeting Minutes April 29, 2026 Virtual Meeting Summary

Attendees:

- Council Members: Jean Schroeder, June Hermanson, Gina Lytle, Chris Johnsrud, Julie Williams, Scott Williamson, Tami Hoar (CIL Director), Savannah Smith
- CIL Directors: Margaret Keener, Scott Birkenbuel, Tami Hoar
- DET Staff: Lacey Conzelman, Julia Arnold, Sarah Seltzer, Hannah Stokes

Budget Report

- Hannah Stikes gave the financial report.
 - **SILC Budget – FY2026** as of March 31, 2026
 - Consulting - \$130
 - Supplies/Materials - \$0
 - Travel - \$0
 - Honorariums - \$1,100
 - Meetings/Conference Costs - \$0
 - Education/Training - \$600
 - Communication - \$0
 - Printing/Pub& Graphics - \$0
 - Repair / Maintenance - \$0
 - Other Expense - \$0
 - Total - \$2,70.00
 - 12% budget spent
- Julia Arnold indicated \$5000 has been deposited with the Billings Hotel and Convention Center for the August IL Symposium.
- Part B 2025 Contracts with CILs are 52% spend as of March 31, 2026.
- General Fund 2025 contracts are 61% spent as of March 31, 2026.
- IL Program Manager Administrative Costs \$50,618 (33% spent) as of March 31, 2026.
- Council discussed the draft budget for the remainder of the Part B SILC funds..

Reports/Planning:

- Allison McClure, Ability Montana Self-Direct Program Manager, updated the SILC on the Netsmart/EVV Program being used at Ability Montana. The limitations of the program and why Ability is adopting a new program to facilitate this program. The SILC discussed this issue and proposed several solutions to discuss at the next meeting.
- Travis Hoffman, Summit Independent Living and Collective Disruption member, led a discussion of the current status of Section 504 in Montana.

Motions:

- June Hermanson made a motion to approve the January 21, 2026 meeting minutes as written. Jean Schroeder made the second. The motion passed with an all-in-favor vote.
- Tami Hoar made a motion to add an additional \$2000 to the IL Symposium budget, Gina Lytle made the second. The motion passed unanimously.

- Tami Hoar made the motion to pay for the registration fee up to \$2000 for individuals attending the IL Symposium. Gina Lytle made the second. The motion passed unanimously.
- Tami Hoar made the motion to accept the bylaw update, Scott Williamson seconded this bylaw update, and an all-in-favor vote was cast.

SILC Committee Reports:

- The Policy & Procedure Committee shared updates regarding the policy written to address disputes within the Council. History was provided on how this proposed wording came about, opinions were shared, and a discussion was held. Voting took place on this motion, and the motion passed.
- Julia shared an update for the Membership Committee. Two applications were awaiting the Governor's appointment, and a third was to be submitted to the Governor's portal soon. If all three were appointed, the Council would now consist of 13 members.
- Tami Hoar discussed that the SPIL Writing Committee had met several times and will continue to ramp up after the summer.
- The CIL Satisfaction Committee discussed progress that was being made on the goal to complete the CIL Satisfaction survey. A review of the committee's history, present progress, and proposal to use the State of Montana's Qualtrics program.

CIL Reports:

- Tami Hoar, Summit

Tami Hoar, Summit Independent Living, provided program updates. Summit's peer program remains strong, with 20 active peers—most based in Missoula. Several peers have transitioned into staff roles over the past year, including Reggie Herbert, who is well-known in the blind community for his work in accessibility, audio description, and educational programming. Reggie was hired as a Pre-ETS Specialist through a vocational rehabilitation contract and is also providing one-on-one assistive technology support to consumers.

Summit is developing a week-long Pre-ETS summer day camp for 15–20 high school students, in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation. Reggie will support curriculum delivery. Summit also continues providing its Building Advocacy and Leadership Skills (BASE) curriculum through direct school contracts.

Peers remain active in advocacy, community engagement, and training initiatives. A peer-led team provides regular disability etiquette training for Mountain Line's new drivers, which has been positively received, and Missoula County contracted Summit to deliver a four-part disability etiquette training to all county employees. Additional collaborations include participation in transportation planning and walk audits for the county.

- Carlos Ramalho, LIFTT

Carlos Ramalho provided an update on LIFTT's recent activities. LIFTT successfully relocated its Glendive office to a newly purchased building—the former local television and radio station—which offers more space and significant long-term cost savings. The building will also house LIFTT's second Uplift Thrift Store, which will be substantially larger than the Billings location and will continue supporting both community needs and organizational fundraising.

The new facility will additionally accommodate LIFTT's transportation program. Two vans are in service, equipped with comprehensive security cameras for safety and policy compliance. A third, larger van remains pending delivery due to manufacturer corrections required by the Montana Department of Transportation.

Carlos Ramalho reported improved staffing stability following recent cost-of-living wage adjustments. Leadership transitions are underway due to an upcoming retirement. LIFTT continues to grow, serving more than 300 active consumers in Glendive, and exploring expansion into Miles City, pending financial feasibility.

The organization has secured more than ten grants this year from diverse partners, including industrial, nonprofit, and financial institutions. LIFTT also formed an outreach and education partnership with the Yellowstone Valley Heritage Center, acquiring the "Unequally Equal" disability rights exhibit to display in the new Glendive building.

LIFTT's PCA program continues to expand into rural communities, helping individuals remain in their homes with the support they need. Other core and innovative services are also growing, including diabetes prevention and management programs, Tai Chi, art classes, and the inclusive community garden. ADA-accessible features and donated seeds will support this year's garden kickoff on May 15.

ADA anniversary events are planned for August 1 in Billings and Glendive. Billings will host "Hidden Treasures," a fundraising dinner event aimed at increasing self-sufficiency. LIFTT is also collaborating with Disability Rights Montana on Section 504 advocacy, with recent public outreach including an editorial published in the Billings Gazette.

Overall, LIFTT reports strong growth early in the fiscal year, with more Montanans receiving independent living services and ongoing efforts to expand inclusion and community partnerships.

- Margaret Keener, NCILS

Executive Director of NCILS, Margaret Keener, shared staffing updates and highlighted NCILS activities this quarter. Following internal transitions, all vacant positions have been filled, and NCILS is now fully staffed. Despite the transitions, more than 500 consumers were served across Part B, Part C, and SD Pass programs.

Program work continues to expand. The peer program hosted an event on the 'ADA and You' featuring speaker Lloyd Sparks. NCILS received strong participation and positive feedback. The center also facilitated access to several statewide town halls and numerous meetings for consumers without access to technology by providing office-based connection points. The new Peer Advisory Council is convening its first meeting tomorrow.

Upcoming events include a DPHHS-collaborative wellness workshop for individuals with cognitive disabilities on May 21 and a Leadership Luncheon on May 19 at the Hampton Inn, designed to connect consumers with city, county, and state leaders and legislative candidates.

Staff continue supporting statewide Section 504 efforts and will participate in next week's celebration and testimony in Helena. The center recently expanded its facility by 1,500 square feet, including a new training kitchen, and will hold an open house on June 4. A nutrition education grant will support six classes on affordable healthy cooking using slow cookers and Instant Pots; participants who complete

the series will receive an Instant Pot and a cookbook. Additional classes will be offered in partnership with a local school, with broader regional expansion planned.

Planning is underway for the ADA picnic in July. "My Life" youth programs are preparing for summer sessions, with Step One focusing on college readiness at Carroll College and Step Two emphasizing employment skills. A "mini My Life" program will be offered in September for Hart Butte students, with potential expansion to surrounding areas. Efforts continue to strengthen services and partnerships with Native American communities.

NCILS is also working to expand leadership luncheons and related services to additional regions such as Glasgow. The staff is preparing for the statewide Transition Conference in November, which will include keynotes, a career fair, and a presentation on connecting with Independent Living Centers. Collaboration with other CILs will ensure statewide representation and resources for participating youth and families.

NCILS has updated its webpage and is now active on social media.

- Scott Berkenbuel, Ability Montana

Ability Montana Executive Director Scott Birkenbuel reported significant recent activity across the organization. Ability Montana has onboarded new staff and continues to expand programming. Two employees are attending the ADA Conference to complete certification as ADA coordinators. The organization will host "Let's Talk Disability – Helena" monologues at Carroll College on May 14, with tickets available online. The Ability podcast continues to grow.

The Independent Living team in Bozeman completed a walk audit and subsequently received a city grant to improve accessibility at Lindley Park, including updates to the trail system. An ADA celebration and ribbon-cutting event is planned at the park on July 25. MSU students, the City of Bozeman, and Ability Montana are collaborating on GIS mapping to develop an accessibility map and app for downtown Bozeman.

Ability Montana conducted a walk audit in Ennis with the High Fives Foundation and co-sponsored a screening of the film "MEND." The organization held its first legislative open house at all three offices with good attendance; Bozeman's event included Republican legislators, while Helena's included Democratic legislators. Discussions focused on disability rights and Section 504.

The self-directed care program continues to grow. Ability Montana is assisting consumers through Medicaid transitions related to new work-or-volunteer requirements, noting limited state guidance. The organization is implementing a new EVV system due to inadequacies in the state-provided option.

The Veterans Directed Care program is temporarily not accepting referrals as new staff onboard. The VA anticipates reopening referrals within 60 days, noting current staffing challenges at Fort Harrison.

Winter recreation programs were well attended. Ability Montana received a \$99,000 VA grant to support recreation equipment and supplies. Staff conducted 85 lessons totaling 300 hours, serving

42 individual participants, along with 27 school group lessons, enabling students with disabilities to participate in ski days at Discovery Basin.

Adaptive skating participation remains lower than pre-COVID levels. Camp Bullwheel is preparing for a full summer schedule, including veteran-directed programs, fly fishing camps, a Pathfinders youth camp, and a STEM camp. COO Ingrid Hill is completing Leadership Montana.

Scott Birkenbuel also met with the Attorney General's office regarding Section 504. The discussion was lengthy and contentious, with no resolution. Concerns centered on state liability and interpretations related to disability definitions.

Ability Montana is preparing for its first "Evening of Empowerment" fundraising event at Heart Ranch near Gallatin Gateway. Chef Eduardo Garcia will provide the meal, and former Governor Marc Racicot will co-host. The event will include short educational videos about independent living.

Public Comment

- None

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm to tour Ability Montana. The next meeting is to be held in August in conjunction with the IL Symposium.