ARO Communications Committee Meeting Minutes
Date: May 29, 2025
Attendees: Mike Bowl, Kristin Johnson, Barbara Vona, James Dias, Ruben Stepanyan, Nicolas Grillet, Sujata Pandey, Pankaj Bhatia, Francisco Barros, Yuan He, Farideh Moeinvaziri
Apologies: Kelsey Anbuhl, Dietmar Wohlbauer

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1. Welcome and Introductions

Summary:
Chair Mike Bowl opened the meeting by welcoming members and providing context on the committee's purpose and goals. A round of introductions followed, with members sharing their affiliations and interests. Kristin Johnson, Executive Director of ARO, emphasized her role in supporting the committee's strategic planning and operations.

Decisions Made:

- Confirmed current committee composition and clarified roles, including spARO representatives.

Action Items:

- None noted.

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2. Committee Overview and Priorities

Summary:
Mike Bowl outlined the committee's merged responsibilities from the former External Relations and the Communications Committees. Two main initiatives were highlighted:

1. **Mini Grant Program** – spearheaded by Nicolas Grillet to support local outreach events.
2. **Outreach Slide Deck Project** – aimed at educating school-age children about hearing health using resources like NIH's Noisy Planet.

Kristin Johnson added that slide decks for both young children and middle schoolers were already in development by Kelsey Anbuhl.

Decisions Made:

- Target launch for outreach resources: February 2026 (ARO Mid-Winter Meeting).
- Proposal to Council for an Outreach Award to be developed.

Action Items:

- Committee to finalize outreach slide decks.
- Develop a proposal for the Outreach Award.
- Members to suggest simple classroom demonstrations for inclusion in the outreach kit.

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3. Mini Grant Program Update

Summary:
Nicolas Grillet reviewed the mini grant program, which offers up to $1,000 for local outreach initiatives. The application process is simple and rolling, but awareness remains low. The committee discussed improving visibility and clarifying website language to avoid confusion with outdated descriptions.

Decisions Made:

- Maintain rolling application format.
- Clarify and unify mini grant language across the website.
- Showcase past awardees and their projects on the ARO website.

Action Items:

- Kristin to provide Nicolas with past applicant data.
- Nicolas and Christine to follow up with past awardees for testimonials and photos.
- Update website to clearly distinguish ARO-funded mini grants from external opportunities.

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4. Website Review and Maintenance

Summary:
The committee discussed the need for ongoing website review to ensure accuracy and

functionality. Issues such as broken links (e.g., Noisy Planet) and outdated content were noted.

Decisions Made:

- Regularly review the website for broken links and outdated content.
- Add a recurring agenda item to review website issues.

Action Items:

- All members to explore the website and report issues.

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6. Future Planning and Tracking Outreach

Summary:
The committee discussed methods to track outreach activities and measure impact. Ideas included creating a map of outreach events and encouraging participants to report their activities.

Decisions Made:

- Develop a visual map to track outreach events.
- Encourage reporting of outreach activities for visibility and impact assessment.

Action Items:

- Kristin to explore adding a map feature to the website.
- Committee to define a process for members to report outreach events.

Summary

The ARO Communications Committee welcomed new members and reviewed its primary initiatives: the mini grant program and the outreach slide deck project. The committee emphasized the importance of promoting hearing health education and increasing visibility of available resources. Website updates, spARO engagement, and future planning were key discussion points.

Decisions Made

- Confirmed committee composition and roles.
- Set February 2026 as the target for launching outreach program.
- Agreed to develop a proposal for an Outreach Award.
- Maintain rolling mini grant application process.
- Clarify mini grant language on the website.
- Add recurring website review to meeting agendas.
- Explore tracking outreach events via a website map.

Action Items

- Group: Finalize outreach slide decks.
- Group: Develop Outreach Award proposal.
- Group: Suggest classroom demos for outreach kit.
- Kristin: Provide past mini grant applicant data.
- Nico: Follow up with past awardees for information/testimonials.
- Group: Provide Kristin with updates needed to mini grant page and application.
- Farideh & Yuan: Gather input/interest levels in the outreach program as well as promote it at spARO meetings.
- Group: Report website issues.
- Kristin: Find out what the options are for imbedding a map on website.
- Group: Define outreach reporting process.