ARO Communications Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: September 17, 2025
Attendees: Mike Bowl, Francisco Barros, Rhiannon McNeely, Barbara Vona, Kelsey Anbuhl, Nicolas Grillet, Dietmar Wohlbauer, Farideh Moeinvaziri

1. Welcome and Introductions

Summary:
The meeting began with informal greetings and check-ins among committee members. Attendance was confirmed, with Ruben Stepanyan noted as absent. Mike Bowl facilitated the meeting and transitioned into agenda topics.

Decisions Made:

- Ruben Stepanyan was the only member who sent apologies for absence.

Action Items:

- None noted for this section.

2. Educational Outreach Slide Development – Younger Students

Summary:
Francisco Barros presented updates to the educational outreach slides for younger students. The revised content emphasizes interactive learning and simplified concepts of sound, hearing, and hearing protection. The team discussed the importance of relatable examples, hands-on activities, and minimizing technical jargon. Suggestions included using instruments to demonstrate frequency, avoiding complex terms like “decibels,” and incorporating visual aids like warning stickers and everyday noisy items.

Decisions Made:

- Slide content will focus on relatable, interactive examples rather than technical explanations.
- Decibels will be mentioned but not explained in depth.
- Activities will include tuning forks, paper cup telephones, and sound demos.
- A trial run will be conducted at a Seattle school.
- Real-world examples (e.g., lawnmowers, fireworks) will be used to illustrate loud sounds.

Action Items:

- Francisco to finalize slides and create a presentation guide.

- Francisco to contact the Seattle teacher for feedback and schedule a classroom trial.
- Team to explore adding visuals of noise warning stickers and everyday items.
- Francisco to test activities and gather feedback from educators**.**

3. Educational Outreach Slide Development – Older Students

Summary:
Kelsey Anbuhl shared updates to the slide deck tailored for older students. The revised slides include more detailed explanations of sound, decibels, and hearing loss. Practical advice is provided on managing volume levels on devices, and the importance of protecting hearing is emphasized. The committee discussed incorporating real-world demos, apps for measuring sound, and strategies for engaging students with technology.

Decisions Made:

- Older student slides will include deeper scientific content and practical advice.
- Sound demos and decibel apps will be used to enhance engagement.
- Earplug demonstrations will be included.
- A slide on communicating with individuals with hearing loss will be added.
- ARO introduction slide will be added to the beginning of the presentation.

Action Items:

- Kelsey to refine slides and incorporate feedback.
- Kelsey to add examples of hearing protection and communication strategies.
- Francisco to share sound resource links (e.g., Pixabay).
- Kelsey to research reputable sound libraries and CDC/NIH resources.
- Committee to provide feedback on take-home messages for each slide.

4. Mini Grant Program Update

Summary:
Nicolas Grillet provided updates on the mini grant program. A new approach to avoid tax issues was discussed—splitting awards between two recipients. Farideh Moeinvaziri promoted the program within her group, and the committee discussed further promotion at the upcoming ARO meeting.

Decisions Made:

- Mini grant awards will be split between two recipients to avoid tax thresholds.
- Website updates have improved clarity for applicants.
- Promotion will be increased at the upcoming ARO meeting.

Action Items:

- Mike to discuss outreach award and promotion strategy with ARO Council.

5. Outreach Material Funding Discussion

Summary:
Francisco raised the possibility of ARO supporting outreach materials (e.g., earplugs, activity supplies). The committee agreed this would be beneficial but noted logistical challenges. Suggestions included seeking university support or reimbursement options.

Decisions Made:

- ARO support for outreach materials is desirable but requires Council approval.
- Universities may be encouraged to fund outreach efforts.

Action Items:

- Mike to raise funding support with ARO Council.
- Committee members to explore university funding options for outreach materials.

Summary

The meeting focused on refining educational outreach materials for younger and older students, updating the mini grant program, and discussing funding for outreach supplies. Emphasis was placed on accessibility, engagement, and practical application of hearing health education.

Decisions Made (Consolidated)

- Educational content will be simplified for younger students and expanded for older students.
- Real-world examples and interactive demos will be used to teach sound and hearing protection.
- Decibels will be introduced but not deeply explained to younger audiences.
- Slide decks will include practical advice and communication strategies.

- Mini grant awards will be split amongst 2 people per awarded application to avoid tax issues.
- Outreach materials may be funded by ARO or universities.
- ARO introduction slide will be added to presentations.

Action Items (Consolidated)

- Francisco Barros: Finalize younger student slides; create presentation guide; contact Seattle school; share sound resource links.
- Kelsey Anbuhl: Refine older student slides; add communication strategies; research sound libraries and health resources.
- Mike Bowl: Discuss outreach award and funding support with ARO Council.
- Committee Members: Provide feedback on slides and take-home messages; explore university support for outreach materials.