



Division of Rehabilitative Services

Employment Service Organization Steering Committee (ESOSC)

Tuesday, July 11, 2023

10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

In-Person Meeting Location: 8004 Franklin Farms Drive Henrico, VA 23229

Minutes

Members Present: Shirley Lyons, Alan Hargraves, Joanne Aceto, Chris Lavach, Jason Harper, Jim Fenerty, Stephanie Hoer

Members Absent: Chuck McElroy (personal absence)

Committee Vacancies: 3

DRS Staff Attending: Kathryn Hayfield, Donna Bonessi, Anita Mundy, Dale Batten, David Leon, Dionca Coleman, Julie Jacobs

Full Committee Call to Order and Introductions

Joanne Aceto, Committee Chair

Joanne Aceto called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m. and welcomed members and guests.

Approve Meeting Minutes from April 11, 2023, and Current Agenda

Joanne Aceto

The Committee reviewed a draft of the meeting minutes dated April 11, 2023 and the Agenda for today's meeting. A motion was made by Shirley Lyons to accept the Minutes as written and Agenda as proposed. Jason Harper seconded the motion. All members present voted to approve the meeting minutes and Agenda as proposed. The Commissioner joined the meeting after the Minutes had been approved and noted that there was an error in April's Minutes under the Commissioner's Update. The following sentence was removed from the final Minutes of the April 11, 2023 meeting: Title I funding will now be housed with the community college system. Apprenticeships will be overseen by DOLI.

Public Comment

Joanne Aceto

The ESOSC offered three opportunities during the meeting for public comment. No members of the public requested an opportunity to address the Committee at any of these occasions. Public notice was posted prior to the meeting with the opportunity for the public to submit written public comment via a variety of means by July 10, 2023. Anita Mundy reported that no members of the public submitted public comment prior to the meeting.

Update on Reappointment Status of ESOSC Committee Members,

Anita Mundy, DARS Provider

Anita Mundy reported that as of this meeting, there have been no Committee reappointments/appointments by

the Senate or House of Representatives. There is currently one application submitted for approval for a Senate vaACCSES nominee and one application submitted for approval from the House of Representatives for a family member appointment. Virginia Goodwill Network has a vacant House appointment. Committee member, Stephanie Hoer, will follow up with Virginia Goodwill Network to encourage a nominee from the organization.

Resources Available for Individuals & Families as they Pertain to Paid Work Experiences

David Leon, Director of Workforce Programs

Per the request of the Committee at the previous meeting, Mr. Leon presented information and three documents that address Reporting Wages to the Social Security Administration, SSI's Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE), and ABLE accounts. The Committee had previously expressed concerns they had received from individuals and family members who reported being unaware that paid work experiences may affect their taxes. Mr. Leon addressed those concerns and reviewed the beforementioned resources. This information is available to WISAs and is available on the DARS website.

A suggestion was made by the Committee requesting that DARS develop a flyer or brochure for individuals and family members who receive a 1099-Misc tax form. This flyer could include resources and information to assist in informed decision-making regarding employment as it pertains to the financial aspect of working and earning money. DARS will consider developing an additional brochure and will also share the current available documents with ESO Leaders and VR staff.

Status Update on Recommendations Previously Made by the Committee

Anita Mundy

07/12/2022 Recommendation 1 (Approved/Completed)

The ESOSC recommends that DARS use LTESS-EES projected balances to contract with Virginia Commonwealth University to provide a 40-hour supported employment training course to 500 supported employment staff of eligible ESO's, contingent on the availability of funds. (Motion put forth by Jim Fenerty, motion seconded by Chris Lavach, unanimously approved by members present). (This recommendation will include DARS purchasing a block of slots to be used over the next fiscal year.)

Update:07/11/2023- Seventy-one individuals were enrolled in the VCU Basic ACRE Training, Cohort 2. Thirty-six individuals earned a credential. Twenty-six of these 36 participants took the course for the first time. Ten participants took the course for the second time and earned their credential. Thirty-five participants did not earn a credential. This update will be removed from future updates. DARS will not be offering additional courses at this time.

07/12/2022 Recommendation 2 (Approved/Completed)

The Committee recommends that a \$1,000 per staff stipend be paid to ESO's whose staff successfully complete the VCU training and obtain an ACRE certification, to cover the costs incurred by ESO's, and contingent on the availability of funds for SFY22 and SFY23. (Motion put forth by Jim Fenerty, motion seconded by Stephanie Hoer, unanimously approved by members present).

Update: 07/11/2023- Twenty-two individuals were eligible to retake the ACRE training. Ten individuals re-enrolled. 8 out of 10 individuals who took the ACRE training for the second time and who earned a credential, organizations were offered a \$1,000 stipend. Two were not offered stipends because the individuals completed their assignments after the due date and after stipends were issued. This update will be removed from future updates.

07/12/2022 WISA Training (Approved/Ongoing)

In addition to the five recommendations made at the July 12, 2022, meeting, the ESOSC approved using part of the LTESS-EES projected balances to provide **WISA Training** to staff of eligible organizations. The WISA training is in addition to the recommendations that were voted on and approved by the ESOSC and is contingent on the availability of funds. Seven of Ten current Committee members voted to add WISA Training to the list of recommendations for approval. (McElroy, Lyons, Hoer, Harper, Hargraves, Fenerty, Bergen).

Update 07/11/2023- Thirty-one individuals were enrolled in the WISA training through Cornell. Two individuals dropped the course. Twenty-one of the participants passed the written portion of the exam and are in the process of completing their case study (Cornell gives 3 months to complete the case study). Five individuals failed and 3 individuals completed the course but did not sit for the exam. Cornell is offering these participants another chance to pass the exam. There is no further update at this point because case studies have not been reported on yet.

10/11/2022 Recommendation 2 (Approved/Completed)

The Committee recommends that DARS complete a midyear reallocation and pay \$1,000 stipends to ESOs for the 67 staff who registered in the Fall of 2022 for the Supported Employment course through Virginia Commonwealth University but who will not complete the course until Winter 2023, contingent on the availability of funds. (Motion put forth by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Chuck McElroy. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried).

Update 07/11/2023- Twenty-two individuals were eligible to retake the ACRE training. Ten individuals re-enrolled. 8 out of 10 individuals who took the ACRE training for the second time and who earned a credential, organizations were offered a \$1,000 stipend. Two were not offered stipends because the individuals completed their assignments after the due date and after stipends were issued. This update will be removed from future updates.

10/11/2022 Recommendation 3 (Approved/Completed)

The Committee recommends that DARS use projected SFY23 LTESS-EES balances to fund tuition and stipends for 150 new slots in the VCU Supported Employment course. This recommendation includes increasing the ESO stipend to \$1,500 per staff successful course completion to compensate ESOs for lost revenue due to staff time away from billable activities and is contingent on the availability of funds. (Jason Harper initiated this motion. Shirley Lyons seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried).

Update 07/11/2023- Seventy-one individuals were initially eligible to earn stipends. At the end of the course, fifteen organizations had staff who were actually eligible for stipends. \$48,000 total was paid to these organizations. This number includes both \$1,000 and \$1,500 stipends. This update will be removed from future updates.

10/11/2022 Recommendation 6 (Approved/Ongoing)

The Committee recommends that \$85,000 of the projected LTESS-EES balances be used to fund 60 ESO staff to complete WISA training offered by Cornell University and is contingent on available funds. (Motion put forth by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Jason Harper. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried).

Update 07/11/2023- Updates were wrapped into the previous WISA update. 21 individuals passed the written portion of the training and are in the process of completing their case studies. DARS also offered a Youth course for current DARS approved WISAs which was slated to begin

June 26. No participants registered and the course was cancelled.

10/11/2022 Recommendation 7 (Approved/Ongoing)

The Committee recommends that stipends in the amount of \$2,500 each be paid to ESOs for each staff member who successfully completes the WISA training to compensate ESOs for lost revenue due to staff time away from billable activities and is contingent on the availability of funds. (Motion put forth by Chris Lavach and seconded by Shirley Lyons. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried).

Update 07/11/2023- Stipend disbursement will be determined once participants complete the full course.

01/10/2023 Recommendation 1 (Approved/Completed)

The Committee recommends that DARS offer grants of up to \$50,000 per organization, up to \$1,000,000, to be used for capacity building for employment services personnel. The application process should be simple and justify how the funds will be used for capacity building. Outcomes will be reported at the end of 6 months. Additionally recommended that a second round of disbursements if funds are available. The first round to be paid out by April 30 and second round to be paid out by June 30, 2023, pending the availability of funds. (Recommendation made by Shirley Lyons, seconded by Jim Fenerty. All members present voted in favor of this recommendation-Lavach, Harper, Hargraves, Fenerty, Aceto, Lyons, Hoer, and McElroy.)

Update 07/11/2023- The original estimation of funds being requested for this relief at the April meeting was thought to be around \$1.25 million. Twenty-four organizations requested relief. The total amount requested was \$883,546.03. Funds were reviewed and disbursed as appropriate.

01/10/2023 Recommendation 2 (Approved/Completed)

The Committee recommends that DARS create a service specifically for EES services to support activities for individuals transitioning from Group Supported Employment, center-based, or facility-based employment, into community-based employment. (Recommendation made by Stephanie Hoer, seconded by Jason Harper. Members in favor: Lavach, Harper, Hargraves, Fenerty, Aceto, Hoer, and McElroy. Lyons abstained.)

Update 07/11/2023- The E1200 code has been created and is available to organizations that utilize EES funds. Eligible organizations were notified of this new code and instructed to contact me if they would like to add this to their services. To date, two organizations have made requests. This update will be removed from future updates.

01/10/2023 Recommendation 3 (Approved/Ongoing)

The Committee recommends that DARS research how LTESS funds could be used to fund ESO staff travel to support individuals served using Medicaid Waiver. Staff travel time is not compensated by Medicaid waiver. This is specifically to provide LTFA services for individuals whose services are funded by Medicaid Waiver in rural areas. Criteria of eligibility will need to be determined. (Recommendation made by Chris Lavach, seconded by Jason Harper. Members in favor: Lavach, Fenerty, Lyons, Hoer, Aceto, Hargraves, and Harper. McElroy opposed.)

Update 07/11/2023- Commissioner Hayfield approved this recommendation. Research on the definition of a rural area was conducted and DARS presented the definition as defined by the Office of Management and Budget/Census. This is the source used by Virginia Department of Health via DMAS.

The Committee voiced concern over the areas of the state that were considered rural according to the OMB map and for the purposes of providing employment support to individuals who utilize Medicaid Waiver services, provided the following recommendation.

07/11/2023 Recommendation (Approved/Ongoing)

The Committee recommends that DARS conduct a pilot to increase employment services to individuals with Medicaid Waiver funding. This pilot will allow LTESS funding to be utilized to fund staff travel that is over one hour, one way, from the employment staff’s starting point. Current LTESS providers who serve Medicaid Waiver participants are eligible. Providers that participate in this pilot will sign an agreement stating that they will continue services if LTESS funds can no longer support staff travel. The pilot will be reviewed quarterly by the ESOSC and DARS. (Motion put forth by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Alan Hargraves. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried and was immediately approved by the DARS Commissioner, Kathy Hayfield).

LTESS-EES SFY23 End of Year Actual Statistics, ESO Rate Adjustments, and SFY24 Allocation

Methodology

*Donna Bonessi, DARS Director
Employment Services and
Special Programs*

Ms. Bonessi reviewed the LTESS-EES 2023 Final Spending Report, Comparisons, and Actual Balances. Below is the YTD Summary that reflects the final YTD balance of \$452,571.73

Year to Date Summary			
	EES	LTESS	Total
Expected Expenditure	\$ 2,571,136.00	\$ 6,187,568.00	\$ 8,758,704.00
Actual Expenditure	\$ 1,396,429.76	\$ 5,136,385.41	\$ 6,532,815.17
YTD balance	\$ 1,174,706.24	\$ 1,051,182.59	\$ 2,225,888.83
SE Training Funds			\$ 63,000.00
VCU SE/Cornell WISA			\$ 31,500.00
ESO Capacity Buiding Funds			\$ 1,678,817.10
Total YTD Balance			\$ 452,571.73

Ms. Bonessi reported that all eligible ESOs received a 4.6% rate increase for most ESO services in State Fiscal Year 24, effective July 1, 2023. These rate adjustments do not apply to ESOs that have a contract with Fairfax County Community Services Board for Supported Employment (SE) Services. DARS will continue to utilize rates established with Fairfax County for SE services. Other services such as Project SEARCH, Pre-Employment Transition group services, Customized Employment Services, and individual services that are not based on the organization's hourly rate, will be adjusted.

Allocations for SFY24 have been awarded and rates have been updated in RateSource. Organizations that utilize LTESS funds received the full allocation based on the 3-year rolling average. Organizations that utilize EES funds were awarded half of their allocation based on the 3-year rolling average and will receive the remainder of funds as necessary to cover expenses.

Commissioner's Update***Kathy Hayfield, DARS Commissioner***

The Commissioner announced that the state budget has not been approved. The Commonwealth is currently in the second year of the bi-annual budget. There were no new allocations planned for this year. ESOs and VR will not be impacted and will continue to operate as usual. The Commissioner stated she attended the CSAVR Executive Committee Meeting. It was reported at the meeting that millions of VR dollars were being returned to the federal government because agencies were not spending their allotments. Federal funding has gone up, but in some situations states are not matching those funds as required by federal law, which is causing the states to return unspent VR funding dollars. This is not a concern in the Commonwealth. The Commissioner also reported that the Commonwealth of Virginia received a non-compliance letter from RSA because DARS did not meet the 15% of Pre-ETS dollars spending requirement. DARS utilized 12.1% which was under the federal requirement. Virginia DARS must submit a corrective action plan by mid August outlining a plan to spend the 15% reserve on Pre-ETS services.

Upcoming Agenda Items, SFY24 Future Meeting Dates, and other Business***Committee***

SFY24 meeting dates were presented by Anita Mundy and agreed upon by the Committee as follows: January 9, April 9, July 9, and October 8.

Upcoming elections for the Chair and Vice Chair appointments were discussed. The Committee decided to vote on new appointments at this meeting. A motion to appoint Jason Harper as the new upcoming Chair and Alan Hargraves as the upcoming Vice-Chair was put forth by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Joanne Aceto. All members present approved this motion which will take effect immediately following this meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

The next meeting of the Employment Service Organization Steering Committee is scheduled for October 10, 2023. The Committee will meet from 10:30 am – 2:00 pm or until all business has been conducted.