



Division of Rehabilitative Services

Employment Service Organization Steering Committee (ESOSC)

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

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

Minutes

Members Present: Shirley Lyons, Chuck McElroy, Alan Hargraves, Joanne Aceto, Chris Lavach, Jason Harper, Jim Fenerty, and Jan Williams

Members Absent: Stephanie Hoer

DRS Staff Attending: Kathryn Hayfield, Donna Bonessi, Anita Mundy, Martin Kurylowski, Teri Nunley, Dale Batten, David Leon, 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 July 12, 2022

Joanne Aceto

The Committee reviewed a draft of the meeting minutes dated July 12, 2022. A motion was made by Shirley Lyons to approve the minutes. Joanne Aceto seconded the motion. All members present voted to approve the meeting minutes.

Approval of Agenda

Joanne Aceto

The Agenda was presented for approval. Jan Williams made a motion to accept the Agenda as written. Jason Harper seconded the motion. The Committee members present unanimously approved the proposed Agenda dated October 11, 2022.

Public Comment

Joanne Aceto

The ESOSC offered two opportunities during the meeting for public comment. No members of the public requested an opportunity to address the Committee at either 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 October 10, 2022. Anita Mundy reported that no members of the public submitted public comment prior to the meeting.

Review of ESOSC Committee Member Reappointment Statuses

Anita Mundy,

DARS Provider Program Specialist & Staff to the Committee

Anita Mundy provided an update on receiving formal reappointment letters for Committee members Chuck McElroy, Stephanie Hoer, Jason Harper, and Jim Fenerty. The remainder of the members are waiting for notice of reappointment for a second term to the Committee. According to the ESOSC Bylaws, current members may continue to serve on the Committee until they are reappointed or a replacement is appointed. Committee terms began July 1, 2022 and will end June 30, 2025.

Status Report on April 12 Recommendations to the Commissioner

Anita Mundy

Recommendation 1

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.

Recommendation approved.

Update:

67 individuals completed the VCU Course.

67 individuals participated but did not complete the VCU Course..

18 individuals were registered and did not complete any of the assignments

17 individuals withdrew from the course

VCU offered to run the course again for the non-completers at no additional charge.

Recommendation 2

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, in order to cover the costs incurred by ESO's, and contingent on the availability of funds for SFY22 and SFY23. **Recommendation approved**

Update:

The ESOSC determined that funds are available for this from SFY 23 balance from first quarter Organizations whose staff completed the course are eligible to receive the stipend.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the DARS Commissioner make a request from the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the balance of LTESS-EES funds at the end of SFY 22 be allowed to carry forward to SFY 23. **Recommendation not approved. State General Fund dollars cannot be carried forward into the next fiscal year. The Secretary of HHR would not have the authority to approve the request. The state Budget (Appropriations Act) is approved by the GA and signed by the Governor. There is no avenue to do this.**

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that a second provider recruitment, onboarding, and training fund be made available to reimburse LTESS-EES providers for expenses directly related to recruiting, training, and onboarding direct employment services staff (not to include administrative staff), for expenses incurred between the dates of September 1, 2021 – April 30, 2022. Should requests exceed available funds, each

provider will receive an equal prorated percentage of remaining funds. Any allocation of funds is contingent on the availability of funds for SFY22. **Recommendation approved**

Update: DARS offered this relief fund to ESO's to assist with building capacity. \$613,557.56 was allocated to eligible organizations.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that in state fiscal year 2023, DARS revert back to a 3-Year Rolling Average and base allocation of funds on actual expenses incurred by eligible ESOs. **Recommendation approved**

Update: DARS reverted back to the 3-year rolling average for SFY23.

In addition to the five recommendations made at the July 12, 2022 meeting, Anita Mundy, reached out to each of the ESOSC members to request their input on using part of the LTESS-EES projected balances to provide **WISA Training** to staff of eligible organizations. The WISA training will be 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 responded that they would like to add WISA Training to the list of recommendations for approval. (McElroy, Lyons, Hoer, Harper, Hargraves, Fenerty, Bergen). **Commissioner Hayfield approved the addition of WISA Training for ESO eligible staff, contingent on the availability of funds.**

Update: David Leon, Director of Workforce Programs, addressed the Committee and stated that the contract with Cornell University is ready to be signed as soon as he receives approval to utilize LTESS funds. Since the WISA training is a very rigorous course, Mr. Leon suggested that interested participants should enroll in the free VCU Introduction to Social Security Benefits course as a way to measure participant's interest and ability to successfully complete Cornell's WISA training.

WISA Rate Increases

Anita Mundy

The Work Incentives Specialist Advocate (WISA) program integrates Social Security benefits and work incentives counseling services into the VR service model, for individuals receiving SSI and SSDI who are working, or want to work and have questions about how that work will impact benefits, health insurance and disposable income. These services are also available to individuals on the Home and Community-based services Medicaid waiver.

Effective October 1st, the reimbursement rate to a WISA vendor for the WorkWORLD for the web summary and analysis report, is increasing from \$300 to \$450 per referral. Reports turned in based on authorization dates prior to 10/1 will still receive \$300. Reports turned in based on authorization dates after 10/1 will receive \$450. Regarding the as-needed updates to the report, the WorkWORLD authorization that is issued will cover any updates required within 12 months of the date of the original authorization.

The increase will cover additional meetings with the client as needed, to discuss employment-related changes as a result of the client getting a raise, working more hours, and accessing work incentives. The reimbursement rate for helping the client address overpayments in SSI and SSDI benefits is increasing from \$150 to \$250 per referral. The cost of the increase in these services will be covered through cost

reimbursement funds that DARS receives as a Ticket to Work vendor with the Social Security Administration.

These increases do no impact EWISA since approved providers are reimbursed at their hourly rate. The expectation is that WISA staff follow up when requested and that part of the increase is to cover this.

Pre-Employment Transition Services Update

***Martin Kurylowski,
Transition & Education Services Coordinator***

The update on Pre-ETS was primarily focused on Summer Pre-ETS activity with vendors. The following authorization data is reflective of all Pre-ETS activities supported by vendors between 5/01-08/31/2022 (includes Job Exploration Counseling, Workplace Readiness Training, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Instruction in Self-Advocacy, and Counseling on Postsecondary Education & Training opportunities).

Mr. Kurylowski shared that there is a need for Pre-ETS vendors who can support both short-term work-based learning experiences (e.g. work site visits/tours, informational interviews, job shadows, short-term job tryouts, etc.) and 3-8 week work experiences supported by skills trainers. Although there was an increase in work experience activity this past summer, there were still numerous reports of students who were unable to participate in a work experience due to a lack of vendors to support them. In general terms, there are more gaps and lack of options in rural regions of Virginia.

Individual Placement & Support (IPS) Services and Improving Services for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness Discussion

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

Donna Bonessi introduced Teri Nunley, the new IPS Specialist and Trainer for DARS. Ms. Bonessi and Ms. Nunley shared that DARS is in the process of building IPS services. Two early-adopter sites have been established in Fairfax County and Chesterfield County. DARS is planning to build these across the state. Teri Nunley provided the definition of Serious Mental Illness per the request of the Committee and explained how IPS is developed through a mental health treatment team. This approach includes all wrap-around services to support the individual. Employment Services is a piece of this. Long-term supports from the MH Team remain in place to provide these services. DARS plans to have additional sites developed after the New Year.

Gaps in Service Areas and Needs Discussion

Committee

Discussion continued about the need to increase services for students receiving Pre-ETS. Mr. Kurylowski stated that providers can support Pre-ETS by having a presence in the community and leveraging relationships to help build capacity, especially with work experiences in rural areas. Any organization interested in providing Pre-ETS services should reach out to him directly. Work experiences can be done year round and he encouraged communication with the local DARS offices to let them know what capacity ESOs have to provide this service.

**LTESS-EES SFY23 First Quarter Spending Report, Comparisons,
and Projected Balances**

Donna Bonessi

Ms. Bonessi reviewed the LTESS-EES SFY23 First Quarter Spending Report, Comparisons, and Projected Balances. Below is the YTD Summary that reflects the first quarter balance of \$560,078.15

Total Quarter 1 Projected Balances for SFY23 as of 8/31/2022 is \$2,240,312.60

First Quarter Ending August 31, 2022			
	EES	LTESS	Total
Expected Expenditure	\$ 642,784.00	\$ 1,546,892.00	\$ 2,189,676.00
Actual Expenditure	\$ 371,284.35	\$ 1,258,313.50	\$ 1,629,597.85
Balance on 8/31/22	\$ 271,499.65	\$ 288,578.50	\$ 560,078.15
Final 1st Qtr Balance			\$ 560,078.15

New ESOs Seeking LTESS Consideration for SFY24

Anita Mundy

Anita Mundy presented four organizations who have achieved CARF Accreditation and are on the waiting list to receive LTESS funds. The four organizations are Omega Services, Rise Services, VIA, and ServiceSource (requesting to expand services to Rest of State). Ms. Mundy suggested consideration for the Committee to use some of the projected balances for SFY24 to allocate funds to some or all of the organizations on the waitlist, which is an action outside of the current LTESS-EES Policy.

The Committee discussed bringing these organizations off the waitlist and recommended that these Organizations not wait until SFY24 funds are available.

Jason Harper made a motion to allow the four organizations to be allocated \$5,000 each beginning December 1, 2022 to be used for the remainder of SFY23. The organizations will then be eligible to receive the full \$10,000 initial allocation for new LTESS providers in SFY24. Chris Lavach seconded this motion. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried.

SFY23 Projected Balance Discussion & Recommendations

Committee

Numerous recommendations were discussed by the Committee as a way to utilize LTESS-EES Projected Balances. All recommendations discussed will be presented by Anita Mundy to Commissioner Hayfield for approval. These recommendations are listed below:

1. The Committee recommends that the four organizations currently on the waitlist to receive LTESS funds be allocated \$5,000 each beginning December 1, 2022 to be used for the remainder of SFY23. These organizations will also be eligible to receive the full \$10,000 initial allocation for new LTESS providers in SFY24.
2. 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).

3. 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).
4. The Committee recommends that existing LTESS providers who expand to either the Northern Virginia District or Rest of State can utilize a portion of their existing LTESS funds for the new vendor number until they are allocated an initial allocation for the new service area. (Motion put forth by Jan Williams. Jim Fenerty seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried).
5. The Committee recommends a mid-year reallocation based upon percentages of ESO projected balances at 6 months. (Motion put forth by Jim Fenerty and seconded by Jan Williams. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried).
6. 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 funds. (Motion put forth by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Jason Harper. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried).
7. 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).

Election of Officers

Joanne Aceto

Per ESOSC Virginia Code, each year, the Committee shall elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from among its members. The election was held and Joanne Aceto was re-elected for a second term as Chair of the Committee, The motion was made by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Chuck McElroy. All members present voted in favor. The motion carried.

Jan Williams was nominated as Vice-Chair by Shirley Lyons, however, Ms. Williams declined. Ms. Lyons amended her nomination and put forward Chris Lavach as nominee for Vice-Chair. Jim Fenerty seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. The motion carried.

Joanne Aceto and Chris Lavach will be the 2023 Officers for the ESOSC whose terms will begin at the close of today's meeting.

Commissioner's Update

Kathy Hayfield, DARS Commissioner

DARS is in the process of finishing up closing out the federal fiscal year. DARS does not have exact data to share at this juncture, however, the Agency is seeing that the length of time individuals are staying in their jobs is good. Successful closures are expected to be higher than last year and the current count appears to be approximately 2,500. Counselors have written approximately 8,000 Plans this year which is good as counselors prepare for next year. Wages range around \$12.12 per hour and hours per week worked are stabilized around 25-26 hours per week. There are not many individuals engaged in

full-time employment. Unfortunately, food services and cleaning are still the top jobs where individuals are obtaining jobs. The Commissioner challenged the Committee to come up with strategies that- can be implemented to help individuals gain better employment.

Upcoming Agenda Items, and Other Business

Joanne Aceto, Chair

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

Adjournment

A motion was made by Jan Williams to adjourn the meeting. All members were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.