



Division of Rehabilitative Services

Employment Service Organization Steering Committee (ESOSC)

Tuesday, January 9, 2024

10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

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

Minutes

Members Present: Alan Hargraves, Joanne Aceto, Chris Lavach, Chuck McElroy, Shirley Lyons, Jason Harper

Members Absent: Jim Fenerty (medical)

Committee Vacancies: 4

DRS Staff Attending: Anita Mundy, Dale Batten, Dionca Coleman, Julie Jacobs, John Stewart, Matt Luther, Donna Bonessi, Cara Kaufman

Full Committee Call to Order and Introductions

Jason Harper, Committee Chair

Jason Harper called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. and welcomed members and guests.

Approve Meeting Minutes from October 10, 2023, and Current Agenda

Jason Harper

The Committee reviewed a draft of the meeting minutes dated October 10, 2023, and the agenda for today’s meeting. A motion was made by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Joanne Aceto to accept the Minutes as written. Hargraves, Aceto, Lavach, Fenerty, McElroy, Lyons voted in favor. Jason Harper abstained. The motion carried. Chuck McElroy made a motion that was seconded by Chris Lavach to accept the agenda as proposed. All members present voted to approve the agenda as proposed.

Public Comment

Jason Harper

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 January 8, 2024. Anita Mundy reported that no members of the public submitted public comment prior to the meeting.

**Review of Committee Responsibilities/By-laws/Conflict of Interest,
Financial Disclosure Requirements**

**Anita Mundy, DARS Provider
Program Specialist**

Anita Mundy reminded the Committee that the annual financial disclosure is due for completion by January 21, 2024. An email was sent to all Committee members by Cecily Slasor with instructions on completing this form. All members present reported that they had received Ms. Slasor's email request.

**Update on Reappointment/New Appointment Statuses of ESOSC
Committee Members**

Anita Mundy

Anita Mundy reported that, as of this meeting, Lyons and Lavach have been reappointed for a second term by the House of Representatives. McElroy and Harper have received second term appointments from the Senate on Rules Committee. Aceto has applied to the House for a second term and is waiting notice of reappointment. Fenerty and Hargraves have received their second term Gubernatorial reappointments. There are 4 Committee vacancies: Virginia Goodwill Network- House vacancy and Senate vacancy, one Representative of the Virginia Association of Community Rehabilitation Program Senate vacancy, one House vacancy for an individual who has a family member receiving services in an employment services organization that is eligible to receive funding pursuant to § 51.5-169.1

EPIC Grant Update

John Stewart, RPRJ EPIC Model Manager

John Stewart shared information gathered from listening sessions with current Customized Employment (CE) providers and then data shared from their CE cases. Information shared from the listening sessions included challenges with staffing, a desire for expanded knowledge of CE practices amongst VR Counselors, participants, families, and ESO staff and leadership, a desire for greater assistance with Discovery practices and documentation, struggles with unreimbursable activities associated with CE implementation and practice, and struggles with outcomes-based rate structures. Information gathered from the 35 CE cases shared with DARS revealed 5 individuals who had completed all 5 phases of CE and obtained employment or pursued self-employment, 5 individuals who accepted employment offers prior to completing the CE process, 15 individuals who had discontinued CE services part way through the process without obtaining employment, and 10 individuals currently engaged in CE. Of the 15 individuals who discontinued CE services without obtaining employment, 5 were due to ESO CE capacity issues, 4 elected to pursue employment with DARS through other means, 5 discontinued pursuit of employment or DARS services, and 1 lost contact with DARS.

Pre-ETS Update

Matt Luther, Transitional and Education Manager

Matt Luther discussed outreach collaborative efforts focused on partnerships for Pre-ETS to encourage providers to gravitate to underserved areas and offices. These outreach efforts allowed for opportunities to share information on the Model Interagency Pre-ETS Program with VCU and discussed future cross training opportunities with Schools and DARS. A total of six new Pre-ETS Providers have been approved since June 2024. Mr. Luther has been providing timesheet Training and VR Flexibilities for Pre-ETS and hosting weekly standing meetings with VDOE's Transition Team. A new plan is being developed to further streamline Pre-ETS Applications. Mr. Luther has been identifying the Student and Youth Counselors with selected school partners to participate in a VA Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) Pre-Conference. Mr. Luther informed the Committee that a DARS Statewide Transition Specialist for Staff Development and a Statewide Transition Specialist for Capacity Development have recently been hired and will be joining his team.

Prompt Payment for Services Discussion

Jason Harper

Jason Harper expressed concern over DARS obligations for prompt payment for services delivered. Numerous ESOs reported not receiving payment for services. Julie Jacobs, DARS FRS Director, participated in the discussion and addressed the Committee's concerns. Ms. Jacobs has been in the process of researching this issue once made aware of the situation. Her research discovered that incoming authorizations have significantly increased in a little over a year, resulting in many offices falling behind in payment due to staffing shortages. Ms. Jacobs reported that DARS has temporarily reassigned additional staff to process these invoices and that these staff will remain in place until DARS is caught up. DARS is now reviewing the current bill payment process in step-by-step detail to devise a more efficient payment process.

Ms. Jacobs stated there have also been ongoing issues with ESOs not submitting their billing on time. This delay in receiving invoices also causes issues with payment, especially when there are missing bills in a batch that an ESO submits. DARS must put these batches to the side until all bills are received. This delays payment since DARS staff must wait for the batch to be complete before being able to process it. Ms. Jacobs reminded the Committee and public guests that billing is due by the 10th of each month and by adhering to the deadline and submitting complete batches of billing, this will speed up the process. Additional issues that delay DARS processing these invoices include ESOs not including the SPOC, who processes these, on e-mailed bills to VR Counselors, and submitted invoices without PID numbers and/or authorization numbers. Lastly, Ms. Jacobs shared that a training is being developed for ESO staff to review what is expected to be included in Monthly Reports and progress notes. This is an area that DARS has seen a statewide decrease, in regard to the content and quality of documentation.

Status Update on Recommendations Previously Made by the Committee

Anita Mundy

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

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 01/09/2024- Cohort 1 Total Individuals Receiving Full WISA Credential: 18/31.

Cohort 2 Total Individuals Receiving Full WISA Credential: 9/17. This brings the total number of individuals who passed the written exam and case study to receive a full WISA credential to 27/47 (57% pass). This update will be removed from future updates.

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 01/09/2024- Upon the determination of projected available funds, DARS will offer \$2,500 to organizations for each staff who successfully achieved a WISA credential. Based on the total of 27 staff who earned this credential, this would amount to \$67,500. Ms. Mundy recommended that these funds only be given to those organizations who have fulfilled their obligation to DARS by

submitting all required Spending Reports and documentation requested for previous funding received. The Committee members present agreed with Ms. Mundy's recommendation.

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

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 01/09/2024- DARS reached out to organizations that did not submit their Spending Reports and still has not received 16 Spending Reports from organizations who received capacity relief funds (2 rounds were dispersed- due dates were August & September of 2023, approx. \$500k). Ms. Mundy recommended that any additional funds only be given to those organizations who have fulfilled their obligation to DARS by submitting all required Spending Reports and documentation requested for previous funding received. The Committee members present agreed with Ms. Mundy's recommendation.

Ms. Mundy will contact organizations with outstanding reports and request that these reports be submitted promptly.

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

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 01/09/2024- Several organizations have requested that this service code be added to their list of billable services. To date there has only been one organization that actually billed for this service under EES. DARS is closely monitoring the use of this new service, and upon review of the requisition, noted that it was billed at an hourly rate and provided in a group setting. There has been some confusion regarding how the E1200 service may be delivered. DARS set this service description up as an individual service billed at an Hourly Rate.

The Committee discussed the E1200 service code initially set up as an individual service code, set up for reimbursement at an hourly rate. The Committee is recommending that DARS expand on the service description to allow for the E1200 service to be delivered in a Group Setting of no more than 7 individuals in a group and reimbursed at a Daily Rate. Chris Lavach made a motion for DARS to establish a Group Rate for no more than 7 individuals in a group, based off of the E1200 service description, and reimbursed at a Daily Rate. Joanne Aceto seconded the motion. Lavach, Aceto, McElroy, Hargraves, Harper voted in agreement of the motion. Lyons abstained. DARS will establish a group code for this service.

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 DARS Commissioner, Kathy Hayfield).

Update 01/09/2024

Several organizations have requested the E6030 code, however, there was no billing submitted for SFY24 Quarter 2 (September – November). DARS is seeing some possible activity for December 2023 and will report out on that at the SFY Q3 meeting once the data has been reviewed.

Update: Individuals transitioning from GSE, Center-based, or Facility-based employment to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) who utilize Extended Employment Services (EES) Funds

LTESS-EES SFY24 First Quarter Spending Report, Comparisons, and Projected Balances

***Donna Bonessi,
ESSP Director***

Ms. Bonessi reviewed the LTESS-EES SFY24 Quarter 2 Spending Report, Comparisons, and Projected Balances. Quarter 2 total LTESS-EES projected balance is \$986,577.25

EES expenditures for Quarter 2 were at 28% of what was anticipated. LTESS expenditures for Quarter 2 reflect 43% of what was expected for the Quarter. EES expenditures are the same as reported in SFY23, while LTESS expenditures increased by 2% from SFY23.

Second Quarter Ending November 30, 2023			
	EES	LTESS	Total
Expected Expenditure	\$ 642,784.00	\$ 1,546,892.00	\$ 2,189,676.00
Actual Expenditure	\$ 334,989.05	\$ 1,328,415.71	\$ 1,663,404.76
2nd QTR Bal on 11/30/23	\$ 307,794.95	\$ 218,476.29	\$ 526,271.24
Mid year Balance			\$ 986,577.25
Final Balance after 2nd Qtr			\$ 986,577.25

SFY24 Projected Balances, Future Use of Funds, and Recommendations to DARS

Jason Harper and Committee

The Committee discussed alternatives for the utilization of projected balances. Discussion included allocating an additional round of funds to ESOs for capacity relief and approving BNAFSH as a LTESS provider upon the organization obtaining CARF accreditation. Currently, BNAFSH is pending CARF accreditation.

A motion was made by Shirley Lyons to add BNAFSH as a LTESS provider once CARF accreditation has been achieved and if funds are available. BNAFSH has two vendor ID's, and each location will receive five-thousand dollars for the remainder of the year. Joanne Aceto seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor and motion carried. DARS will seek approval from Commissioner Hayfield to add BNAFSH to the LTESS roster, upon successful CARF accreditation and as funds allow.

An additional motion was made by Joanne Aceto and seconded by Alan Hargraves for DARS to offer funds 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. The Committee also recommended that organization that have not submitted Spending Reports for previous funds received, not be eligible to receive further relief until these outstanding reports are submitted and pending the availability of funds. Funds may only be used for expenses incurred for the delivery of employment services. Funds cannot be used for expenses incurred for other service lines, such as day support services, or residential services. Organizations accepting funds will be required to submit a detailed accounting of how funds were spent. All members present were in favor of this recommendation.

Combining LTESS-EES Funding Streams

Jason Harper and Committee

Mr. Harper addressed the Committee to encourage thought on combining LTESS-EES allotments from the General Assembly and how this could be advocated for and accomplished in future legislation, as more individuals are exiting facility-based employment. Mr. Harper asked that this topic be added to the April 2024 Agenda.

Upcoming Agenda Items and other Business

Committee

The Committee would like to discuss building capacity funds and its future use. The Committee does not agree with it being used as a long-term solution.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

The next meeting of the Employment Service Organization Steering Committee is scheduled for April 9, 2024. The Committee will meet from 10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. or until all business has been conducted.