



Division of Rehabilitative Services

Employment Service Organization Steering Committee (ESOSC)

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

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

Minutes

Members Present: Shirley Lyons, Chuck McElroy, Alan Hargraves, Joanne Aceto, Megan Bergen, Chris Lavach, Jason Harper, Teresa Hall, Stephanie Hoer, Jim Fenerty

Members Absent: Robin Metcalf

DRS Staff Attending: Kathryn Hayfield, Dale Batten, Donna Bonessi, Anita Mundy, Leah Mills, Julie Jacobs

Full Committee Call to Order and Introductions

Shirley Lyons, Chair

Shirley Lyons called the meeting to order at 11:12 a.m. and welcomed members and guests. Ms. Lyons asked members and expected guests to acknowledge their physical presence. Ms. Lyons informed the Committee and guests that Robin Metcalf resigned from the Committee.

Approve Meeting Minutes from July 13, 2021

Shirley Lyons

The Committee reviewed a draft of the meeting minutes dated July 13, 2021. Chuck McElroy noted a punctuation error and requested that it be corrected. A motion was made by Stephanie Hoer to approve the minutes as amended. Chuck McElroy seconded the motion. All members present voted to approve the meeting minutes.

Approval of Agenda

Shirley Lyons

The Agenda was presented for approval. Anita Mundy, DARS staff to the Committee, requested that an update regarding the EWISA Service Description be added to the Agenda. Donna Bonessi, DARS EESP Director, requested to add an update regarding a verification request from the Disability Law Center, and Committee Member, Joanne Aceto requested that DARS provide an update on the 2021 LTESS-EES funds remaining balance. The Committee members present unanimously agreed to add these items to the Agenda.

Public Comment

Shirley Lyons

The ESOSC offered two opportunities during the meeting for public comment. No members of the public signed up to speak. Public notice was also posted prior to the meeting. Public comment was requested to be submitted by October 10, 2021. Anita Mundy reported that no members of the public submitted public comment prior to the meeting.

Election of the ESOSC Chair and Vice Chair

Shirley Lyons

Per the ESOSC Code of Virginia and ESOSC By-Laws, it is necessary to elect a new Committee Chair and Vice Chair. Shirley Lyons requested nominations from the floor. Alan Hargraves nominated Jason Harper for Chair. Mr. Harper declined his nomination. Teresa Hall nominated Joanne Aceto as Chair, Ms. Aceto accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations. The ten Committee members who were present unanimously voted to elect Joanne Aceto as the incoming Chair for the ESOSC.

Ms. Lyons opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair. Chuck McElroy nominated Jason Harper to serve a second term. Joanne Aceto seconded the motion. Jason accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations. The ten Committee members who were present unanimously voted to elect Jason Harper to serve a second term as the Vice Chair for the ESOSC.

Discussion and Approval of the Proposed 2022 ESOSC Meeting Schedule

Shirley Lyons

Anita Mundy, Staff to the Committee, presented a proposed 2022 meeting calendar. The proposed meeting dates were: January 11, April 12, July 12, and October 11. The Committee discussed the dates/start time and Teresa Hall motioned to accept these dates and to change the meeting start time to 10:30 am. Alan Hargraves seconded this motion. The present Committee members unanimously agreed to accept the proposed 2022 meeting calendar with a start time of 10:30 am.

Review and Approve the ESOSC Electronic Meeting Policy as Updated

Shirley Lyons

Anita Mundy presented the updated ESOSC Electronic Meeting Policy that was reviewed and discussed at the July 13, 2021 meeting. Changes to the policy were necessary due to new FOIA regulations. Teresa Hall motioned to approve the updates. Alan Hargraves seconded the motion. The Committee present unanimously approved the updates to the electronic meeting policy. The policy will go into effect immediately.

Disability Law Center of Virginia Request

Donna Bonessi

Deputy Director, ESSP, DRS

Ms. Bonessi informed the Committee that DARS recently responded to an inquiry from the Disability Law Center of Virginia regarding their request to provide information on the Scope and Purpose of the ESOSC. DARS provided this information as requested. There were no other additional questions from the Law Center. Ms. Bonessi shared with the Committee the correspondence that transpired.

EWISA Service Description Update

Anita Mundy

Staff to the Committee

Ms. Mundy shared the updated EWISA Service Description with the Committee. Since the last Committee meeting when the service description was reviewed, it was brought to the attention to DARS by an ESO that there could be the potential for gaps in EWISA services due to deadline requirements of the requisitioning system. Ms. Mundy worked with DARS IT to come up with a workable solution to eliminate these gaps. Instructions for ESOs using this service were written and updated under the *Billing* section of the EWISA Service Description.

LTESS-EES First Quarter Spending Report

Donna Bonessi

With Breakdown by Organization, Comparisons, and Projected Balances

Ms. Bonessi provided a breakdown of the 2022 First Quarter Spending Review. Trends in services by Providers are beginning to show increases.

Ms. Bonessi provided a breakdown on First Quarter Expenditures. There was a balance of \$621,152.40. See Expected vs. Actual Expenditures in the chart below.

Year to Date Expected vs Actual			
First Quarter Ending August 31, 2021			
	EES	LTESS	Total
Expected Expenditure	\$ 629,317.00	\$ 1,464,064.20	\$ 2,093,381.20
Actual Expenditure	\$ 333,354.38	\$ 1,138,874.42	\$ 1,472,228.80
Balance on 8/31/21	\$ 295,962.62	\$ 325,189.78	\$ 621,152.40
Final 1st Qtr Balance			\$ 621,152.40

Ms. Bonessi also provided a breakdown by organization which showed the expenditures for all employment organizations for the first quarter. There are numerous organizations who have not spent their funds. Additionally, there are four providers who have discontinued providing employment services. Joanne Aceto asked for further clarification about the \$727,238 that was unspent in Fiscal Year 21. Commissioner Hayfield reported those funds were returned to the Commonwealth’s General Fund for Fiscal Year 21.

Use of LTESS-EES Projected Balances Discussion

Committee

The Committee reviewed and discussed the information provided by Ms. Bonessi. The Committee also discussed mid-year reallocations and potentially recommending to sweep the balances of those organizations who are not spending their funds, so that they may be reallocated to organizations that are in need of additional funding. The Committee would like answers from these organizations as to what their intent is to spend these funds. The Committee requested that DARS reach out to organizations who have not used their funds to ask why they have not. If these organizations state that they intend to spend their allocations, the Committee suggested that DARS request a written plan from each provider that outlines how and when they intend to utilize their allocations. DARS agreed to contact these organizations and report back to the Committee.

The Committee further discussed how projected balances could be spent. An initial motion was made by Joanne Aceto and seconded by Megan Bergen, that stated that the first quarter remaining balance be used for Emergency Relief funds for organizations using previous methodology. This motion was later withdrawn.

After further discussion a motion was made by Jason Harper and seconded by Chuck McElroy that a recommendation be made to DARS that \$500k of the remaining First Quarter balance be used as economic relief funds. These funds will be offered to all LTESS-EES eligible ESOs and specific amounts distributed will be based off of FY 21 Emergency Relief Fund methodology. The remaining \$121k would be made available to smaller organizations that are in need of additional dollars to increase capacity. These funds would be distributed based by application process and distribution would be determined by DARS and based on capacity building needs.

The Committee members present voted all in favor of this motion. Commissioner Hayfield, who was present for this discussion, accepted the recommendation.

It was noted in further discussions by the Committee that numerous organizations have not used any of their first quarter LTESS-EES allocations. The Committee has concern that these funds are being

underutilized and may go unspent, when other organizations could use these funds to provide services. It was suggested that DARS reach out to these organizations to ask their intent in regard to use of these underutilized funds.

Jason Harper made a motion that was seconded by Teresa Hall, which recommends that if an organization does not respond to a DARS inquiry by November 30, 2021 with their intent to utilize LTESSEES first quarter balances, then those balances will be deallocated and distributed using the same methodology that is used for the relief funds. All Committee members present voted in favor of this recommendation. Motion passed.

Commissioner's Update

Kathy Hayfield, DARS Commissioner

Commissioner Hayfield provided an update regarding VR Performance outcomes. DARS is seeing an increase in referral applications, specifically noting an increase in VR referrals for school age individuals.

The Commissioner also introduced the new Field Services Director, Julie Jacobs. Ms. Jacobs will be leading the VR focus of the Districts along with the six District Directors.

DARS has been awarded the Rehabilitation Services Administration Disability Innovation Fund Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project grant to begin October 1, 2021. This five year, \$9,236,300.00 grant aims to assist 750 individuals with disabilities enter career pathways in state, federal and local government as well as into registered apprenticeships in skilled trades and STEM fields. DARS will collaborate with multiple agencies within Virginia government including the Department of Human Resource Management, Department of Labor and Industry, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, and other critical public/private sector workforce partners to serve at least 750 VR-eligible individuals with disabilities. They will assist individuals with disabilities who have been traditionally unserved or underserved by Virginia's workforce system so they can obtain or advance in occupations in both the skills-based trade and industry fields, including STEM, or in state government.

The project will also capitalize upon two legislative initiatives recently adopted by the Virginia General Assembly: one that expands employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in state government and the other that increases diversity, equity, and inclusion opportunities in the Commonwealth.

DARS reports 303 successful closures for the month of October. This has been the most closures in one month since 2018. DARS is pleased to report that the Agency ended the fiscal year with no waiting list.

The Commissioner noted that the 2021 GA required the Secretary of HHR to complete a study and a workgroup focused on elevating aging services in the Commonwealth. The study is to include consideration for reestablishing a stand-alone Department for Aging. The report and recommendations are due to the GA and the Governor by December 1, 2021.

DARS reported that over 90% of its workforce is vaccinated. DARS staff that are not yet vaccinated are undergoing weekly COVID testing.

The Commissioner presented outgoing ESOSC Chair, Shirley Lyons, with a Certificate of Appreciation, for

her two years of service as the Committee's Chair.

Upcoming Agenda Items, and Other Business

Shirley Lyons, Chair

The next meeting of the Employment Service Organization Steering Committee is scheduled for January 11, 2022. It was requested by the Committee that DARS report back on capacity building discussions that will be taking place with ESOs across the Commonwealth.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m.