



## Division of Rehabilitative Services

### Employment Service Organization Steering Committee (ESOSC)

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

In-Person Meeting Location: 5620 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060

#### Minutes

**Members Present:** Shanna Bouthyard, Chris Martin, Greta Harrison (electronically), Stephanie Porter-Lopez, Adair Jensen-Smith, Christopher Hicks, Michelle Lotrecchiano, David Gusler, Shannon Shaffer, Grady "Skip" Phillips, Madeline Fitzgerald

**Members Absent:** none

**DARS Staff Attending:** Commissioner Kathy Hayfield, Deputy Commissioner Dale Batten, Anita Mundy, Donna Bonessi, Dionca Coleman, Matt Luther, Catherine Harrison

#### Full Committee Call to Order and Introductions

*Chris Martin, Committee Vice-Chair*

Chris Martin called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed members and guests.

#### Approve Meeting Minutes from July 08, 2025, and Current Agenda

*Chris Martin*

The Committee reviewed the draft meeting minutes from October 14, 2025, along with the agenda for the current meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as written was made by Grady "Skip" Phillips and seconded by Michelle Lotrecchiano. All members present voted in favor to accept the minutes as written, and the motion carried.

A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Grady "Skip" Phillips and seconded by Christopher Hicks. All members present voted in favor of accepting the agenda as presented, and the motion carried.

#### Public Comment

*Chris Martin*

The ESOSC provided three opportunities during the meeting for public comment. Public notice was posted in advance, allowing individuals to submit written comments through various channels by January 12, 2026. No public comment was submitted prior to the meeting.

Jason Harper of RSVP signed up during the meeting to provide public comment. Mr. Harper directed his question to DARS regarding confirmation that DARS plans to reallocate funds to organizations that stepped in to serve individuals following the discontinuation of services by Goodwill of the Valleys. Ms. Bonessi confirmed that this is correct and that DARS expects to reallocate LTESS funds within the next few weeks.

**Overview of Committee's Charge & Review of State Budget Bill  
as these relate to the ESOSC and LTESS/EES programs**

**Catherine Harrison, DARS Director  
of Policy & Legislative Affairs**

At the request of ESOSC Chair Chris Martin, Catherine Harrison delivered a comprehensive presentation and distributed a detailed handout outlining the responsibilities and scope of the ESOSC as set forth in the Code of Virginia. Ms. Harrison reviewed the statutory provisions related to LTESS and EES funding, including distinctions in permissible use of funds for individuals classified as having a Significant Disability versus a Most Significant Disability. Ms. Harrison also reviewed a recent change in budget language permitting the combination of LTESS and EES funds, effective July 1, 2026.

**Launch to the Future, Transition Day, Pre-ETS Updates**

**Matt Luther, DARS Transition & Education  
Services Manager**

Per the request of the Committee at the previous meeting, Matt Luther provided a general update on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Mr. Luther reported that over 100 DARS counselors participated in the "Launch to the Future" conference. Counselors were provided the opportunity to hear presentations from students who shared their individual success stories, as well as to participate in multiple breakout sessions focused on improving service quality and accountability.

Mr. Luther provided an overview of 'Transition Day' events held at Lancaster High School and Central High School. These events showcased collaboration among the local DARS Counselor, the DARS Transition Team, three DARS providers, the William & Mary Training and Technical Assistance Center, and Gear UP/Level UP from the State Council on Higher Education to deliver transition activities for students and presentations for parents.

Mr. Luther explained that the focus is on delivering intentional Pre-Employment and Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students by utilizing a sequencing guide developed through the Interagency Collaborative Model Pre-ETS Site (<http://www.preets.vcu.org>).

**Status Update on Recommendations Previously Made  
by the Committee & ESO Updates**

**Anita Mundy, Supported Employment Services  
& Long-Term Follow Along Manager**

Anita Mundy and Donna Bonessi presented data related to long-term follow along service codes E1200, E1201, E6030, and EWISA, E5129, E1100, and E5107. The data was shared live with the Committee, allowing members to review and discuss various data points in real time.

Additional Return on Investment data was shared for the period of June 2019- December 2025. A fund source comparison was conducted between Extended Employment Services (EES) funds and Long-Term Employment Support Services (LTESS) funds. The data showed the ROI per dollar was much higher for individuals served through Individual Supported Employment than any other services.

In addition to the data presentation, Anita Mundy provided an update on the ongoing CARF cost reimbursement recommendation. To date, seven organizations have submitted requests for CARF cost reimbursement for SFY26. Round 1 Reimbursements are scheduled to be issued in the amount of \$57,926.00. Ms. Mundy reported that to date a total of \$245,985.75 has been allocated to eligible ESOs for CARF cost reimbursements. Ms. Mundy noted that the upcoming round of CARF cost reimbursements will be the final cycle recommended by the Committee. Ms. Mundy will report at the April meeting on the number of organizations that have submitted reimbursement requests, ensuring the Committee has the data needed to determine next steps. Ms. Mundy also reported that CARF surveys have been delayed by at least six months for many organizations due to a shortage of surveyors. She encouraged the Committee to consider extending

reimbursement opportunities into SFY27 to accommodate organizations affected by these delays.

#### **LTESS-EES Data Reports, System Access, and Timeliness of Report Submissions**

**Anita Mundy**

Anita Mundy provided an update due to previous concerns regarding the timeliness of requisition submissions by several organizations, delaying the collection of data to present to the Committee. Ms. Mundy noted significant improvement with only one organization failing to submit their requisitions on time. Ms. Mundy emphasized the importance of submitting requisitions on time to ensure timely bill payments and accurate data reporting to the Committee.

#### **LTESS-EES SFY26 Second Quarter Spending Report, Comparisons, and Projected Balances**

**Donna Bonessi, Director ESSP**

Donna Bonessi presented the SFY 2026 second quarter and year-to-date LTESS/EES Statistics, Second Quarter Spending Report, Comparisons, and Projected Balances to the Committee. The total Year-to Date balance for Quarter 2 is \$155,313.78.

Second Quarter Ending November 30, 2025			
	EES	LTESS	Total
Expected Expenditure	\$ 474,849.27	\$ 1,561,319.93	\$ 2,036,169.20
Actual Expenditure	\$ 382,288.90	\$ 1,586,968.50	\$ 1,969,257.40
2nd QTR Bal on 11/30/25	\$ 92,560.37	\$ (25,648.58)	\$ 66,911.80
Mid year Balance			\$ 155,313.78
Final Balance after 2nd Qtr			\$ 155,313.78

Through discussion with the Committee, members voiced that it would be helpful if DARS would also report on reserve funds. In the past, reserve funds have not been included in the Projections vs. Actuals Reports. Moving forward this will be included in the next reports.

Ms. Bonessi shared a Long-Term Employment Supports infographic summarizing LTESS/EES rate on investment (ROI) data. Data showed that Individual Supported Employment services had the highest ROI as compared to other services.

Service Type	# served	Return/\$1	ROI	Net gain
Individual Supported Employment	7,739	\$9.37	836.6%	\$241,903,504
Sheltered Employment	539	\$1.59	58.6%	\$4,435,906
Group Supported Employment	194	\$1.33	32.8%	\$1,660,750
Medicaid Transportation	196	\$1.37	36.7%	\$215,698
Work Incentives Follow up	77	\$10.09	908.6%	\$379,527

Ms. Bonessi reported that 31 participants previously receiving employment services from Goodwill of the Valleys (GWV) have successfully transitioned to other organizations. Funds initially allocated to GWV will be released within the next two weeks to providers supporting those participants.

Ms. Bonessi reported that LTFA services have increased and December marked the first month of SFY26 that many ESOs carried outstanding LTESS balances.

#### **Committee Recommendations to DARS**

*Chris Martin*

The Committee plans to review CARF cost reimbursements to date at the April meeting to determine if a recommendation is warranted to extend reimbursements into SFY 2027, so that all eligible organizations may benefit from these funds. Chris Martin reiterated the value of the Committee being able to review data and requested that this format of reviewing the presented data continue.

#### **Commissioner's Update**

*Kathy Hayfield, DARS Commissioner*

The Commissioner noted that the General Assembly convenes tomorrow and that the outgoing Governor has submitted a two-year budget proposal to the General Assembly. The Commissioner reported that the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) has submitted its budget for review; however, only a few items were incorporated into the new budget and there are no active legislative bills this year.

The request by DARS for general fund dollars required by RSA for state match to draw down all of DRS' federal dollars was not included in the Governors' proposed budget. The Commissioner clarified that LTESS/EES funds cannot be used for matching purposes, as they are designated for long-term follow-along services. Commissioner Hayfield noted that the agency is not currently under order of selection but that the agency is keeping a close watch on how spending looks over the next year or so.

The Commissioner shared that as Virginia prepares for the transition to a new governor and administration, this could be her final attendance at the ESOSC meeting. Commissioner Hayfield expressed gratitude to the Committee for their dedication and hard work over the past years.

#### **SFY26 Future Meeting Dates, Upcoming Agenda Items and other Business**

*Committee*

The next meeting of the Employment Service Organization Steering Committee is scheduled for April 14, 2026. The Committee will meet from 10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. or until all business has been conducted. The meeting will be held at the new DARS Central Office located at 5620 Cox Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23060.

The Committee is considering holding its October meeting at WWRC, which would include a facility tour and the ESOSC session. DARS will assess space availability and report back to the Committee with additional details.

The Committee requested that the April agenda include updates on CARF reimbursements, and continued discussion and review of data for service codes E1200, E1201, E6030, and EWISA.

Anita Mundy reminded members as a follow up the importance of completing the annual Conflict-of-Interest/Financial Disclosure statement by the February 2, 2026, deadline.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:19 PM. The next ESOSC meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2026.

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