



Employer Advisory Group Meeting Agenda & Minutes

Date: 01/22/18
Start Time: 10:00 a.m.
End Time: 11:00 a.m.
Location: E442

Type of meeting: Periodic
Meeting called by: Sue Richards (Provaliant)
Minutes by: Sue Richards
Invitees: Melody Austin, Mark Chi, David Cook, Jennifer Dujka, Chet Henry, Barbie Pearson, Frances Torres
✓ Christine Okanla (ACC)
✓ Betty Butler (Dallas County Comm College)
Wes Simmons (Dallas County Schools)
✓ Dawn Cummings (ESC 3)
Tammy Cunningham, Blenda McNatt (ESC 8)
✓ Jesse Cortinas, Jose Elizondo, Jr. (Judson ISD)
✓ Cathy Felts (Mason ISD)
✓ Nancy Wiggins (Maypearl ISD)
Bonnie Barnhill (Midland Academy Charter)
David Rastellini (Northside ISD)
✓ Tonya Davis (Round Rock ISD)
✓ Christine Porter (Spring Branch ISD)
✓ Becky Bunte (TASBO)
✓ Diana Salami (Texas State)
✓ Aaron LeMay (Univ of No Texas)
Greta Graham (Uplift Education)
✓ Pamela McDonald (UT Austin)

Invitees not present: *Jennifer Dujka, Chet Henry*

Other attendees:

Handouts:

Conference Bridge: 877-746-4263

Participant Code: 2219128

Host Code: 2265442

Purpose of Meeting: Share information with members of the EAG

Expected Outcome: Questions and concerns expressed by members of the EAG will be addressed

AGENDA

- Introductions and roll call – Frances Torres
- Planning and Administration - TRS
 - Frequency of meetings

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- *Next meeting will be in March after Spring Break; they may be monthly for a while and then meetings will be held quarterly*
- **Information on TRS website**
 - *TRS would like to post meeting minutes and names of EAG members on the TRS website. OK with group? Yes*
 - *One concern was expressed by an EAG member who wants to be part of the group but he doesn't want anyone to believe that the group is responsible for or supports the reporting changes. TRS can include clarification on the website regarding the purpose of the group. Group agreed that that addresses the concern.*
- **Purpose of the group**
 - *Previously, TRS met with the EAG to get feedback on development of the new system and going through the Certification process; now TRS wants feedback on the live system*
 - *Meetings are an opportunity to keep everyone up to date on upcoming and implemented changes to the Portal and to keep everyone up to date on changes to laws and rules*
- **Other RE Portal and related information**
 - *If employees are being reported with errors and if they aren't TRS members, then TRS allows them to be removed*
 - *For substitutes, just report days and TRS will override*
 - *Membership eligibility and new member contributions errors were made overridable*
 - *Maintenance release last week fixed error with the RE ledger screen*
 - *Other changes will be implemented within the next two weeks; TRS will release additional changes next month; additional updates will be made in the future*
 - *EAG member said there it would help to have more clarity on how to calculate certain things (e.g., new member contribution calculation). It could help to include examples.*
 - *EAG member expressed confusion over what TRS considers to be the 90th day. New member contribution is due for a new member in the report month that contains the first day of employment through the report month that contains the 90th day of employment*
 - *EAG member noted that child nutrition is another area of uncertainty, particularly since everything is reported at an individual level rather than summary. More examples would help there.*
 - *TRS reminded EAG about the Payroll Manual, workaround list, other helpful information*
 - *Workaround list can be found on the Reporting Entity and Reporting Entity Training. Remedy list provides solution to each error and warning; how often is remedy list updated; the intent is to update whenever a change is made to a validation but updates are slightly behind. Updated error list is targeted for the end of this week. TRS wants to hear from REs if any information on the Remedy List is unclear.*
 - *Report formatting guide can also be helpful*

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- *Current issue list: Last update was made at the end of November and another update will be made very soon*
 - *Before the RE Portal went live, the Payroll Manual was revamped. There's one guide for Higher Ed and one for all other types of entities. Various calculations are explained there.*
 - *TRS would like feedback on the Payroll Manual. If anything additional would be helpful, REs were encouraged to speak up*
 - *RE Portal go live tips and reminders: Tips for making the transition easier*
- **Preview of upcoming activities - TRS**
 - *Review of administrative rules; this happens every couple of years and input from this group will be helpful*
 - *Upcoming training (timeframe, classes)*
 - *½ day introduction where laws and rules related to reporting will be covered*
 - *½ day RE Portal touchpoint to allow time for TRS and REs to discuss current processes, common issues, etc. and share information*
 - *One on one sessions can be scheduled between REs and Coaches*
 - *Trainings will be held at most Education Service Centers and at TRS starting next week and continuing into May.*
 - *During trainings, up to 6 coaches will be out in the field at once*
- **Challenges**
 - **EAR issue - TRS**
 - *Back in November a validation was updated to disallow dates outside of a fiscal year; unfortunately, dates outside of a fiscal year which were previously reported before the update can't be changed by REs due to a secondary error. TRS is close to having a solution for that. If an RE has retirees that they're reporting outside of a fiscal year, an error will appear on the report.*
 - **Issue response time – time related to getting issues addressed and fixed**
 - *Takes longer to implement a change now than it might have in the past because system is more complex and integrated. Additional analysis and testing must be done. There is also additional error checking.*
 - *TRS has been working extra hours to work through questions and is in the process increasing the number of RE Coaches. 3 are being trained right now.*
 - *Up to now, vendor has been addressing all issues. TRS fully assumes responsibility at the end of this month and is optimistic about addressing issues more quickly. It will still take longer than with TRAQS however, due to complexity and integration.*
 - *TRS will be getting on a regular release schedule (e.g., updated version each month). Critical issues will be addressed between those times.*

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- *Email communication went out letting REs know that it may take up to 48 hours for a response.*
- *EAG member asked if there's an estimated time frame for resolving issues exists?*
TRS response: All defects that have been identified so far are scheduled to be fixed by the end of next week. In general, changes will apply to reports that are uploaded after the fixes are implemented. There are certain circumstances where errors may still exist but those are the exception rather than the rule.
- *There are other things that are considered improvements and about 25 of those will be released late next month.*
- *EAG member asked about refunds and the status of those.*
TRS response: Workarounds were implemented that allowed refunds to be sent for reported employees. If an RE has employees that requires a refund, they should contact TRS.
- *EAG member asked if termination certifications are needed in addition to reporting them on the ED90.*
TRS response: Yes. They're two separate processes and a termination certification is needed when employees request a refund. Some REs haven't received communications about the need for certification – they were encouraged to send an email to reporting@trs.texas.gov with any questions.
- *EAG member said that their software vendor is still trying to get their software to compute child nutrition correctly.*
TRS suggested having the software provider contact TRS if clarification is needed on any of the calculations (or anything else that's resulting in issues in their software). Or, provide TRS with the provider and contact information and TRS will reach out to them.
- **Communication**
 - *TRS sends emails and provides information in Update newsletters, but some individuals are still unaware*
 - *Important for web admins to keep RE Contact information current. Currently, some of the information is inaccurate.*
 - *EAG member asked what hours they're able to use the system.*
TRS response: System should be used before 7pm due to nightly processing that starts at that time. Occasionally it will be shut down at 6:30 when a maintenance release must be deployed. It's typically back up by 10pm. Discussions are in process to see if system can stay up until 8pm.
 - *EAG member asked if an email can be sent 15-30 minutes before system goes down with information about when it will be back up.*
TRS response: It may not be possible to send an email but a message can be posted on the RE Portal.
- **Suggested improvements**
 - *Future meetings will be an hour and a half*

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- *REs were encouraged to send suggestions for improvements to reporting@trs.texas.gov*
- *Suggestion: Helpful to be able to look up what has been entered for an employee (i.e., what data exists for an employee on the TRS system); this has also been brought up at other times; TRS plans to explore with the Legal department. RE pointed out that this would reduce the number of calls to Coaches.*
- *Suggestion: It would be helpful to be able to download data for employees, including SSN. Feedback from some REs during certification caused the SSN to be removed due to security concerns but TRS is looking into this again.*