Employer Advisory Group Meeting Agenda & Minutes

Date: 04/25/18
Start Time: 10:30 a.m.
End Time: 12:00 p.m.
Location: E345

Type of meeting: Periodic
Meeting called by: Sue Richards (Provaliant)
Minutes by: Sue Richards
Invitees: Melody Austin, Mark Chi, ~~Ashley Conrad~~, ~~David Cook~~, ~~Jennifer Dujka~~, ~~Chet Henry~~, Jessica Palvino, Barbie Pearson, ~~Michael Ressel~~, ~~Frances Torres~~, Katie Tucker, Kevin Wakley

Christine Okanla (ACC)
✓ Betty Butler (Dallas County Comm College)
Wes Simmons (Dallas County Schools)
✓ Lori Johnson (Eanes ISD)
✓ Dawn Cummings (ESC 3)
Tammy Cunningham (ESC 8)
✓ Jesse Cortinas, ~~Jose Elizondo, Jr.~~ (Judson ISD)
✓ Cathy Felts (Mason ISD)
✓ Nancy Wiggins (Maypearl ISD)
Bonnie Barnhill (Midland Academy Charter)
✓ Wesley Scott, ~~David Rastellini, Lori Gampi~~ (Northside ISD)
✓ Tonya Davis (Round Rock ISD)
✓ Karina Garza (South Texas College)
✓ 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:
Other attendees:
Handouts:
Conference Bridge: 877-746-4263
Participant Code: 2219128
Host Code: 2265442

Purpose of Meeting: Respond to questions, address concerns, and 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
- Questions / topics for discussion
  1. New position codes for Substitute and Teacher – Summer School; time needed for software changes
     - *If new position codes are added, TRS understands that RE software may need to be changed. Information from REs will help determine timing of making the changes.*
     - *New codes being considered due to the need to calculate Stat Min differently during summer months.'*
     - *Lori Johnson doesn't see it as a software change*
     - *Tonya said that it's an update to a crosswalk table for them, but other school districts might need to change their software. Need to check with software providers. Tonya also noted that coding for substitutes will be a huge help.*
     - *Jesse from Judson suggested having a Stat Min Gross amount in the file to serve as the base for calculation. Mark said that that's being considered but would require a report file format change*
     - *TxEIS will need to change; no cost to REs for changes.*
     - *Summer School – errors are currently being overridden. If a separate position code is added to identify summer school employees, errors could be prevented on those employees. TRS is also looking to turn the errors related to stat min calculations into warnings during the months of June, July, and August.*
     - *Next step is to reach out to software providers.*
  2. Still looking for input on how Independent Contractors and Volunteers need to be identified on ER reports during the first 12 months after retirement (e.g., flag, employment type).
     - *Effective September 2017,* retirees must be included on the monthly ER report for the first 12 consecutive calendar months after retirement if the retiree is providing services usually provided by an employee:
       - working as an independent contractor;
       - is waiving, deferring or foregoing compensation; or
       - is working as a volunteer but is performing duties or providing services that the retiree provided immediately before retiring and has an agreement in place to provide those same services or duties after the 12 consecutive-calendar-month break.
     - *Currently, REs should be reporting those retirees with the "Paid Through Third Party Entity" flag as "Yes".*
     - *Mark reviewed the rules associated with volunteers who need to be reported*
     - *Would it be easier to have a separate employment type or flag?*
     - *Several attendees said that they have to track manually – software doesn't cover volunteers.*
     - *Tonya has to track Independent Contractors through Accounts Payable and volunteers are tracked through HR. She doesn't have retiree status of those individuals.*
     - *Melody asked if HR could check View Employee Information when they bring on a volunteer. Tonya said that they don't have access to the RE Portal. The volunteer application asks about retirement status but they don't ask about date. HR will resist having access to the Porrtal due to bandwidth.*

- *Lori asked about the purpose of tracking volunteers. Jessica explained that it goes back to whether there's a true break in service. If they're volunteering in the same position as they left, it may not be considered a break in service.*
- *Several entities expressed concern about reporting volunteers and the work involved in tracking them.*
- *Concern expressed over reporting independent contractors as well*
- *Tonya believes that more education is needed and Barbie said that a video will be released in May-June that will address the need for retirees to take a 12 month break in service before coming back.*
- *TRS retirees working in the first 12 months after retirement was addressed in the September 2017 Update newsletter (see FAQs)*

3. TRS rules say that an employee who earns a year of service and then changes from an eligible position to an ineligible, part-time position needs to be reported as eligible through the rest of the chool year. School year for TRS purposes is Sept 1 through Aug 31.

   However, if this employee comes back for the next school year and their contract starts in August, based on how the system is set up, the RE will need to report this person as eligible through Aug 31 and then submit a new ED40 with the position as non-eligible beginning Sept 1. Because of employment changes at the beginning of each school year in July and August, the new employer may not know that the new employee earned a year of service already and will therefore encounter a lot of errors with their ED reports.

   How does software that's used by EAG members handle this?

   - *Several entities said that once an employee earns a year of service, they'll be reported as eligible. The following year, they'll be reported as ineligible.*
   - *Non-Higher Ed entities, have to clear errors related to this. Some overrides have been needed.*
   - *Scenario: August 2018 report for school year starting in August. Mark asked attendees if, when ED40 is created for FY18-19, does their software say Aug 15-31 was worked in TRS Eligible position? One attendee responded that they'll be paid in September and wouldn't be eligible.*
   - *For employees who started in August but aren't paid until Sept, Melody asked if days worked would be reported. Several attendees responded that yes, days for August will be reported with $0 compensation.*
   - *One of TRS's concerns is related to new hires who are hired as part time for the new year but they earned a year of service in the past year. Tonya said they typically aren't paid until September. She said it would help to show whether an employee has earned a year of service on the View Employee Information screen TRS will consider that..*
   - *Tracking these individuals would be a manual process for some, but there aren't many employees who fall into this category.*
   - *Question: If sub is working part time, do they have to work 180 days rather than 90? Answer: This rule only applies to those who transitioned from an eligible position to a non-eligible, non-substitute position and earned a year of service credit. If the employee earned a year of service and is only substituting, the substitute position is not TRS eligible.*

4. Retiree hours worked - rule is paying the surcharge in the month in which they work and paid against wages paid in the month.
   Problem: District's don't have the completed hours worked for the current month in time to collect the surcharges in the current month payroll because all the hours worked have not

been submitted.

Are there any solutions to this? *Due date for the ER report and associated deposits was changed to the 10th of the month from the 6th to help with this. The only exception is with the August ER report as it is due on the 6th of September. The change became effective in September 2017.*

An example of this would be pay dates that are on the 15th of the month - hours worked from 1st to 13th would have to be more than 1/2 time to know to collect the surcharge for that pay run. This is a manual process to track and collect on the current month wages paid. (Tonya Davis)

- *REs need to remit surcharge amount when it's due.*
- *If you're collecting surcharges from the retiree, how and when it's collected is between the RE and the retiree and should have no effect on reporting of surcharges to TRS. Surcharges can be collected from reitree in a different month than when the surcharges are paid to TRS.*
- *REs should be reporting hours and days worked in the calendar month and pay received in the calendar month; those aren't tied together.*
- *Tonya, Aaron and other attendees mentioned that handling this is a completely manual process for them*

5. RP warning message 638 for regular payroll report period December 2017 (no records found for Employee name SSN; if the employee has terminated, please submit ED90)

   We had 189 code 638 warning messages - and 90 of these messages were for Substitutes - can TRS consider not sending a warning for a Substitute every month or at least provide us with the Employee Type we reported so we know they are a substitute?

   Some substitutes only work every other month or a few days a couple of months during the school year. We keep substitutes on our list of employees until the end of the school year and if they don't return a letter of reasonable assurance then we process a resignation for the substitute at the end of the school year. (Tonya Davis)

   - *This was originally an error to indicate that an employee who had a contract which included the report period was not included on the RP report. It was changed to a warning based on EAG input prior to go-live so it wouldn't kick for substitutes and casual employees.*
   - *An enhancement was recently implemented that allows REs to jump straight to error messages and focus on clearing those before dealing with warnings.*
   - *Eventually, these can either be moved to the bottom of the screen or the warnings can be collapsed.*
   - *Regarding subs – they may work once and then not work again for 6 months. .*
   - *TRS will consider omitting subs from this warning.*

6. Termination Certification Authorization: Currently only someone with signatory authority is able to view/submit a Termination Certification. I would like to request the ability for Staff Contacts to certify the terminations. Staff Contacts are able to create an ED90 and submit with no signature intervention, which essentially does the same thing as a termination certification. (Pam McDonald)

   - *This will be discussed and considered by TRS.*

7. Partial Refund Process: Is there any way for a Payroll Contact (or Reporting Official) to certify the final deposits that are not yet sent to TRS and thereby issue the participant a full

refund, rather than performing the partial refund process? This could be on paper or electronically, but seems like it would be more efficient than the partial refund process, and would lessen the burden on the members. (Pam McDonald)

- *By law, TRS can not refund money that has not been allocated to the member's account.*
- *It's a Federal pension plan requirement.*
- *Pam pointed out that they have sent the funds – it's just that the report hasn't completed yet. Funds won't be allocated to the member's account until report is posted (complete).*

8. View Employee Information: Enhancement suggestion to display on the "View Employee Information" section of the RE Portal if the individual is a TRS member *and* actively employed. This would help us determine ahead of time if TRS deductions are needed due to concurrent employment, rather than during reporting, which is after the payroll has already processed. Sending the employee deduction on the RP report before we have actually collected it is not ideal. Enhancement suggestion to display the date that the member became a new member. This would help us to report contributions more accurately. (Pam McDonald)
   - *Similar suggestions have been received from multiple REs at regional RE sessions and is on the list of changes that are being considered by TRS.*
   - *Pam asked if it would show whether they're actively employed as well as new member information. Yes, that's what's being explored.*
9. RP Report: Enhancement suggestion to add a column for the "Adjusted Report Period": both when editing the report, and viewing errors. If there re multiple RP25s, it would be helpful for navigation purposes. (Pam McDonald)
   - *We assume that you're referring to the totals screen. This will be added to the list of future enhancements. Great idea!*

- Information sharing
  - Defects that were fixed and enhancements made since last meeting
    - *"Pending Complete" status added to search screens.*
    - *Retirement Date was added to View Employee Information.*
    - *ORP Eligibility Notification Date was added to the Certification Details screen and to the TRS28. TRS is checking to see when the new TRS28 will be available from the TRS website.*
    - *Employee name was added to the error/warning screen and columns are now sortable (by first name, social security number, error code, or record type)*
    - *A link was added to the top of the page that enables the RE to jump directly to errors without scrolling through all of the warnings first*
    - *Errors 425 and 426 (This member is covered by a group insurance plan from ERS, A&M, or UT. Member TRS-Care contribution is not due.) will only be generated if the net member TRS-Care Contribution or the net RE TRS-Care Contribution are greater than 0.*
    - *Quick link (link on the left navigation panel) to the RE Ledger was added.*
    - *Reports with posting errors will automatically be unlocked in the following night's posting run (now stopped by 4th level validation). Depending on when a report is*

submitted, it may take two days to see a rejected status because posting is only done at night.

- Additional Discussion
  - *Christine asked when/if SSN would be added to the CSV file. Barbie said that the last 4 digits may be added but not the full SSN. Discussions are currently in process about a process that will allow entities to opt in or opt out of receiving the last 4 digits.*
  - *Betty asked about partial refunds for hardships. Money has been paid but she was told that a partial refund couldn't be done because not enough time had lapsed. Partial refunds can only be provided if more than 60 days have lapsed from due date of the report that contains the final report month. Lori and Pam both said they have employees who are upset because they haven't received their partial refund. Barbie asked them to send the name of the member so they can be researched.*
  - *Pam asked status of reports. Barbie reported the following number of incomplete reports per month:*

    September: 3 | *December: 172* | *March: 460*
    October: 31 | *January: 249* | *April – 1,194*
    November: 102 | *February: 326*

  - *Barbie is concerned about year end coming up. If contributions aren't posted by January it will be very difficult to determine whether an employee who's retiring has earned a year of service.*
  - *Next EAG meeting will be after May 20th. Attendees were asked to let Sue know about any dates when they aren't available. TRS knows that it's a busy time of year.*

ACTIONS, DECISIONS, ISSUES from the Meeting

Action, Decision, Issue	Description	Assignee	Targeted Completion Date
ACTION	*Find out when TRS28 will be available on the TRS website*	*TRS*	*5/21/18*
ACTION	*Add to enhancement list: add a column for the "Adjusted Report Period": both when editing the report, and viewing errors*	*TRS*	*5/21/18*
ACTION	*Consider changing warning message 638 so it doesn't apply to substitutes*	*TRS*	*5/21/18*