Employer Advisory Group Meeting Agenda & Minutes

Date: 1/28/19
Start Time: 2:00 p.m.
End Time: 3:30 p.m.
Location: E562

Type of meeting: Periodic
Meeting called by: Sue Richards (Provaliant)
Minutes by: Sue Richards
Invitees: Melody Austin, Carol Casey, Mark Chi, Ashley Conrad, Chris Cutler, Jennifer Dujka, ~~Art Mata~~, Olu Onime, ~~Jessica Palvino~~, Barbie Pearson, Michael Ressel, Frances Torres, Katie Tucker, Sarah Valenti, Kevin Wakley

Karen McDade (A&M)
Terri McCormick, Jackie Thomas (Amarillo, ISD)
~~Christine Okanla~~ (ACC)
Laura Klock (Beaumont ISD)
Claudia Alba (Belton ISD)
Theresa Zlotopolski (Clint ISD)
Jenny Hale (Comal ISD)
~~Rebecca Davis~~ (Conroe ISD)
Betty Butler (Dallas County Comm College)
~~Lori Johnson~~ (Eanes ISD)
~~Dawn Cummings~~ (ESC 3)
Tammy Cunningham (ESC 8)
Emily Youngblood (Flour Bluff ISD)
Jesse Cortinas, ~~Jose Elizondo, Jr.~~ (Judson ISD)
Mickey Smith (Malakoff ISD)
Cathy Felts (Mason ISD)
Nancy Wiggins (Maypearl ISD)
~~Bonnie Barnhill~~ (Midland Academy Charter)
Kathy Rice (Midwestern State University)
~~RL Richards~~ (Muleshoe ISD)
~~Wesley Scott~~, ~~David Rastellini~~, Lori Ganci (Northside ISD)
~~Susie Lackorn~~ (North East ISD)
Lana Walls (Ranger ISD)
Tonya Davis (Round Rock ISD)
~~Karina Garza~~ (South Texas College)
Christine Porter, Tera Harris (Spring Branch ISD)
~~Becky Bunte~~ (TASBO)
Diana Salami (Texas State)
~~Aaron LeMay~~, Mary Davis (Univ of No Texas)
~~Greta Graham~~ (Uplift Education)
~~Pamela McDonald~~, Jeannie Farahnak (UT Austin)
~~Kim Ray~~ (UTMB)
Betty Su Williams (UT Health Science Center at Houston)

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. Members of this group represent REs from all over the State and all types of entities. They serve as the collective "voice" of all REs.

Expected Outcome: Questions and concerns expressed by members of the EAG will be addressed. EAG members are expected to share information with other entities in their region and bring questions and concerns from those entities to this group.

AGENDA

- Introductions and roll call
    - *Meeting purpose was reviewed and Mark encouraged all of the new EAG members to review minutes from past meetings, which can be found on the [EAG web page]*
- TRS Update on action items from last EAG meeting

1. See if it's possible to add functionality that will let REs upload a spreadsheet containing names of employees and, in return, receive information provided by the View Employee Information screen for each person on the list. (TRS)
   Other priorities are being addressed at this time; also, it's likely that SSNs would be wanted and those can't be provided
    - *Tonya asked if they can query on all of the ED records sent in for a member? Mark explained that it's on the list but as it's a major effort, other items are being addressed first*
    - *Kathy said that her Coach sometimes sends screen prints that show position history; it's helpful in resolving overlapping employment errors;*
2. From 12/11 meeting: Becky said that they've been penalized a small amount due to errors related to new member. They have a credit balance on a different contribution type and Becky asked if the credit balance could automatically be applied to a bucket where it's needed before it's actually transferred.
   Action item: TRS will confirm that that's what's actually happening.
   We confirmed that the system looks at when deposit was made and that date will be used in regard to penalties. Because of feedback from REs, overages aren't automatically transferred into buckets where it's needed (e.g, overage in New Member won't be automatically transferred to Stat Min)
    - *Is there a way to add a feature to identify what caused the P&I? Mark said that it's something can be explored. Current RE Ledger screen provides the report month and contribution type that the penalty interest is associated with.*
    - *Kathy had several entities give questions to her for this group about P&I. One was about the request to waive and why it needs to be in writing. TRS needs it in writing for tracking purposes and in order to have proper information for State Auditors. Kathy also expressed frustration about the time it takes to work through issues with the Coach; more P&I mounts up during that time.*
    - *Betty Butler said that they've had small penalties, most related to New Member. She wondered if it would be possible to make it so balance in New Member (or any account being transferred to) can be a positive amount (i.e., transfer more to that account than is needed). They're only able to take it up to $0. Mark would like to discuss offline and get more details.*
3. Keep track of when reports are submitted and whether email notifications are received regarding report status. If not, let TRS know the date, time, and report type that was submitted. (EAG members' action)

1. Mark encouraged everyone to provide information if they expect an email notification and don't receive one.
    - *Betty Su asked if they can have more than one person on email list. Mark said that the email should be going to Web Administrator, Payroll Contact, and Reporting Official. If it isn't getting to the right person, perhaps they need to be named as the Payroll Contact or Reporting Official.*

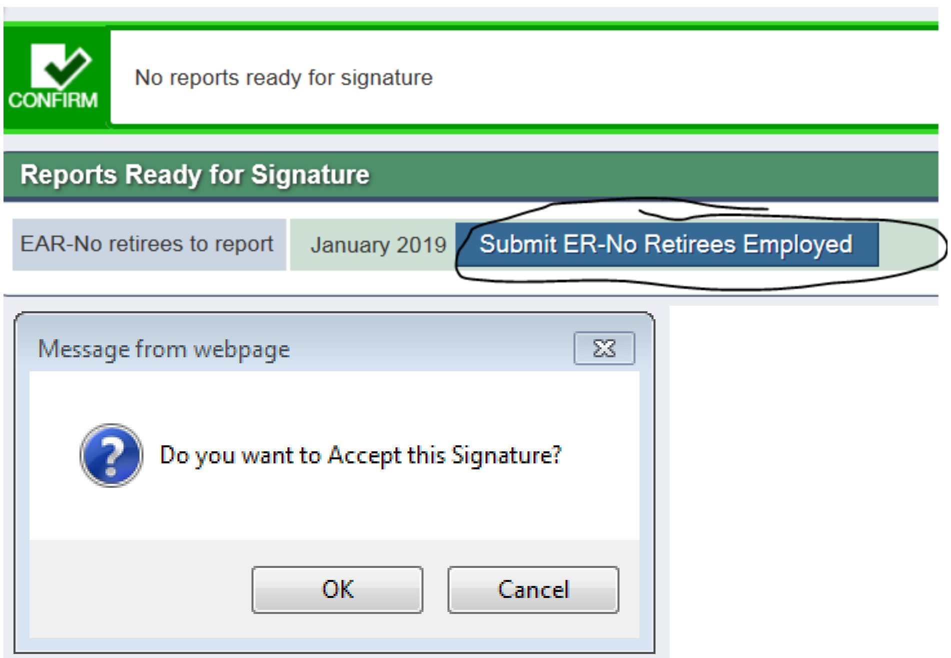
- Input needed by TRS from EAG members
    - *TRS shared thoughts for simplifying TRS membership eligibility and asked for feedback/comment. Kevin talked about two pain points.*
    - *TRS membership eligibility is extremely difficult to manage for employees who are hired as a temp but works into TRS membership (e.g.. adjunct professors). When higher ed entities are working with adjuncts, it seems like it needs to be harder or easier for an adjunct to qualify for membership because now it's a very gray area. Kevin asked if the trend for adjuncts is trending up, down, or staying the same.*
        - *Jeannie from UT said that she sees it staying the same. They would like to discuss internally.*
        - *Kevin asked, if longterm adjuncts are ORP eligible, will most elect ORP? Jeannie said yes, if they're eligible for it. Betty Su agreed. Betty from Dallas sees fewer and fewer people electing ORP and they're increasing the number of adjuncts; a lot of her adjuncts participate in Social Security and don't want to become TRS members*
        - *At UT Austin, most people would like to go into ORP if eligible. Having faculty who start in a part time or temp position and work into full time, is a huge challenge. Kevin asked if there's any pattern or consistency with employee type – Jeannie said that it could be any employee. Betty Su is experiencing the same thing as UT Austin.*
        - *Tonya has same problem as higher ed; administrator hires person in a temp position but then keeps them. They have no way to track that in their software*
    - *Regarding non-retiree substitutes – Is the current definition of a sub being someone who's working in place of a current employee challenging?*
        - *Substitutes are complicated all together due to the definition; if they're a simple sub or an Ed assistant, those are easy; subs who fill in for an existing position are a lot more difficult*
        - *Nancy had 3 teachers resign in the past 3 months and TRS definitions say that they can't put a sub there; Maypearl needs to be able to do that.*
        - *Cathy said that they've been putting a "floating sub" in the position. Mark explained that TRS can't categorize that person as a sub because a sub, by definition, is someone who is temporarily filling in for an employee of record. When a vacant position is filled by a sub, eligibility has to be considered.*
        - *Kevin asked EAG members what information they have about subs they report.*
            - *Northside has their pay category and who they worked for and at what campus and on what day. They have over 3,000 subs in the sub pool.*
            - *Tonya gets the same info and said that one sub can work in multiple positions. They have over 1,000 subs and don't get the information until payroll.*
            - *Kevin said that he'd love to hear from everyone with anything that wasn't shared. This discussion will continue at the next meeting. Email should be sent to Barbie, Mark, and Sue.*

- *Tonya said that there's a senate bill regarding increases in TRS contributions. She said that subs who are on social security don't want to be TRS members.*
- *Solutions for the people who are in that uncertain area to be found; TRS wants to know if they want to be TRS members or not and if the RE wants them to be TRS members or not. Barbie explained that TRS is trying to come up with a way to fit all employee types into the rules, which is quite a challenge.*
- *Tonya mentioned difficulties in keeping track of staff who come on in a trial basis (on call). They're coded as a temporary employee and are frequently seen in custodial and transportation departments.*

- *ED90 changes*
  - *Changes to the ED90 record are being considered and TRS wants to know whether entities have the information that's needed and how difficult it will be to change the software.*
  - *Mark explained that much of the RE reporting functionality is built aound employments and positions. There may be multiple positions within an employment. Currently, entities will need to report the last month when TRS contributions were made as the Final Report Month. In some cases, the employee may have switched from an eligible to ineligible position years ago. TRS needs to know when the final deposit was made if a refund is requested. Knowing when the final deposit was made can expedite the refund. Instead of TRS requiring this information regardless when the eligible position was, the proposed solution was to only have the RE provide the data for employees who transitioned from an eligible position to an ineligible position during the current year or the previous fiscal year. Do entities have that data for the current year and one year prior?*
    - *Jeannie said that it could be tricky for them because they switched to new software and would have to go back to the old one for information. Programmer said that it's impossible to go back and program as described.*
    - *Betty Su said that she'll need to think about it. Initially sounds difficult to program.*
    - *TRS needs to know when the final deposit was made if a refund is requested. Knowing when the final deposit was made can expedite the refund.*
    - *Teresa said that they had that situation this month and they're software created the ED90. They terminated as an aide and began as a sub. Based on that scenario, Mark said that he'd expect an ED45 since they didn't terminate from the employer.*
    - *Tonya said that they'd have difficulty because they switched to a new system. Anything for the prior year has to be manually researched.*
    - *Jennifer clarified that entities aren't being able to do this now. The question is whether it would be possible to report current and prior year in the future.*
    - *Tonya said that it's difficult to see changes in their system; system doesn't store eligible vs. ineligible information. They'd have to go to the payroll department and ask for information.*
    - *TRS is aware that software changes would be needed. EAG members were asked to talk to their software providers regarding the change and whether it's feasible.*
    - *Melody explained that the ED90 information that's being discussed is what's on the termination certification.*
  - *Mark asked EAG members to give this some thought and provide input.*

- Questions / topics from EAG members

1. Is there a way that TRS can lift the audit for Error 663, "The reported employee has a closed account. Please contact TRS." For ED90s only? Our system will send ED90s based on the programming that has been setup. Since this is a termination record, it is possible we have completed a Termination Certification prior to sending an ED90. It would be much easier and reduce our error count if TRS can lift the audit for this error for ED90s only. (Pam McDonald)
   The validation can't be relaxed because the account is actually closed. Once the account is closed, it prevents further records from being reported.
2. When submitting the signature for the ER report, the option to Submit ER-No Retirees Employed is the largest option & is very easy to hit in place of the actual signature option. If you inadvertently select that option, your report is gone & one would need to enter each retiree manually on an ER25. I have not personally done this, but I have a district that has done this twice. Can we move the option and/or offer a second window that gives the district a 2nd chance to realize what they are requesting? Or maybe even allow them to upload another report instead of manually entering all retirees? (Lori Johnson)
   On the signature screen, if the button for "Submit ER-No Retirees Employed" button is clicked, a pop-up window is generated to and asks the user, "Do you want to Accept this Signature?" (second window).



3. On the emails that were sent out to districts asking them to explain the differences in years in order to complete the GASB schedule, we upload this info to TRS.
   i.e. - My email was questioning the grant increase amount & the TRS Care Surcharge increase. This info is sent in every month. Why would TRS not be able to run a query on this from the new system? (Lori Johnson)
   The SAO (State Auditor) requires TRS to have explanations from the REs if the variance is above a certain percentage.
4. Suggestions
   a. My biggest concern is how difficult it is to search for records. For the 2017-18 year we had hundreds of adjustment files to correct data incompatibilities. It would be most helpful if it were possible to search by employee and see all of the RP records reported for the year (or date range), rather than pulling each month RP file and downloading it to a spreadsheet and then merging all the spreadsheets. (Laura Klock)
   Enhancements to View Employee Information are on the radar and planned for the future

b. (similar to a) It would be helpful for reporting entities to have access to what jobs TRS shows for the employees at TRS. We have multiple ED reports that we send and have to look at them all to find what the system sent for an employee. TRS coaches are able to just pull the information up. I have heard that this is in the works, but it is an item that should be hear the top of the list. (Kathy Rice)

c. Ability to sort RP file by error code (I know that I can print the sorted error codes under "Totals", but I think it would be easier to resolve errors in the RP file if I could sort by error type. (Laura Klock)
It's possible to sort by error code today on the Errors & Warnings screen. A recent enhancement added the error code to the detail CSV. There aren't any plans to include error code on the main edit screen as it currently only provides the total number of errors for reach record

d. Ability to have 2 sessions open at same time (when working my RP, if I find that I need to build an ED file, it would be easier if I could have 2 sessions open and toggle between them). Also when working the file I sometimes have to go to "view employee information" and having 2 sessions would make it easier for that. (Laura Klock)
If you have access to two different browsers, you can open the Portal using each. Being able to open two sessions using the same browser is on our list of future enhancements.

e. Ability to "collapse: the warnings in the RP file for the entire session. When I am working the RP file, each time I "return" after correcting a record, I have to collapse the warnings again. It would be nice to do it once per session rather than after each person. (Laura Klock)
You have the ability to skip down but warnings aren't going to be collapsed because they should be read by the entities.

f. We have numerous employees each month that go from Sub status to Full-time and FT to sub....our system is not building ED records with the correct timing and I built many ED 40 and ED 45 records directly into TRS in order to get reports to clear. With having so many changes, it is hard to keep up with the ED40 records. It would be especially helpful if we could look up the current ED 40s on file for a particular employee. It would be even better if there was a button to "end current ED40 record". That way, we would just have to submit the current/new ED40 record. We also have game workers (and other functions) that are considered 03 support staff. They are paid from "functions" (which is extra duty pay) and our system is not building the ED40 records for functions. By having a way to view the current ED 40 on file, I would know what position code needs to have an ED 40 built. (Laura Klock)
Remember that we have the ED45 end-add scenario (reason code A)

- Defects fixed in latest release and planned for next release
  - Defects fixed in January 27th maintenance cycle
    - ✓ The last four digits of the SSN were unmasked on the CSV and error code and error message were added
    - ✓ New Member determination will now consider escheatments (i.e., dormant accounts)
    - ✓ RP25 will now reverse original transaction. Previously it wasn't doing so whenit was associated with a different position.
    - ✓ Additional 4th level posting errors were addressed
    - ✓ RP25 wasn't locating a reported Zero Days Reason Code and was reporting an error; Corrected
    - ✓ Pension surcharge was required for retirees reported as subs, but shouldn't have been; corrected
    - ✓ Problem that caused RER batches to process slowly between 2/17-12/21 was corrected
    - ✓ Rules for finding an overlapping position were corrected
    - ✓ Corrected inconsistencies related to New Member between two different screens
    - ✓ Corrected issues with Report Period upon selecting the Report Type on the Report Summary screen

- Next set of enhancements/fixes to be addressed
  a. *No email notification received for ED40 with ORP Eligible Position = Y*
  b. *Add SSN search box to View Report Details Screen*
  c. *ED45 lacks 'Original Field Match' validation for Employment Type Code field*
  d. *RE ledger activity getting Gen Err when filter for an individual contribution type is selected from the dropdown.*
  e. *RER Validation 776 is being thrown for ER records and is only documented to be thrown for RP20/25*
  f. *EAR validations do not consider time worked when determining concurrent employment*
  g. *View Employee Info Screen showing retirement date of 9/30/05 but saying 'retired before 9/1/05'*
  h. *RS6167 has only had one instance since implementation, believe report is missing folks*
  i. *Update val 563/573 so that report periods prior to the Eligible Position Start Date are not considered as 'ineligible"*
  j. *Val 568/573 dont appear to be considering other eligible employmetn and should, based on the conditions*
  k. *SD20 failed due to file format issue rather than throwing a file format error*
  l. *Permanent Fix for Stat Min related to Summer School Positions*

- RE Report Status

Report Month	# Completed RP Reports	% Complete	# Incomplete RP Reports
October	1,318	99.85%	2
November	1,254	95.00%	66
December	1,102	83.48%	216
January	147	11.14%	1,173

- Additional Discussion
  - *N/A due to time constraints*

ACTIONS, DECISIONS, ISSUES from the Meeting

Action, Decision, Issue	Description	Assignee	Targeted Completion Date