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Revised 04/28/2020

Supported Employment in State Government (SESG) Procedures

The Supported Employment in State Government (SESG) Program, RCW 41.04, was adopted by the Legislature in 1999 and provides paid competitive employment opportunities for individuals with developmental and other significant disabilities in integrated work settings. SESG is employment with customary salary and benefits, for individuals who need support over time, on or off the job, to maintain job performance.

By statute, SESG positions do not count toward an agency's allotted FTE's; however, an agency must have sufficient funds to pay the salary and benefits. The agency may establish an SESG position in any classification and at the established wages and benefits published in the OFM salary schedule. SESG positions are permanent, classified or exempt, and must be filled on a competitive basis according to existing Collective Bargaining Agreements, RCW, WAC's and each state agency's own policies on recruitment and hiring.

Individuals must meet the following criteria to compete for the SESG positions:

- Have a developmental disability as defined in RCW 71A.10.020 or experience a "significant disability" as defined in the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973:¹
- Require on the job training and long-term support to perform their job successfully; and
- Have a reliable source of long-term support.

Executive Order 13-02 requires each cabinet-level agency, board, commission, and other organization that reports to the governor to utilize and participate in the Supported Employment in State Government program in accordance with standards established by OFM. OFM was directed to develop standards, guidance and best practices for utilization of and participation in the state's supported employment program.

Roles

¹ Electronic Code of Federal Regulations Title 34: Education Subtitle B Chapter III PART 361—STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM Section §361.5 Applicable definitions. (30) Individual with a significant disability. e-CFR data is current as of May 26, 2020. https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=98a76e5cc699f2ff1248b0fd52461537&mc=true&node=pt34.2.361&rgn=div5#se34.2.361_15.

OFM State Human Resources Division (SHR)

SHR is responsible for overseeing and publishing agency standards for using the SESG program, coordinating the SESG program with DSHS, and reporting enterprise results.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Department of Social and Health Services

DVR provides consultation and support to agencies related to the program, including educating agency staff, as well as help establishing SESG positions, recruitment and selection processes.

The SESG Program Coordinator is employed by DVR, but works closely with staff with the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration and Aging and Long-Term Support Administration, Home and Community Services and Health Care Authority, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery to assure broad, representative client participation in SESG and assist with overall coordination activities.

The SESG Program Coordinator typically assists a program as follows:

- Instruct and advise agency staff about the SESG program and how to support SESG employees in the work setting;
- Identifying appropriate job duties and job classifications based on the agency's needs;
- Advise and support agency staff in the recruitment process for candidates, including working with service providers, if needed;
- Instruct and advise agency staff on screening and selection of candidates; and
- Coach and consult with agency staff on working with long term support providers.
- Consultation with agency staff about permanent SESG employees related to work place accommodations, modifications to duties, etc., needed to support an employee's progress and retention.

On the Job Training

On the job training under the Supported Employment in State Government program is training an employee receives at their job setting to achieve satisfactory performance of job responsibilities. Training methods, scope, and provider will vary based on the needs of each employee. On the job training can be provided by the employee's supervisor, a co-worker, or a contracted provider. The DVR program manager is available to assist in identifying the training needs of the individual during the appointment and onboarding process. If it is determined that contracted services are needed, the DVR program manager can assist in coordinating these services. Contracted services, if needed, are provided at no cost to the employer.

Long Term Support

Long term support services are often funded by Medicaid based on an individual's eligibility for disability-related services. Long term supports are often provided by community-based employment services providers who deliver services one on one based on the employee's needs. The services can be delivered at the work site or at another location, depending on the type of support and the employee's needs. Generally, services are more intensive at the beginning of a job placement, and taper off as the employee gains satisfactory job performance. Long-term support services are not a replacement for regular supervision and support to the employee as they learn and perform their job duties on a regular basis.

Several state agencies administer employment programs and coordinate the long-term services with the community organization delivering the service based on the disability type and program eligibility of the applicant/candidate. The DVR coordinator will help you make any needed connections. The hiring agency is not responsible for arranging or paying for long term support services.

Examples of long term support may include, but are not limited to:

- A job coach who assists the employee with intellectual or cognitive disabilities to learn and perform job tasks, identify workplace support strategies with the employee's supervisor and co-workers, helps the employee manage their work routine, and provides creative problem-solving as needed.
- A therapist, certified peer counselor, behavioral health supported employment provider or other behavioral health treatment practitioner (e.g., behavioral health support group, medication management, Wellness Recovery Action Plan, etc.) assists the employee with a behavioral health condition to maintain reliable attendance and job performance, develop positive interpersonal relationships with their supervisor and co-workers, successfully adapt to stressors in the workplace, problem solve, and adjust to new or challenging job expectations.
- Natural supports are the people the employee ordinarily comes into contact with at work or at home to help the employee with work routines and social interactions at the worksite. Natural supports can help some individuals maintain job performance.

Funding sources of long term support may include:

- Developmental Disabilities Supported Employment Providers (Medicaid)
- Behavioral Health Supported Employment Providers (Medicaid)
- Social Security Work Incentives
- Natural Support
- Self-pay by employee

State Agency

The agency is responsible for establishing the SESG position, managing the recruitment and selection process, and managing the performance of the employee selected for a supported employment program.

Procedure

1. Establishing a SESG Position

Agencies should follow their internal procedures to establish and fund a SESG position. Existing job classifications, already created positions are used for a SESG position (e.g. Agencies can fill vacant positions via SESG, etc.). It is common for agencies to create a list of potential related job tasks, and then finalize the list once the candidate has been selected. There is no separate job classification for a supported employment position.

Agencies may consult with the DVR SESG Coordinator when developing the list of potential job tasks and drafting the position description. The final position description and record of the position in HRMS should clearly designate the position as a supported employment position by using the NW code. Additionally, the position description should clearly indicate that the employee is required to maintain long term support to assist the employee with maintaining satisfactory job performance.

2. Recruiting for SESG Positions

Agencies should post SESG announcements through the On-Line Recruitment System (OLRS) like other positions. However, because candidates with intellectual disabilities may have difficulty with electronic applications, it is advisable to accept paper applications. Because some candidates will not have traditional education and experience, announcements should list qualitative factors that impact ability to be successful in the position:

- **Social Environment**-degree to which the position requires interaction with others.
- **Physical Environment**-degree to which the position is exposed to environmental factors such as noise, smells, etc.
- **Task Complexity** – degree to which the position requires comfort with ambiguity, task variety, on task sequencing.
- **Support Systems** – degree to which the position requires independence or self-management.

The SESG Program Coordinator may assist agencies with developing job announcements and distributing announcement to private agencies with potential clients in the region.

3. Screening and Selecting SESG applicants

The SESG Program Coordinator may assist the agency in screening applicants to assure they meet SESG criteria. The agency should then narrow down the interview pool in the same manner they would for any other position.

When an interview pool is identified, the DVR SESG Coordinator will assist the agency with developing appropriate interview questions, tests, or other selection tools. Interview tools should address both qualitative factors and possible task assignments.

Each applicant brings his/her long term support as appropriate, to the interview to provide assistance and address any support questions. Not all applicants will need the assistance of long term supports at the interview. After the interview as part of making the job offer, the candidate provides the employer with their written long term support plan that has been mutually agreed upon with their long term supports as to how they will be assisting the individual with maintaining the job. The plan should also include contact information regarding who the employer and/or the candidate can contact should there be any questions or need for support with the plan during the SESG selection process and if the applicant is selected for the position, for the length of the SESG employee's employment.

4. Performance Management

Once an agency has selected a candidate, the agency verifies the individual meets the SESG eligibility (DVR SESG Program Coordinator can assist). The agency may ask for additional

documentation to prove SESG eligibility such as a written statement from a Doctor, Physician's Assistant or Therapist, records from a School Counselor or Vocational Rehabilitation Agency or a similar program with relevant records. Written statements from family members, friends, or former employers/co-workers should not be accepted. The supervisor should follow the agency's onboard process and performance management standards, including development of a performance and development plan (PDP). The agency completes the hiring process through HRMS, with NW Code, Supported Employment.

The SESG employee's long term support begins from the first day of employment and will continue with regularly-scheduled visits with the supervisor, employee, and others as appropriate to ensure that everyone is pleased with the situation. The long term support provider remains a resource to the agency and the employee for the length of the SESG employee's employment. This means that if tasks ever change or new co-workers or supervisor needs training, then the long term support provider will continue to be a resource.

If the SESG employee's long term supports are provided in the community (therapist, certified peer counselor, behavioral health supported employment provider, other behavior health treatment practitioner [e.g., medication management, support groups, etc.]). The supports will begin supporting the individual from the first day of employment and will continue to be regularly-scheduled away from the workplace. The employee will maintain their long term supports. The long term support plan (plan is kept on file with supervisor and a copy is given to the employee) continues to be a resource to the agency and the employee for the length of the SESG employee's employment and is used for annual verification for SESG continued eligibility. The supervisor and employee review the plan at the employee's annual PDP meeting to ensure long term supports are continuing to meet the employee's long term support needs for their position. This means that if there are new co-workers or supervisors or stressors to adapt to in the workplace or new challenging job expectations, the therapist or certified peer counselor, or other behavioral health services will continue to be a resource.

If any changes to a SESG employee's long term support (e.g. loss of long term support, etc.) the SESG employee and/or employer may contact the DVR SESG Coordinator for assistance. The DVR SESG Coordinator will provide other possible resources for support.

The DVR SESG Coordinator will also continue as a resource to the agency. This may include training for supervisors and co-workers, as well as continuing to assist with managing the relationship with the long term support provider.

The long term support is not the responsibility of the agency and is not considered a "reasonable accommodation" that the agency is responsible for; however, other forms of reasonable accommodation must be provided in accordance with the agency's reasonable accommodation policy.