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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 unique, tailored supports over time to maintain job performance. The statute establishes that the SESG positions do not count against agencies allotted FTE's; however, an agency must have sufficient funds to pay for salary and benefits. All SESG positions must offer the same wages and benefits as similar non-supported employment positions. All 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:
- Require supported employment in order to perform a job successfully; and
- Have a source of long term support that will assist the individual in maintaining satisfactory job performance.

On May 22nd, 2013, Governor Jay Inslee signed Executive Order 13-02 requiring each cabinet-level agency, board, commission, and other organization that reports to the governor to utilize and participate in the state's supported employment 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

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.

Department of Social and Health Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

DVR provides counsel to agencies on supported employment. The SESG Program Specialist is based in DVR, but the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration and, DSHS Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery will work closely with the SESG Program Specialist to assure broad, representative client participation in SESG and assist with overall coordination activities. The SESG Program Specialist may assist agencies with:

- Instruct and advise agency staff on identifying appropriate work for a SESG position;
- Advise and support agency staff in working with supported employment vendors and recruiting for SESG candidates;
- Instruct and advise agency staff on screening and selection of SESG candidates; and
- Coach and consult with agency staff on working with long term support providers

Long Term Support

As a condition of employment, it is the SESG employee's responsibility to secure and maintain dependable source of long term support that enables them to maintain satisfactory job performance. Long term support is provided to supplement regular supervision and assist the employee in learning and performing their job duties on a consistent basis.

Examples of long term support may include:

- A job coach who assists the SESG employee with intellectual or cognitive disabilities to learn and perform job tasks, identify workplace support strategies with the employee's supervisor and co-workers, help the employee self-manage their work routine, provide creative problem-solving as needed.
- A therapist or peer support specialist who assists the SESG employee with mental health disabilities 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.

Sources of long term support may include:

- Self-pay by employee
- Social Security Work Incentives
- Developmental Disabilities Supported Employment Providers
- Mental Health Supported Employment Providers

State Agency

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

Procedure

1. Establishing a SESG Position

Agencies should follow their internal procedures for getting approval to establish and fund a SESG position. While any duties may be assigned to a supported employment position, many are composed of routine and repetitive tasks that can be bundled into a body of work. It is common for agencies to create a list of potential related job tasks, and then finalize the list once a candidate has been selected. There is no separate job classification for supported employment position.

Agencies should consult with the 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 Specialist will 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 Specialist will 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 selected, the SESG Program Specialist 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. It is required that each candidate bring their long term support provider to the interview to provide assistance and address any support questions.

4. Performance Management

Once an agency has selected a candidate, the supervisor should follow the agencies onboard process and performance management standards, including development of a performance and development plan.

The SESG employee's long term support provider will begin supporting the individual 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 supervisors need training, then the long term support provider will continue to be a resource.

The SESG Program Specialist 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 arranged by the SESG employee is their responsibility as a condition of employment, 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.

