



VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum

June 7, 2022

VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum

Housekeeping

- Welcome to the VRS Community Partners + VRS Staff Forum.
- **ASL Interpreters** are designated as “co-hosts”, so they appear at the top of your participant list. If you need ability to “multi-pin” please message Sara.Sundeen@state.mn.us or Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us.
- **Closed Captioning** is available. A livestream is linked in the chat.
- **Your name:** please change the name that Zoom displays to your first and last name. An easy way to rename is: 1) go to the participant list and find your name, 2) hover over your name, 3) select “more,” 4) select “rename.”
- **Questions and Comments:** Please submit feedback, questions, comments via Microsoft Form: [Q&A form](#)
- **Microphones:** Please keep your microphone muted throughout the meeting.
- **Technical Issues:** If you have technical issues, please contact Sara.Sundeen@state.mn.us or Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us.
- **Recording:** The session will be recorded and posted to the VRS website along with the agenda, presentation, and transcript.

Agenda

- **Welcome:** Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships
- **July 1, 2022 Contracts Updates:**
 - Kim Babine
 - Janeen Oien: Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 763-204-1354, Janeen.Oien@state.mn.us.
 - Jess Outhwaite: Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 763-233-8829, Jessica.Outhwaite@state.mn.us.
 - Anne Paulson: Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 651-259-7135, Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us.
 - Sara Sundeen: Community Partnerships Program Specialist, 651-247-9121, Sara.Sundeen@state.mn.us.
- **Q&A:** Janeen Oien
- **Wrap Up:** Kim Babine

RFP for July 1 Contracts

All Community Partners Need to Submit an RFP Response

- Request for Proposals for July 1, 2022 contracts:
<https://mn.gov/deed/about/contracts/open-rfp.jsp>
- All organizations that wish to be considered for a VRS Community Partner contract starting July 1, 2022, moving forward must submit a proposal in response to the Request for Proposals.
- The Request for Proposals and the proposal response process is for all VRS Community Partners, not simply new providers. The process to receive a new contract is the same for existing Community Partners and potential new Community Partners.
- If a Community Partner does not submit a new proposal, that partner's contract will end June 30, 2022, and VRS will not be able to authorize for services starting July 1, 2022. This may result in a break in services to individuals.

- To ensure a contract start date of July 1, 2022, proposals must have been received by May 23, 2022.
- If you missed this deadline, please submit your proposal ASAP.
- The RFP is an “open RFP” which means responders can submit a response proposal at any time. However, VRS cannot guarantee a certain effective/start date for proposals submitted after May 23, 2022.

RFP Application Consult

- If you submitted your application, a VRS CP Team Program Specialist contract liaison will be contacting you to schedule a consult.
- It is imperative that applicants schedule the consult in a timely fashion in order to ensure a contract start date of July 1.

State Policy #1446: COVID Testing and Vaccination Policy

Rescinded: State Policy #1446 COVID Testing and Vaccination Policy

- As of May 24, 2022, State of Minnesota Policy #1446, the Proof of Vaccination and Testing, is no longer in effect.
- July 1, 2022 contracts will not include the COVID policy language.
- For existing contracts, due to the rescission of Policy #1446, any clause in your current contract that is predicated on Policy #1446 is negated and will not be enforced. This change is effective beginning May 24, 2022.

2022 Contracts: On-the-Job Work and Training Options

This presentation uses the acronym “OJWT” for “On the Job Work and Training Options.”

On-the-Job Work and Training Options

- **Work Experience:** General Services
- **Work Experience:** Pre-ETS Services
- **Internship:** General Services
- **Internship:** Pre-ETS Services
 - *Note: Pre-ETS Internship is a new service starting July 1, 2022*
- **On-the-Job Evaluation:** General Services
- **Job Tryout:** General Services

When VRS pays the Wages of an Individual in an OJWT Option

- For general services On-the-Job Work and Training Options, sometimes an individual has their wages paid through the VR program.
- The state of Minnesota is not permitted to be the payroll agent to pay for an individual's wages in an OJWT.
- Because of this, VRS reimburses Community Partners (or employers) for the cost of those wages and reimburses Community Partners and employers for the cost of administrative expenses related to being the payroll agent.

Community Partners as the Payroll Agent for an Individual in an OJWT Option

- When a Community Partner is the payroll agent, the Community Partner is also responsible for additional costs such as workers compensation, unemployment insurance, liability insurance, and other expenses.
- In the past, for general services, VRS has reimbursed Community Partners for those wages and payroll agent administrative expenses through the hourly service fee.
- More recently, for Pre-ETS Work Experiences, VRS has reimbursed Community Partners through a “Service” Hours and “Wages” Hours Structure.
- In the “Service” Hours and “Wages” Hours Structure for Pre-ETS Work Experiences, VRS authorized 1) a particular number of service hours and 2) a particular number of “wages” hours.

“Service” Hours and “Wages” Hours Structure

- As referenced in the [April 5, 2022 Forum](#):
- Starting July 1, VRS will use that Pre-ETS Work Experience structure of separating “Service” hours from the “Wages” reimbursement for all On-the-Job Work and Training Options where VRS is reimbursing the wages of an individual.
- VRS will reimburse wages at “Wages + 50%.” That is: the individual’s wage rate, *plus* 50% of the individual’s wage *equals* the amount authorized per hour to the Community Partner under a “Wages” service title.

Example: Work Experience Services

- VRS contracts with XYZ Community Partner to help Joe, who is 42, find a Work Experience, pay his wages during the Work Experience, and support Joe through the Work Experience.
- “Work Experience – Services” - VRS staff authorize for a certain number of hours under the service title: “Work Experience – Services.” That’s the amount of time for site development, supporting an individual during the experience, any closure after the experience.

Example: Work Experience Wages

- “Work Experience – Wages” - VRS staff will also authorize for the wages of the individual in that experience.
- Let’s say Joe will make \$16 per hour in his work experience.
 - 50% of \$16 is \$8.
 - \$16 plus \$8 equals \$24
 - VRS will authorize for \$24 per hour to the Community Partner.
 - The Community Partner will pay Joe the \$16 per hour and use the \$8 per hour to cover the administrative expenses of being the payroll agent.

OJWT Site Development

- Development of a competitive, integrated On-the-Job Work and Training Opportunity is referred to as “site development.”
- In current contracts expiring June 30, 2022, VRS has considered site development an “indirect” cost and asked Community Partners to build the costs of site development into the hourly “direct” service time.
- Starting July 1, VRS will reimburse Community Partners for site development at the hourly service rate.
- VRS staff will assess and determine the number of hours of site development to authorize depending on the goal of the service, the career goal, and the individual.

An On-the-Job Evaluation (OJE) at a community employment site is evaluative in nature. The purpose for the OJE is to provide VRS with an assessment of the suitability of a particular career or occupational area of interest, gain information on work skills, interests, work tolerance, and/or identify work supports.

Contracts

- “On-the-Job Evaluation - Services” at “\$xx per hour”
- “On-the-Job Evaluation - Wages” at “Wages + 50%” (If the Community Partner is willing to be payroll agent.)

A Job Tryout is a short-term work tryout which allows an individual the opportunity to demonstrate to an employer their capacity to effectively perform in a job related to their specific employment goal. There must be a job opening at the employer with the possibility of getting hired if the Job Tryout is successful.

Contracts

- “Job Tryout - Services” at “\$xx per hour”
- “Job Tryout - Wages” at “Wages + 50%” (If the Community Partner is willing to be payroll agent.)

Work Experience – General Services

A Work Experience for General Services is a short-term, time limited work opportunity. Experiential in nature, participants may explore careers, understand the nature of work, and/or build foundational soft and work skills. It serves as a “stepping-stone” on their career pathway. In addition, it will continue to serve as a carryover service when an individual is eligible for VR services but no longer eligible for Pre-ETS.

Contracts

- “Work Experience - Services” at “\$xx per hour”
- “Work Experience - Wages” at “Wages + 50%” (If the Community Partner is willing to be payroll agent.)

Pre-ETS Work Experience

A Pre-ETS Work Experience is intended for a student to understand the nature of work and build soft skills. Pre-ETS Work Experiences can be short-term or for “intermediate jobs”.

Contracts

- “Pre-ETS Work Experience - Services” at “\$xx per hour”
- “Pre-ETS Work Experience - Wages” at “Wages + 50%” (If the Community Partner is willing to be payroll agent.)

Internship – General Services

An Internship is a time-limited, professional learning opportunity that allows a person to gain relevant skills and experience in a particular career field that aligns with their job goal.

Contracts

- “Internship - Services” at “\$xx per hour”
- “Internship - Wages” at “Wages + 50%” (If the Community Partner is willing to be payroll agent.)

A Pre-ETS Internship is a time-limited, professional learning opportunity that allows a person to gain relevant skills and experience in a particular career field that aligns with their job goal.

Contracts

- “Pre-ETS Internship - Services” at “\$xx per hour”
- “Pre-ETS “Internship - Wages” at “Wages + 50%” (If the Community Partner is willing to be payroll agent.)

OJWT Training to Come!

- **CPs and VRS Staff:** Look for a training opportunity this summer to go in-depth on On-the-Job Work and Training Options!
- **VRS Staff:** look for VRS staff-specific information including VR Policy and Guidance updates this summer.

2022 Contracts: Pre-ETS Updates

Pre-ETS “Group” Definition

- Starting July 1, a For the purposes of group rates for Pre-ETS services, a “group” is 3 or more students.
- This is a change from current contracts ending June 30 where a “group” is defined as 2 or more students.

*Change to How Prep-Time is Compensated

- In current contracts, VRS compensates Community Partners providing Pre-Employment Transition Services for “prep time” as “billable” hourly time.
- In the contracts effective July 1, VRS will no longer reimburse Community Partners hourly for the prep time.
- VRS will align indirect services such as prep time with general services. Unless otherwise specified, activities such as prep time, report writing, and invoicing will not be reimbursed at the hourly service rate.
- Community Partners will build the cost to complete these activities into the hourly rate of direct service.

- In current contracts, VRS compensates Community Partners for travel expenses related to the provision of services as “billable” hourly service time.
- In the contracts effective July 1, 2022, there will be no changes in how VRS authorizes Pre-ETS Travel and Transportation expenses.
- VRS will continue to compensate Community Partners providing participant transport or travel for the provision of services as “billable” hourly service time.
- Community Partners will continue to report and invoice for Pre-ETS Travel and Transportation expenses within the “billable” hourly Pre-ETS service time as in current contracts.

General and Pre-ETS Services Crosswalk

*No Changes

Current Pre-ETS Service	Current General Services (through June 30, 2022)	General Services July 1, 2022
Pre-ETS Introductory Work Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational Interview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Shadow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational Interview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Shadow
Pre-ETS Work Experience – Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Experience – Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Experience - Services
Pre-ETS Work Experience – Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Experience – Wages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Experience - Wages
Pre-ETS Intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake
Pre-ETS Work-Based Learning Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Coaching
Pre-ETS Workplace Readiness Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDS • Job Seeking Skills Training • Public Transportation Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IL Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDS • Job Seeking Skills Training • Public Transportation Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IL Services

Pre-ETS Job Exploration Counseling Services

*Changes to Pre-ETS and General Services Crosswalk

Current Pre-ETS Service	Current General Services (through June 30, 2022)	General Services July 1, 2022
Pre-ETS Job Exploration Counseling Services	Job Exploration Counseling Services (General)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Development Services (EDS) • Job Seeking Skills Training

- As referenced in the [April 5, 2022 Forum](#):
- Starting July 1, 2022, "Job Exploration Counseling" will be eliminated as a service title under General Services.
- Starting July 1, 2022, the activities of Job Exploration Counseling will be authorized under Employee Development Services or Job Seeking Skills Training.

Pre-ETS Post-Secondary Education Counseling Services

*Changes to Pre-ETS and General Services Crosswalk

Current Pre-ETS Service	Current General Services (through June 30, 2022)	General Services July 1, 2022
Pre-ETS Post-Secondary Education Counseling Services	Post-Secondary Education Counseling Services (General)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Secondary Supports

- As referenced in the [April 5, 2022 Forum](#):
- Starting July 1, 2022, "Postsecondary Education Counseling Services" will be eliminated as a service title under General Services.
- The activities of Postsecondary Education Counseling services will be authorized under Post-Secondary Supports.

Pre-ETS Instruction in Self-Advocacy Services

*Changes to Pre-ETS and General Services Crosswalk

Current Pre-ETS Service	Current General Services (through June 30, 2022)	General Services July 1, 2022
Pre-ETS Instruction in Self-Advocacy Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction in Self-Advocacy • Independent Living Advocacy Skills, Peer Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Living Services

- Starting July 1, 2022, “Instruction in Self-Advocacy” will be eliminated as a service title under General Services.
- The activities of Instruction in Self-Advocacy services will be authorized under Independent Living Services.

2022 Contracts: Other Service Title Changes

Benefits Services Structure

*Change to Services, Service Titles

- As discussed at the [April 5, 2022 Forum](#), VRS is changing how Benefits Services are structured and how they appear on contracts and in Workforce 1.

Benefits Coaching Services

provide benefits information performed by a certified Benefits Coach who has completed the Disability HUB MN Benefits Coaching Training.

Benefits Coaching Report: VRS authorizes for completion of a Benefits Coaching Report and accompanying activities by a Benefits Coach on a per-report basis.

Hourly Benefits Coaching Services VRS also authorizes for some stand-alone hourly Benefits Coaching Services performed by a Benefits Coach.

Benefits Planning Services

are in-depth services for complex benefit situations performed by a certified Community Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) or Community Partner Work Incentive Coordinator (CPWIC) Work Incentive Practitioner (WIP).

BS&A Report: VRS authorizes for completion of a Benefits Summary and Analysis (BS&A) Report by a CWIC /CPWIC / WIP and accompanying activities on a per-report basis.

Hourly Benefits Planning Services: VRS also authorizes for some stand-alone hourly Benefits Planning Services performed by at CWIC/CPWIC/WIP.

2022 Contracts: Rate Considerations

Community Partner Rate Proposals

- In their RFP Response/Application, Community Partners are welcome to propose rates to reasonably cover the cost for any services.
 - However, Statewide Standardized Rates are set for Job Placement and Retention under a Performance Based Agreement (PBA), Occupational Communication Specialists Services (OCSS) differential for the Job Placement and Retention Performance Based Agreement, and any “Wages” service for an On-the-Job Work and Training Option.

Contracted Services Rate Negotiations

- VRS Leadership is the final decider on negotiated rates for any service.
- The VRS Community Partnerships Team Program Specialists lead negotiations with Community Partners regarding rates.

Contracted Services Rates: Reasonable and Necessary

- Federal Regulations for the Vocational Rehabilitation program requires VR program funds expended to be “reasonable and necessary.”
- For the purposes of rate negotiations, VRS is mandated to consider if rates for contracted services are reasonable and necessary for the provision of a service to an individual.

Contracted Services Rate Considerations

- VRS considers the following factors in rate negotiations:
 - Staff qualifications/resumes
 - Specialization: If a CP has a specialization supported by education and training
 - Cost of Business (increases in Cost of Business, employee compensation increases)
 - Service provider gaps geographically
 - Service need

Contracted Services Rate Changes

- Here are a few things to note regarding rates starting July 1, 2022.
 - **Pre-ETS:** rates were set at statewide standardized rates of \$75/hour in 2019. For Pre-ETS, negotiations included discussion of increase cost of doing business as well as asking CPs to build “prep time” into the cost of the hourly service instead of billing for it separately.
 - **General Services Travel/Transport:** these services will see an increase from \$28/hours to \$50/hours in response to rising cost of travel/transport.

2022 Contracts: Next 3 Weeks

Community Partner Staff

- Community Partners: please stay on top of communication with your Community Partnerships (CP) Team Program Specialist.
- If you haven't had a consult with your Community Partnerships Team Program Specialist contract liaison – please do so asap.
- Watch for draft contracts to review and notes about any issues processing your contract.
- Watch for the contract for final signature and return ASAP. There are still 3 big steps after you sign before the contract is executed.

- For VRS Staff: more information about how to approach your work in the next 3 weeks is in the works and will be coming to you shortly.
- The CP Team will send regular email communication to VRS staff regarding the status of each July 1 contract and new contract number.

Discussion – Questions and Answers

Please submit questions and comments using the Microsoft Form linked in the chat and listed below.

[MS Form for Q&A](#)



Thank You!



We'd love to hear your feedback on our VRS Community Partner + VRS Staff Forums.

Please provide your thoughts in the Microsoft Form below. The forum feedback questions are at the end of the form.

[MS Form for Q&A and Forum Feedback](#)

Funding Notice

The VR program receives 78.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2022, the total amount of grant funds is \$44,081,347. The required state match for these funds is \$11,930,529 (21.3 percent). The state of Minnesota has appropriated \$14.3 million to exceed the matching requirement.