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CALIFORNIA

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DATE: April 27, 2020

TO: LA:RISE Contractors

FROM: Gerardo Ruvalcaba, Director
Workforce Development System 

**SUBJECT: WDS INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 20-32
GUIDANCE ON LOS ANGELES REGIONAL INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE (LA:RISE) OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19**

EFFECTIVE DATE

This bulletin is effective upon issuance.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance to the LA:RISE contractors on operational expectations during the COVID-19 crisis. As new information from the Mayor, City Council, other governmental entities, and funding partners is released, updated guidance may be forthcoming.

BACKGROUND

In order to help stop the spread of the viral outbreak of COVID-19, on March 19, 2020, Gov. Newsom and Mayor Garcetti issued stay at home orders which asked all residents to remain at home, limit outside activities to what is absolutely necessary for essential tasks, forbade community gatherings of 10 or more people, and mandated the shutdown of non-essential businesses. The result has been restrictions on how LA:RISE participants receive services through our LA:RISE partners and the City's workforce system.

The Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) Information Bulletin 20-01: Regarding COVID-19 issued on March 17, 2020 described service delivery plans for key workforce development programs including LA:RISE: *LA:RISE partners, including social enterprises and system partners, will continue to operate. Direct face-to-face contact will be limited and all trainings will be postponed. It is critical that wages paid to clients continue on the same workplan. We understand that there may be modifications of assignments, etc., however it is critical that LA:RISE partners continue to provide supervision and services to all clients, as all are highly at risk of falling back into homelessness.*

The Information Bulletin also advised that all group workshops, orientations, and job fairs are to be postponed and supported the implementation of alternative service delivery strategies applicable to LA:RISE: Provide services remotely through phone calls, video conferencing, e-mail and web content; stream workshops or training; conduct appointment only in-person visits, staying to the recommended six-foot social distancing guideline.

On April 7, 2020, Mayor Garcetti issued his Worker Protection Order. The Order required that effective April 10, 2020, all workers who work at businesses or perform services that are exempt under the City of Los Angeles Safer At Home Emergency Order must wear face coverings such as scarves and bandanas over their noses and mouths while performing their work. All such employers must provide, at their expense, non-medical grade face coverings for their employees. All customers and visitors of essential businesses and organizations must wear face coverings over their noses and mouths to provide additional protection for employees and customers.

PY 2019-20 PERFORMANCE METRICS

At this time, there are no plans to adjust the Program Year (PY) 2019-20 LA:RISE performance metrics, which include:

- 100% of total enrolled participants are placed in subsidized transitional job
- 70% of total enrolled participants are co-enrolled in WIOA
- 50% of total enrolled are referred to competitive employment
- 50% of total enrolled are placed in un-subsidized competitive employment
- 50% of total enrolled participants receive job retention services

EWDD understand the challenges LA:RISE contractors may face meeting the PY 2019 negotiated levels of performance. For program monitoring purposes, the EWDD will take into consideration performance milestones not impacted by COVID-19 such as completing at a minimum seventy percent of LA:RISE transitional employment enrollments by December 31, 2019; overall performance from July 1, 2019 to February 28, 2020, timely data entry into the CalJOBS system, timely fiscal reporting, and overall rate of substantiated expenditures. Contractors should still assume a PY 19/20 contract end date of June 30, 2020. EWDD has not negotiated goals for PY 2020-21. It is assumed COVID-19 impacts will be considered when those negotiations begin.

TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND ALTERNATIVE WORKSITES

The LA:RISE participant's transitional employment duties may be modified to abide the COVID-19 social distancing guidelines or as a result of the mandated shutdown of non-essential businesses/worksites. If the participant's LA:RISE transitional employment worksite has been impacted by COVID-19, please inform EWDD and REDF to collectively strategize how to best modify the participant transitional employment opportunity or secure an alternative worksite. Additionally, contractors are to respond to request for information relating to the impact of COVID-19 on LA:RISE to help weigh mitigation and recovery interventions.

LA:RISE ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES

The following provides guidance on COVID-19 related expenses that may be charged to LA:RISE funding streams.

Health and Safety related allowable expenses

- The cost of purchasing face masks or coverings for essential employees is a reimbursable expense for LA:RISE service providers.
- Items for the cleaning and sanitizing of dedicated and common space that is used to house and serve program staff and participants is an allowable grant function.

Transitional employment and related services

In this time of extreme economic turmoil, EWDD's goal is to ensure that LA:RISE resources continue to be used to directly benefit the enrolled participants. EWDD encourages the implementation of alternative service delivery strategies that safely facilitates services to participants while supporting the LA:RISE program model.

Until such time that the local economy is reopened, EWDD encourages LA:RISE service providers to consider the following program modifications to maximize services to participants:

- Conduct remote or virtual participant orientation sessions;
- Conduct case management via telephone, video conference, e-mail, and text
- Assist participants with COVID-19 related referrals
- Provide support services and barrier removal to COVID-19 impacted participants
- Providing remote or virtual job search and placement support
- Conduct remote or virtual employability skills or job readiness training to prepare participants for employment
- Encourage online vocational training
- Upon EWDD approval, provide education stipend for virtual employability skills, job readiness, or online vocational training. This is applicable to all LA:RISE programs including A Bridge Home participants.
- Identify and develop alternative or modified transitional employment or work experience opportunities for impacted participants. Examples include:
 - Assisting in COVID 19 cleaning and sanitizing of dedicated and common space that is used to house and serve program staff and participants
 - Assisting with administrative functions
 - Conducting Remote Work. For participants working remotely, centers must have the tools in place to track and supervise their reported work time.
 - Staffing Emergency Shelters as coordinated by the City and County
 - Worksite at another partner social enterprise or private employer
 - Upon EWDD approval, up to 150 hours of additional transitional employment (for participants who have completed initial 300 hours; must be completed by June 30, 2020).

Virtual training and other remote skill building:

For transitional employment participants: Virtual or on-line employability skills or job readiness training to prepare participants for employment counts toward the completion of the participant's 300 hours of transitional employment. The participant may be paid the same transitional employment wage, at least the City of Los Angeles minimum hourly wage, for every hour of documented participation in training. For virtual or online training or activities, the centers must have the tools and mechanism in place to supervise and track the time participants spend on such activities.

Education Stipends:

Upon EWDD approval, education stipends may be provided to individuals participating in virtual job readiness and other skill building on-line training. EWDD recommends that the dollar amount not exceed \$400 and funds should be distributed in increments of \$50 per workshop upon completion. This is applicable to all LA:RISE programs including A Bridge Home participants.

Paid Leave for LA:RISE Participants

Paid leave for LA:RISE transitional employment participants affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is allowable if the contractor has an established, written policy that applies equitably and consistently to all staff regardless of employee class, and if it is reasonable. The paid leave hours do not count toward the completion of the participant's 300 hours of transitional employment.

Support services and barrier removal for COVID-19 impacted participants:

COVID 19: The purchase of face masks or coverings for LA:RISE participants is a reimbursable support service expense for LA:RISE service providers.

Needs Related Payments: Upon EWDD approval and on-a-case by case basis, a one-time, emergency needs related supportive service payment can be made to LA:RISE participants who have been impacted by COVID-19, for those who are currently not employed or who have reduced work hours due to the stay at home order. As with all support services, the support must be reasonable, allowable, and necessary to allow participation in the LA:RISE program and activities and to prevent the participant from reverting back into homelessness. EWDD recommends that the dollar amount not exceed \$1,000. The needs related supportive service is for participants who cannot afford to pay for that service on their own and who cannot obtain the supportive service through any other programs including COVID-19 related emergency relief programs. Job retention and personal support funds may also be used for barrier removal support services for all active participants. All services must be substantiated, case noted, and documented as COVID-19.

Approved Program Budgets

All anticipated expenditures should be itemized in the agency's approved LA:RISE budget. Please contact EWDD's LA:RISE Program Administrator should you have questions about your program budget and allowed expenditures.

TEMPORARY WAIVER OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR A WET SIGNATURE

In order to adhere to the stay at home ordinance, contractors are encouraged to capture signatures digitally as opposed to having participants come into the centers. Contractors

may secure digital signature with applications such as DocuSign or with Adobe <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/acrobat/how-to/electronic-signatures-online-e-signatures.html>.

In alignment with the stay at home orders, and only if a wet or electronic signature is not possible, contractors may use self-attestation and temporarily waive the requirement for a wet or electronic signature on the LA:RISE required program documents including participant eligibility form, worksite acknowledgement form, employment retention incentives log, and support services or financial incentives support documents. This temporary allowance will remove barriers and offer individuals easier access to LA:RISE program services. LA:RISE providers are to case note that a wet or electronic signature was waived due to COVID-19 Safer At Home Emergency Order.

In place of a wet signature, contractors may communicate with the participant via e-mail, text, video conferencing, or phone and attest in writing on behalf of the participant that the eligibility information is true, or that the support service or financial incentive was received by mail, and that all required support documentation is on file.

Support Services and Financial Incentives:

For communication via video conferencing or phone: LA:RISE contractor may sign the employment retention incentives log on behalf of the participant attesting that the financial incentive was received by the participant. Staff should specify on the form: COVID-19; received verbal consent from client on (date/time); include staff name and signature.

For communication via e-mail: The correspondence should include the name of the participant, CalJOBS User ID, the supportive service or financial incentive provided and the amount. Contractors should include a copy of the e-mail exchange in the participant's file. Staff should specify on correspondence: COVID-19; received consent from client on (date); include staff name and signature.

A list with the LA:RISE participant e-mail and phone numbers should be made available upon request to support digital signature or digital communications. Contractors should update their supportive service policy and procedures to explain their COVID-19 modified procedures and make it available upon request from EWDD for audit purposes. Contractors must still comply with the Supportive Services/Needs-Related Payments Policy outlined in EWDD's Annual Plan, secure fiscal supports and document accordingly.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND DATA PROTECTION

The security of customer data and its transmission, as well as ease of customer access, must be considered. The transmission of confidential customer data may be done through encrypted email or cloud services, with the appropriate protections to prevent inappropriate disclosure.

WDS CONTACT

If you have any questions or require further information related to this bulletin, please contact LA:RISE Program Administrator, Elizabeth Macias at Elizabeth.Macias@lacity.org or at (213) 744-9017, TTY: 711.

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