

GSETA Operations Notes

Policy Updates and Compliance

The meeting highlighted important regulatory updates impacting workforce training programs, emphasizing compliance and communication. August Minutes was motioned by Paul Grzella and seconded by Howard Weiss

- **New CDL English Proficiency Requirements Introduced** clarified by John Bicica from the U.S. Department of Labor, mandating workforce system grantees to assess English proficiency for commercial driver's license (CDL) training candidates to meet federal language standards (06:48)
 - The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration requires CDL drivers to read and speak English adequately for public interaction, traffic sign comprehension, and official record-keeping.
 - Workforce systems must conduct initial interviews to verify language proficiency and consider co-enrollment or integrated education if candidates fall short.
 - Several New Jersey CDL training providers on the ETPL are under federal investigation and some are temporarily suspended from accepting new students.
 - Christopher Peake will coordinate with Lesley Hirsch to ensure state awareness and alignment with federal actions to update the ETPL promptly and avoid local enrollment confusion.
- **SNAP ABOD Draft Policy Progress and Implementation Challenges** were detailed by Kendra Lee, who shared that feedback from nine local areas and over 40 pages of comments led to significant edits nearing a final draft (15:23)
 - Kendra emphasized the critical need for all local areas to use the IAR (Individualized Assistance Referral) system consistently for accurate reporting, which impacts funding allocations.
 - The DFD portion of the policy is advancing with expected updates this week; the AOSOS system guidance is still under development with plans for targeted local area reviews. Kendra asked Chris through GSETA to gather a list of names of individuals who can assist with this review.
 - Melissa Moody confirmed that the CSSAs have a ready-to-activate One Path system that will automate referral data entry, simplifying the process for welfare agencies (23:57).

- Local areas not currently using IAR should coordinate with state contacts to gain access and begin using the mailbox system to streamline referrals (33:58).
- **State Plan and Funding Timelines** remain tight, with Kendra Lee working to finalize edits and submit updates to DFD promptly to avoid service disruptions and clarify allocation amounts (21:00)
 - The state plan's approval is critical to releasing SNAP E&T allocations and requires reconciling participant data between AOSOS and other reports. The plan acceptance or non-acceptance impacts funding plans, which is why NOAs for the new WFNJ program year starting October 1 have not been released yet.
 - Coordination between DOL and DFD is ongoing to ensure data accuracy and policy alignment.

Technology and System Integration

The meeting underscored the efforts to improve referral and data management systems to increase operational efficiency and data accuracy.

- **IAR System Adoption and Integration with One Path** is imminent, with Melissa Moody reporting that the One Path referral system is built and ready for activation once final feedback from DOL is received (24:00)
 - The system auto-generates referrals based on existing data, requiring minimal user training beyond basic instructions.
 - Integration challenges exist between the new One Path platform and the legacy AOSOS system, but fallback options allow One Path to operate independently if needed.
 - Coordination between technical teams (WISE, DOL, DFD) is active, with Kendra Lee facilitating conversations to finalize timelines and ensure smooth implementation.
 - Local welfare agencies will not need to learn new systems; CSSAs will input data in their existing system, which will communicate automatically with AOSOS.
- **Recommendations for Local Areas to Increase IAR Usage** were made by Christopher Peake, suggesting local areas that do not currently use IAR should obtain a general AOSOS login for a shared mailbox to manage referrals effectively (33:58)

- Meredith Barracato highlighted that sustained effectiveness of the IAR system depends on dedicated staff monitoring the shared mailbox to ensure referrals are processed timely.
- Howard Weiss expressed concerns about delays in approving welfare workers' access to AOSOS, potentially complicating IAR adoption before the One Path system is fully operational.

Engagement with NGOs and Co-enrollment Processes

The discussion revealed ongoing challenges and practices regarding coordination with nonprofits and grant-funded programs serving workforce clients.

- **Comprehensive NGO Listings and Outreach Efforts** were shared by Paul Grzella, who described a centralized resource on the NJDOL website listing all current NGOs and grantees, facilitating local coordination and outreach (38:40)
 - Fernandel Almonor and Essex County partners have actively engaged NGOs through MOUs, monthly partner meetings, and virtual briefings to clarify referral and co-enrollment protocols.
 - Emphasis was placed on ensuring frontline workers and managers are aware of available NGO services and the referral process.
- **Clarity on Eligibility and Enrollment Responsibilities** surfaced as a key issue, with local variation in how NGOs and workforce areas handle client eligibility and enrollment (44:19)
 - Howard Weiss and others confirmed that NGOs typically manage their own eligibility requirements based on their funding and program rules.
 - Workforce areas provide AOSOS registration numbers to NGOs but do not enroll clients into WIOA or Workforce New Jersey programs unless co-enrollment occurs.
 - Some local areas, such as Union County, reported receiving guidance that certain NGOs, like Pathways to Recovery, require clients to meet WIOA Adult eligibility before enrollment, indicating inconsistent interpretations requiring further clarification (56:31).
 - The group agreed that eligibility verification should primarily occur during co-enrollment and that confirming eligibility for NGO-only services is the NGO's duty.

- Christopher Peake noted the need to follow up and clarify statewide policies to reduce local confusion and workload duplication.
- **Monitoring Attendance and Outcome Tracking for Co-enrolled Clients** was highlighted as a challenge, with Howard Weiss pointing out the importance of verifying attendance to meet federal reporting and compliance requirements (42:41)
 - Local areas must document client participation to maintain compliance with welfare agency mandates and program performance metrics.
 - Effective communication with NGOs is critical to tracking client progress and ensuring accurate reporting in WIOA databases.

Operational Successes and Program Highlights

The meeting closed with positive updates on workforce events and innovative youth engagement.

- **Quarterly Job Recruitment Event Achieved 10 Placements in Two Hours** shared by Fernandel Almonor, highlighting strong employer collaboration and quick hiring outcomes at the July 2026 event (01:01:42)
 - The next event will focus on government jobs and take place in October in Hunterdon County in partnership with the local chamber of commerce.
- **Youth Work Experience Program Showcased Innovative App Development** by participants at Sounds of Tomorrow, as described by Paul Grzella (01:02:59)
 - The app, SOT Connect, is a platform that integrates workforce and community resources for creatives, including networking, educational programs, internships, and project management.
 - Participants used the app to report work hours, helping ensure accurate billing and accountability for grant-funded youth programs.
 - He noted that one participant in the Summer Youth Program has secured employment for the fall, demonstrating direct program impact.
- **Recognition of Youth Program Funding Challenges and Rapid Scale-Up** was noted by Howard Weiss, who praised the quick expansion of summer youth services despite late funding allocations (01:05:34)
 - Planning for funding availability by January is critical for smoother program delivery in future years.

- Sharing success stories is seen as a strategic tool to secure funding and support.