

SCSEP All Grantee Call December 3, 2014

Introduction

Jennifer Pirtle: Hi, everybody. Welcome to another exciting SCSEP all grantee call. We're really happy that you're joining us for the call today. I want to tell you who's all here in the National Office: Irene Jefferson, Michi McNeace, Simi Atolagbe. And on the phone we have Ann Maize, Terri Cram, and Bennett Pudlin.

Late Breaking News

Jennifer Pirtle: First I want to thank you all for working on and turning in the state plan modifications. We know that this was not easy this year because of WIOA and some other challenges. We appreciate you taking the time to do it. There are a few states that have not turned those in and did not get an extension so please get those in as soon as possible.

We have updated the aggregate and individual performance results for PY13. There were no substantial changes to the data but four grantees were affected. All of the four grantees that were affected will be getting an email from me later today with a link to the new reports, and if you would like to see the latest report it is available on our Web page at www.doleta.gov/seniors under performance reporting information. The information is also available on the community of practice. We also have a new spreadsheet showing authorized and modified slots which have been updated to reflect increases in state minimum wages, including those made by the state cost of living adjustment laws. Those changes have already been uploaded into SPARQ. I will be sending out an email later today with the updated links to the PY13 performance results and the spreadsheet with the modified slots. You'll be getting that email today from the SCSEP.national mailbox.

WIOA Update

Jennifer Pirtle: As you all know WIOA stands for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. We are going to start putting a WIOA update on all of our calls because we know that you are interested in the impact that WIOA will have on SCSEP, and we want to be able to give you any new information that is relevant during this update.

There is a new WIOA 101 Webcast series that is available on ETA's WIOA page, and that page is www.doleta.gov/wioa. There are several brief narrated presentations that range from one to ten minutes and cover topic areas including state and local governance, robust and effective services to job seekers, workers, and businesses, one-stop center service design, employment service and unemployment insurance, target populations and national programs among others, along with overviews of the law and highlights to key provisions.

All of the relevant information and updates regarding the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will be posted on this page, so if you're ever interested in finding out the latest or any information about WIOA, visit that page, and again that's www.doleta.gov/wioa.

Communications

Jennifer Pirtle: With all of the staffing changes at the national level and the new staff coming onboard locally we've been getting some questions about where to send questions related to SCSEP, so we have streamlined the process for you. In the email that I send out later today it will also have information about this communications structure for your reference. So for SPARQ technical questions, you will email help@SCSEP-help.com with a copy to SCSEP.national@dol.gov. Currently you have been sending things to the help mailbox at help@SCSEP-help.com, but now you'll copy the national mailbox.

For all other questions related to SCSEP, any policy or program or any other questions related, you should email your FPO with a copy to the national mailbox which is SCSEP.national@dol.gov. From there your FPO, the national office, and all of our subject matter experts will work together to get you answers that you need and in a timely manner. I'll be sending out that information again about this streamlined communication in an email today to all of the grantees and I'll copy your FPOs and your FPOs know about this as well.

Equitable Distribution Report

Irene Jefferson: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you all for your cooperation with your submissions. It is very helpful for us to gather this information. We're currently reviewing those reports looking at the tendencies in the numbers and looking at your summaries and with your FPOs identifying challenges and identifying technical assistance needs.

State Plan Modifications

Irene Jefferson: We have received state plan modifications for most of you except those with extensions. Those with extensions, you will be held to the date that you were given to turn in your final modification submissions. If you have not turned in your state plan modification submission, I urge you to do so as soon as possible and with a copy to your FPO. Please submit your copy to grants.SCSEPDOCS@dol.gov with a copy to your FPO of course. The national office and the FPO staff will be reviewing your plans for the next month or so. You will be contacted by your FPO if there are any issues that need to be addressed and corrected. Our initial plan was to have the approval letters out by the year's end. However, the holiday schedule will more than likely make the process a little longer, so we're extending our time for approval letters to be sent out by the end of January. Again, thank you all for your cooperation and your submissions. We appreciate you.

Federal Register Notice

Michi McNeace: Hi, everyone. This is just a friendly reminder that currently ETA is soliciting comments regarding the SCSEP collection of data for the program support, and the report will also include the customer satisfaction surveys. The federal register is accessible on the SCSEP Community of Practice (CoP), along with the federal register you'll see the documents that we would like for you guys to access and comment on. When you redo the federal register, it will give you guidance on how to comment and where to send your comments to. **Please do not post your comments on the CoP.** I'm sure this has been up for probably about a couple weeks now, and we've been receiving comments. The comments go to Jennifer, so hopefully we'll get this done. I believe OMB has a deadline of March 31st, 2015.

SPARQ Update

Terri Cram: Hi, I have a very short list this month. First of all the next scheduled maintenance by DOL's IT department will be Friday, December 5th. The schedule for the rest of the calendar year is posted on the SPARQ home page and the SCSEP Web site. The PY 14 quarter two close is tentatively scheduled for January 28th, 2015. The exact schedule will be provided soon

Ann Maize: I get to remind you that the sample for the validation for the PY13 data is now available. The data validation handbook will be available by mid-December. It's currently being updated with information needed for next year. In the meantime, data validators can use last year's handbooks for this year's validation because there have not been major changes. The deadline for this year's validation will be June 1, 2015.

Now next item, the new rural urban community area or thus known as RUCA codes based on the data from the 2010 census are now available. The updated codes are available in SPARQ and on the SCSEP Web site. Grantees and subgrantees should use these codes for all enrollments starting on or after November 26th. The old codes will still be needed for data validation and have been sent to all grantees, administrators, and validators. The old codes are also available on the data validation page.

Now, as always, let me remind you to check the user accounts for locked and expired accounts. Check the accounts on a routine basis and address any accounts that are locked or expired. If you've not already done so, let your subs and local projects know that users can now reset their own passwords when their accounts are locked. If you need another copy of the email, you should contact BCT Partners.

I'm going to be retiring next week. It's been a pleasure working with all of you, but I've decided it's time to have a bit more time with my grandchildren. I have five, so let me make sure you know I applaud you for the good work you do helping older workers get training and get jobs and I want to say thanks so much for giving me the privilege of working with you. Have a good day.

Jennifer Pirtle: Thanks, Ann. We're really going to miss you and but we wish you the best luck in retirement and have the most fun.

Now we're going to switch a little bit. We're going to get a kind of a little bit of a training and a little bit of a reorientation with an overview to data validation, so I'm going to turn it over to Bennett Pudlin our subject matter expert.

Data Validation Overview

Bennett Pudlin: Thank you, Jennifer, and good afternoon, everyone. This may sound a little bit like national data validation week, but I've been asked to do a brief overview of the data validation process. Ann just reminded you that the samples were made available last week when the new release of SPARQ went out, and this is for many of you a refresher I'm sure, but there are some of you who will be new to the mysteries and joys of data validation this year.

History and purpose of data validation: ETA has required all of its programs to go through data validation. SCSEP has been required to participate beginning with program year 2007. It has special significance for SCSEP beyond the general ETA requirement because there was a general government accountability office report in the early 2000s that criticized SCSEP for the unreliability of its data. Those were in the pre-SPARQ days, and SPARQ was designed in part to respond to that GAO report and data validation was the additional component to satisfy the government's desire to have more reliable data. We also, as you may recall, had an office of the inspector general report in 2013 of our ARRA program, and that report found other weaknesses in SCSEP data and again data validation has been modified partly to respond to those concerns of the OIG.

Data validation can identify individual errors in specific cases, but it also can be used to identify systemic errors that could lead to significant improvements in the overall validity and integrity of our nationwide data, and that's what we hope to achieve. The design of the data validation has two components. There's a documentation requirement that caseworkers must follow for specific data elements and then there's a process for validating the data from the prior year to assess the degree of compliance with those documentation requirements.

The data elements that are subjected to data validation are those that are related either to eligibility, performance, or key program requirements. We only validate positive values in SPARQ. When a SPARQ user claims that something was done or seeks credit for something, data validation does not attempt to check for values that have not been claimed or things that have not been done.

The samples are designed to use the smallest number of cases required to be statistically valid at the grantee level. The larger the grantee, the smaller the percentage of cases that need to be sampled, but the sample does not attempt to yield valid results at the subgrantee level. Each program year we produce two samples based on data from the prior program year.

For this program year, 2014, the eligibility sample is based on all new enrollments during PY2013. The eligibility sample primarily focuses on program eligibility but includes information on community service and training hours, approved breaks, and priority of service. The performance sample contains participants who achieved their final performance during program year 2013.

The performance sample is stratified so that records with more quarters of wages have a greater chance of being included in the sample. This sample also includes data elements for IEPs and recertification. The method of administration of DV has been essentially unchanged since the beginning in PY2007. Validation is required to be completed within six months of the drawing of the sample.

In this case for PY2014, DOL expects all validation to be complete by June 1st, 2015. Validation must be conducted by grantee staff or contractors who have no involvement with data collection or the entry of data into SPARQ. And only individuals with validator status can access the

materials in SPARQ related to data validation. Validation may be done either onsite at the subgrantee or remotely at the grantee's office with the subgrantee sending the case files to the validator. However, subgrantees should not be informed of the sample cases until just before the validation occurs.

Let me briefly just walk you through the highlights of the steps in the validation process and remind you that the entire process is spelled out in detail with screenshots in chapter three of the data validation handbook Ann referred to a minute ago. So, the process starts with the grantee assigning validator status to the appropriate staff and validators reviewing the DV handbook, especially for any revisions from prior years.

Validators can then access the DV function from the SPARQ home page under system tools. Once you're into the DV page, you select either the eligibility or performance sample that you want to start with and the program year for the data since we're doing the data validation in program year '14, you would select the data from program year PY13, and you have the option of selecting all of the subgrantees that have records to be validated in one list.

Or you can select each subgrantee separately, and if you do the latter, of course you want to be certain that you are capturing every subgrantee so you don't miss any records. Once you make your selections, SPARQ will then display the summary worksheet for the selected subgrantees with three tabs: worksheets, reports, and comments. The summary worksheet lists each participant record in the sample and its validation status.

You can export the sample to Excel, you can print all the worksheets, or you can do your work directly in SPARQ. Any of these methods will give you all of the fields to be validated for each record. Some elements in some records will not be validatable and those will be marked as N/A. All other elements that should be validated will give you a pass fail option. Equipped with the list either in hard copy or online, you can then validate each required element for each record.

When you enter the results of the validation into SPARQ, just click on the name of the individual record in the summary worksheet. That'll open the page that lists each element. It allows you to enter the pass or fail score. Be sure to click the save button before you leave a record or all of your work will be lost. The scoring of the items as pass or fail must be based on a comparison of the source documentation in the case file with the reported value in SPARQ as being validated.

Chapter four of the handbook presents the instructions and the rules for the actual validation and the table at the end of chapter four lists the acceptable documentation for each element. When marking an element as failed or if you're not sure how to score it, make a copy of the relevant source documentation. This will be useful for later discussion with the subgrantee or with other grantee validators.

You can also enter comments for individual record or for a sample as a whole. The report tab will bring you to the summary and analytic report which lists three kinds of error rates for each element in the sample, the running error rate, the overall rate, and the reported error rate. The

running error rate starts at 0% and goes up every time you fail another element. The other two reports start at 100% and go down every time you pass an element.

The overall error rate compares the error rate for the element to the entire sample and the reported error rate takes into account that the element may not have been validatable in each record sample. In terms of resources to support you in doing this work the bible is the data validation handbook which contains both the documentation requirements and the instructions for conducting the validation.

As Ann said it's being updated currently and we expect it available later this month. The DV handbook explicitly incorporates the requirements contained in the SCSEP regulations, the relevant information in the data collection handbook which provides definitions and procedures for collecting the data. Both validators and subgrantee staff must consult all of these sources to do their jobs properly.

Each data element has specific requirements for the type of documentation permitted. Official documents or business records, confirmation of signature and dates, detailed case notes, and participant or third party signed attestation – the handbook sets out the minimum standards for each element. Grantees have always been free to set higher standards for their own staff if they choose to do so. That's something validators would need to confirm with their grantees.

And in the appendix to the handbook are sample attestations forms that grantees can choose to adopt for specified fields in the handbook. Finally, just a word about the DV results, grantees are expected to use the reports in SPARQ to identify the need for additional training and oversight of subgrantees and local projects. Results should not be shared with any subgrantees, however, until DV is final.

Grantees are not evaluated or ranked on their DV scores. However grantees are required to complete DV and DOL tracks the completion status of each grantee during the six month DV period. In addition DOL will use the DV results to drive targeted technical assistance nationwide.

Q&A

Rocco Claroni: This one's for Bennett on the data validation. Related to new data element dated last EP update, and I guess a couple questions on that. I'm – I guess the source, acceptable sources to validate that will be coming out in the new validation handbook, but I noticed that some of the dates that we'll validate in the sample go back to 2008, 2009 even. Now I'm assuming that's because they didn't update their data last IEP. In the event that documentation's not available it could be in storage, because we're going back more than five years, I know – do we fail it then?

Woman: Bennett, I have the handbook open if you'd like me to answer.

Bennett Pudlin: Please.

Woman: Okay so first of all the rules for IEP were included in last year's handbook prospectively so that you would know what the rules were going to be, so the handbook's that currently on the SCSEP Web site has all the information I'm about to say.

Rocco Claroni: **Oh, okay, then that's all I need to know. I just saw it was new.**

Woman: Okay, and just to clarify, for the PY14 validation of the PY13 data if this information has not been recorded in SPARQ it should not be constituted as a fail as long as the information is in the case file since we've never actually specified that it had to be entered into SPARQ. So this year you don't have to have it in SPARQ. Next year the rule was made known last year, so next year it will have to be in SPARQ, but this year you just have to have the documentation.

Bennett Pudlin: Just to reiterate, the requirements on the IEP and the termination letter were added to data validation last year although they weren't yet available in SPARQ and the rationale for that was that these items have been programmatic and statutory requirements from the beginning of time, and grantees were not being asked to do anything different just because they were added to DV for purposes of compliance with the OIG report.

Conclusion

Jennifer Pirtle: Okay, well if there are no other questions, we'll just remind you that our next meeting is on Wednesday, January 7th at 3pm eastern. I want to thank you for joining us today. I know many of you are going to be on vacation in the next few weeks, and we want you to have safe travels and happy holidays.