



Establishing Policies for Participant Employee Success

Economic Mobility – Optimizing Program Design



Do you have an online or hard copy place in which your organization's policies relating to participant employees are documented and readily available to staff ?

Yes

No

Sort of: (please explain briefly)

Program Announcement: Optional Technical Assistance

As a reminder, you can continue to access Technical Assistance through CA RISE. Below are opportunities for additional support beyond the 1:1 project you can access through your RM.

Listen4Good

We are offering Listen4Good's Premium Program in Jul 2025 which includes:

- Survey templates for surveying community members, clients, volunteers, staff, and partners
- 1:1 coaching from experts in survey design, increasing response rates, and data analysis
- SurveyMonkey Premier account
- Client survey benchmarks—comparing your survey results to similar organizations
- Step-by-step webinars and a core web app with templates, resources, and FAQs

If interested, please email Galiana at galiana@redf.org

NorthStar Digital Literacy

We are offering a one-year subscription to NorthStar's Digital Literacy Curriculum, which will enable your participant employees to access tools that support:

- Mastering the basic skills needed to use a computer
- The internet in daily life, employment, and education.

This opportunity also includes three 90-minute training flights designed for someone on your staff who is/will be responsible for digital literacy education.

If interested, please email Galiana at galiana@redf.org

CFR Direct Deposit

We are offering support with direct deposit to your participant employees through CFR focus cards.

Direct deposit is the fastest, safest, and most reliable way to pay employees—and a powerful step toward financial security.

If interested, please email Galiana at galiana@redf.org



Program Announcement: Upcoming Optional Workshops

We will continue to release optional content including workshops that you can attend! We want to gauge interest in the August Sessions as they require a significant time commitment

May 2025

May 6 – 8: Advancing Financials Series

- **May 6:** Double Bottom Line Analysis
- **May 7:** Raising Impact Capital Strategy
- **May 8:** Embedding Data & Finance in your Decision-Making – TBD

June & July 2025

June 3- 17: Executive Skills and Career Readiness Series

- **June 3:** Executive Skills
- **June 4:** Lived Experience and Career Readiness
- **June 5:** Career Readiness Curriculum Deep Dive
- **June 17:** The Case for Embedding Executive Skills into your Organization
- **July 1:** Leveraging Implementation Science to become an Executive Skills Focused Organization

July 10: Addressing Burnout – The Science of Optimizing Productivity & Performance

August 2025

Gauging Interest - We can offer the Management Center's Training on Effective Management, which provides tools and resources on how to drive impact, strengthen culture, delegate projects and responsibilities effectively (without micromanaging), address unconscious bias, build strong manager-staff relationships, and use feedback to manage performance and improve results. Minimum time commitment 6 hours.

If interested, please email Katie at korovecz@redf.org



Economic Mobility Optimize Program Design



◆ **Optional Coaching Sessions**

Our goals for today and plan to achieve them

OBJECTIVES

- Build peer connections
- Gain awareness of topics that ESEs have found it helpful to have policies addressing, relevant considerations, and recommendations
- Prioritize policies that your ESE should adopt or change in the near term and begin thinking about factors specific to your context
- Identify opportunities for consistently communicating your ESE's policies
- Create space for raising questions, but be comfortable with not being able to resolve all questions today

AGENDA

- Context and rationale for establishing policies
- Key policies for participant employee success
 - Personal reflection
 - Small group discussions
- Key practices for participant employee success
 - Small group discussions
- Communicating policies and practices to staff and participant employees
- Wrap Up
 - Individual commitments



Today's punchline

Clear, documented policies empower ESE staff to act quickly, strategically, and with consistency when issues arise, fostering fair and equitable responses.

Policies in context

Balancing ESE's mission
with risk mitigation

Commitment to supporting individual employees

- Distinguishes ESEs from other employers
- Takes into consideration circumstances of employee
- **Developmental approach:** Not expecting performance to be at 100% on day 1...but expecting to see improvement over time
 - Consequences (discipline and punishment) vary at different stages

Risk mitigation / compliance with employment laws

- Nonprofits can potentially be sued for discrimination
 - E.g., perception can be enough to spark such charges, so need to be wary of treating your employees differently from one another
 - Equity is a key value of many ESEs – but employment law still tends to prioritize equality
- Nonprofits are regularly sued for violation of wage and labor laws
 - Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA)
 - <https://redfworkshop.org/resource/paga-private-attorneys-general-act-compliance-webinar/>

Put in writing the scenarios that may result in different treatment

Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA): Recent Reforms

- Recent reforms

- Requires a PAGA plaintiff to have **personally suffered** each of the Labor Code violations
- Expands “cure provisions”
- Reduces penalties for employers who proactively take “all reasonable steps” to comply with the Labor Code

- High risk labor code violations

- Failure to provide meal and rest periods as required
- Failure to provide complete and accurate wages statements to employees
- Failure to keep accurate time records (need to ensure employees are not working off the clock)
- Failure to reimburse business-related expenses and costs
- Failure to pay employees in timely manner
- Unlawful wage deductions

Use of personal cell phones; uniform purchase or maintenance



Key policies for participant employee success

- 1) Duration of employment**
- 2) Eligibility for:**
 - **Employee benefits**
 - **Program benefits**
- 3) Compensation**
- 4) Re-hiring**
- 5) Substance use**

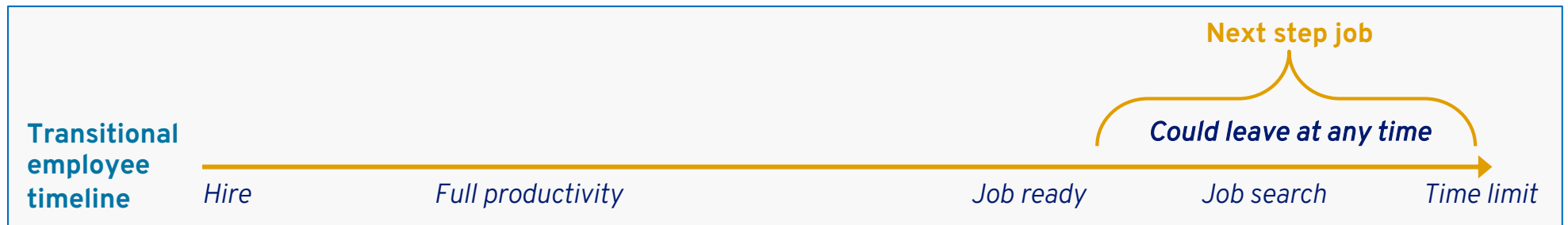
Duration of employment

Definition:

Policy setting a time limit capping the length of a transitional job

Duration of employment (continued)

Not just a time limit: ESEs should really be identifying a several weeks- or month-long range when supportive of transition



Duration of employment (continued)

Permanent employers also have decisions to make

- Is your culture going to be one where:
 - Your aim is to retain your participant employees, and you invest in them accordingly
 - You are only “technically” a permanent employer, but still encourage transition
 - Do you proactively support employees in securing next step jobs
- Hybrid option:
 - Can set and consistently communicate a time limit, but then have a policy of extending for specified reasons

Employee benefits: Differences need to be based on employment-based classifications

Definition:

Policy outlining benefits for participant employees.

Employers can treat employees differently from one another (e.g., offer different benefit packages) only if the employer can demonstrate that the individuals fall into different bona fide employment-based classifications.

“Similarly situated individuals” must be treated equally.

Eligibility for program benefits

Definition:

Policy outlining consistent eligibility standards for the supports and resources designed to stabilize your participant employees and support their professional development

Examples:

Emergency payments / advances / loans, private sessions with external professional (e.g., driving instructor, therapist), savings match

Reflection

Consider the policies that we've discussed so far:

- 1) Duration of employment
- 2) Eligibility for:
 - Employee benefits
 - Program benefits

Open your [reflection sheet](#) and evaluate where your ESE is today with regard to each policy:

- 1) Got a policy we really like
- 2) Have something, but would be good to update / refine
- 3) Don't have much of a policy, or it's not working

Compensation

Definition:

Policy clarifying whether participant employees are “on-the-clock” earning wages for any portion of programming time (i.e., is programming part of their job)

Mistakes to avoid:

- Cannot discipline someone at work for not doing something that they were not paid to do
- When programming is part of “work” or participants are “producing” product or service to be sold, then wage and hours laws need to be followed

Re-hiring

Definition:

Policy specifying whether or not the ESE will re-hire a former participant employee. Can refer to any of the following:

- Transitional employer hiring graduates as permanent staff
- When short-handed, temporarily bringing back graduates who have not secured external employment or who have lost a job
- Re-hiring as a participant employee somebody who did not previously graduate

Substance use

Definition:

Policy specifying how the Enterprise handles substance use, including testing, treatment, and discipline

Mistakes to avoid:

- Not keeping up with rapidly changing laws
- Disciplining employees for communicating about drug use versus impairment on the job
- Treating different employees differently

Reflection

Consider the policies that we've just discussed :

- 3) Compensation
- 4) Re-hiring
- 5) Substance use

Return to your [reflection sheet](#) and evaluate where your ESE is today with regard to each policy:

- 1) Got a policy we really like
- 2) Have something that's ok but could be updated / refined
- 3) Don't have much of a policy, or it's not working

Breakout #1

Break into small groups and discuss some of the policies that you reflected upon:

- Share an example of a related policy or practice that's working well for your ESE?
- What is a policy that you think you should add, refine or change based on something said today?

Key practices for participant employee success

- 1) Attendance**
- 2) Discipline**
- 3) Employee input / voice /
feedback**

Attendance

Definition:

Outlining your ESE's expectations pertaining to employee attendance, timeliness, absences, and other related matters and the ways you hold employees accountable to these standards

Mistakes to avoid:

- Treating all absences the same, regardless of reason
- Failure to communicate employees' rights relative to time off (e.g., mandated paid leave, FMLA, California Family Rights Act, ADA, jury duty)
- Penalizing employees for absences protected by law

Discipline

Definition:

An ESE's process for enforcing its rules and standards of behavior.

The goal is to correct behavior, prevent future violations, maintain a productive workplace, and support employees' progress toward readiness for mainstream employment.

Discipline (continued)

Example: Plan for addressing performance issues as they occur

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT				
Incident	Incident Description	Required Action	Responsible	Involved
Not meeting production goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant is not meeting production goals Address issue after 3 weeks of poor or decreased performance 	1. Observe the work to identify room for improvement	Supervisor Trainer or Job Coach	
		2. If "quick-fix" or skill issue - conduct a check-in to address issue/provide support	Supervisor Trainer or Job Coach	
		3. If recurring/related to violation of another policy – hold program team meeting	Supervisor Trainer or Job Coach	Program Director & remainder of program team
		4. Document instance in participant's Slack	Supervisor Trainer or Job Coach	
Underperformance in soft / hard skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant is not demonstrating necessary growth in soft / hard skills areas 	1. Observe / document issues	Supervisor Trainer or Job Coach	
		2. Discuss room for growth in performance review	Supervisor Trainer or Job Coach	
		3. Provide / additional training and support, as needed	Supervisor Trainer or Job Coach	
		4. If no improvement, set meeting with Program Director & Supervisor Trainer or Production Manager	Job Coach	Program Director & Supervisor Trainer or Production Manager, where applicable



Employee input / voice / feedback

Definition:

Refers to the formal process of gathering and responding to feedback from participant employees, with an emphasis on equity, ease of use for decision-making, review by leadership, and continuous improvement

Mistakes to avoid:

- Failing to gather feedback / input; assuming you already know what participant employees think / experience
- Failure to assure anonymity
- Gathering feedback but not sharing results with the employees who provided it
- Failing to close the loop and share results and use of feedback



Breakout #2

Choose which breakout group you would like to join:

- 1) Attendance
- 2) Discipline
- 3) Employee input/voice/feedback

In your breakout group, discuss:

- 1) What practices and/or tools are you using? What is working well?
- 2) What is an ongoing challenge for you?

Documenting and communicating policies

- 1) Staff
- 2) Participant employees

Communicating policies and practices to professional staff

- Staff-facing policy and procedure manual
- Discuss case studies during onboarding and team meetings to ensure consistent interpretation and application
 - Capture examples for subsequent use
- Review and update
 - As realize additional detail or new policies needed
 - Updates / changes
 - Do continuously but also set cadence for review in entirety

Communicating policies and practices to participant employees

- Frequent and multiple forms of communication
 - Recruitment materials / info sessions
 - Orientation / onboarding
- Tailoring handbook(s) to participant employees
 - Consider coupling employee handbook with a program handbook
 - Employee-friendly cover sheets and one-pager supplements to formal handbook
 - Voiceover handbook contents as few participant employees will read
 - Be creative: role play, videos, etc.
 - Clarify importance to employee and ESE of compliance around lunch / breaks / clocking in and out, etc.
- Check-ins and reviews

Reflection

Share in the chat policies or practices that you are intrigued by or that you would like to discuss further during next month's coaching session

Key resources to be posted

- [Participant Employee Compensation Best Practices](#)
- The Mile High Way: Performance Management and Discipline
- PAGA compliance [webinar](#)
- Participant Employee Voice [article](#)
- [Customizable template](#) for a participant employee survey and a sample survey
- REDF Workshop article: [Participant Employee Handbook](#)

Commitments



Based on everything you learned today, what are one or two commitments you can make? For example:

- Review your ESE's existing handbooks or other policy documentation
- Convene colleagues to discuss which policies / practices to revisit or add
- Assign team member to watch PAGA webinar to learn more about CA labor law

What's next?

- **Additional resources** will be posted on REDFWorkshop
- **Coaching hours** will be hosted on Wednesday, May 14th from 11am-12:30pm PST
- **Make progress on commitments** from last slide!
- **Next cohort session** is Wednesday, June 11 from 11am-12:30pm PST
- **Upcoming optional workshops:**
 - May 6 - [Double Bottom Line Analysis](#)
 - May 7 - [Rising Impact Capital Strategy](#)



Feedback survey

Please take a few minutes to fill out our Survey on this session.

<https://bit.ly/EMTOptimizeAll>

This feedback helps us improve your experience and plan adjustments to make moving forward.





Thank you!