

**STATEWIDE PEF – DOL LM**  
**Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 1PM-3PM**

<b>PEF -planned attendees</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT – planned attendees</b>
Scarlett Ahmed, Co-chair	Suzanne Piccirillo, Co-chair
Bill Clingersmith	Jane Thompson
Kevin Jones	Sean Hennessy
Scott Hektor	Justin Smi
Robert Wright – PEF Field Rep	Christopher White
	Leighann Brown
	Tracie Covey
	Karen Ronca
	Paul Milanovich
	Jennifer Williamson
	Allison Konderwich
	Gregory Felter

**I. Welcome/Introductions (Roll Call)**

**II. Approve prior minutes-** from August 7, 2024  
Approved.

PEF requests receipt of minutes within two weeks after LM meetings, with both PEF and DOL notations.

Management advised they've been working on a better system to review minutes. Will get minutes out timely for pre-meetings.

**III. Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions (DEWS)**

**A. General Division Update**

**1) PEF requests discussion of Working Group relating UI and Career Centers**

Management reiterated that this effects more than one area, they are collecting information and exploring creative solutions to this issue. They are looking for people to participate in the work group and want to schedule before the end of the year.

PEF advised they would like Scarlett Ahmed, Asha Archie, Scott Hektor, and Robert Wright to attend.

Management scheduled meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup> at 1PM.

**2) PEF requests discussion of Apprenticeship Navigator positions**

Management advised there are 4, grade 23 Associate Employment Services Representatives. Some areas have more opportunity for growth than others. Plattsburgh, White Plains, Syracuse, and Elmira will be getting these positions. Navigators will be digging into the labor market, researching potential business contacts and targets, going to hiring events, making lots of outreach calls, meeting and forming relationships with businesses, Case

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managing, and working with businesses and other organizations to grow, scale, and create registered apprenticeship programs. In 6 months to a year, they will see where the program is at and adjust if necessary.

PEF advised that employees are not happy about this because staff are already doing great work but at grade 18, not grade 23. PEF requested clarification on differences between grade 18 and 23.

Management noted what the differences are. Management indicated there is opportunity for next level work in these roles.

PEF asked if they would be supervising.

Management advised not right now but will be evaluating in the future.

PEF asked if there will be a reallocation of grade 23s.

Management advised that is something we will have to evaluate.

PEF asked if there was a time frame of evaluating.

Management stated that after the 4 positions are filled and they have some time in the role.

PEF asked if positions will report to Chris Pinheiro.

Management advised no, this team reports directly to Melissa Johnston but Chris and Melissa work closely together as well as Adele and Leif, they have constant communication.

Management advised they have gone into this eyes wide open, realizing there is a lot of great things happening. We want to do things in ways that we aren't already doing. Navigators will be leveraging relationships that may not exist right now and we will work together to ensure that the best practices are elevated.

Management noted PEFs concerns about employees doing similar duties as the Navigators.

**3) Update on the Asylum Seeker project.**

Management advised the project is continuing strong. Still having weekly recruitment events. Over 11,000 individuals served. Can't predict what will happen at the federal level but are prepared for potential scenarios. At a recent meeting, Federal DOL reassured that everything is continuing as usual.

**4) Update on Jails to Jobs program**

Management advised PEF and GOER met in July. MOU is outstanding, no additional updates.

**B. Staffing update.**

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Management informed since January, we've hired around 400 people across the state in this division. A lot of promotion opportunities have opened. Joanna Palladino is now Peer Manager of Quality Assurance. Julia Murphy is now the Customer Engagement Manager. Melissa Johnston moved up to manage the Office of Special Initiatives. Simon Yip is now Quality Assurance Manager and Natasha Macklin is our Contracts Unit Manager. There are a lot of opportunities and upward mobility in this division.

Christopher White leaving DOL, accepted a position with SUNY doing workforce development! Congratulations!

**IV. Unemployment Insurance**

**A. General Division Update**

Continuing to address workload; continuing to move in the right direction. Modernization is still on track for fall 2025. Kicked off the next phase of User Acceptance Training, UAT 3. Working on creation of training materials, user guides, and manuals. Continuing to work on data integration and data restructuring. Doing the necessary work needed to leverage the rest of the program changes, to change the ways customers and staff interact with our program. Using that data to deliver the best and most effective service possible.

**B. Staffing update**

Management will follow up after meeting with this information.

**C. Update on UI modernization**

**a) PEF requests consideration of removal of adjudicator names from determinations.**

Management advised they switched to the RACF model, full names are not on adjudications going out.

PEF advised that as of right now determinations still have full names on them. Questionnaires go out with RACF but determinations go out with full names.

Management requested PEF share any documents demonstrating this.

PEF asked what is being done to reduce customer wait times.

Management advised that this will be part of the discussion for the work group.

PEF inquiring what is being done today.

Management advised that there is technology that they are looking to utilize to fast-track initial contacts with customers. Will also provide information and answer customer questions. This will open up some doors to self-service. Will more easily see if a customer has exhausted their benefits and will be able to walk them through that and guide them in filing a new claim. Will help with adjudication and mitigate the issue. Working on some different ways to integrate this on the hotline as well. These enhancements have been made available.

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**b) PEF requests discussion on impact to PEF members following presumed CSEA UI staff resignation(s).**

Management advised employees have been directed to be in line with the telecommuting guidance. Not aware and not anticipating any impacts on operations. If any issues are raised, please let management know.

PEF advised various resignations; given the backlog, what is being done to address those.

Management advised they are continuously recruiting. Vast majority of telecommuters did return to the office as well.

PEF asked if offering additional telecommuting days would help with recruitment and retention.

Management advised that there are pros and cons. It takes some time for new people to understand and learn how it all works, being in person leads to higher success rates. Management noted they see PEFs position.

**V. Research and Statistics**

**A. Division Update**

No major updates, moving along well.

**B. Staffing update**

There was one internal promotion into a PEF position.

**VI. UI Appeal Board**

**A. General Division Update**

Management is excited to share that DOL reached out to us and asked our training team to create a library for continuing education and have it on demand for CLE training for attorneys, UIAB and DOL. Hope to have live by the beginning of 2025. New hire ALJs will continue with live trainings with a facilitator. Judges have adjusted really well to electronic case transfer and will be moving to paperless files, live in January 2025. Some additional work was done to eliminate duplicated documents in files to make it easier for judges to sort through. Appeals judges already received training on the ECF and virtual hearings, practicing this week using the electric files while in their hearings. Excited to modernize work to offer more remote opportunities, especially for emergency scenarios.

PEF asked if judges still have a writing day.

Management advised they do on Friday but have other time to do so as well.

**B. Update on staffing.**

109 employees excluding board members.

88 of those are PEF. Due to shifting some hourlies into PEF positions with NYHELPS and new hires.

6 newly hired ALJs are going to be on full calendar as of December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Worked on DOL with a recruitment plan moving forward. Twice a year 15 item UI referee recruitments will be done. There is one happening right now, recruiting 15

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employees across the state, limit of one per office. Some offices have more. This will ensure no qualified candidates across the state will be missed. Will start March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Turnover has slowed, continue to see judges and admins retire. These 15 hires will be very critical as employees continue to retire. Postings that went up on the 7<sup>th</sup>, will close on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

PEF requested the title names of those 15 openings.

Management advised they are UI Referees, grade 25.

**C. Update on the UI hearing platform.**

Virtual hearings continue to go well. Appeals judges have adjusted very quickly to the paperless switch, success this week and last week. Have a 3-question survey for claimants once hearing is complete. Not getting much response which tells us people are satisfied.

**VII. Worker Protection**

**A. General Division Update**

Not Discussed

**B. Update on Staffing**

523 staff, increase from last year – 513. Have a lot of items in active recruitment across all units and several internal promotions.

**1) PESH**

**PEF requests discussion on Industrial Hygienists.**

Management advised that PESH is a federally funded program, NYS DOL matches the federal contribution by over 50%. Staffing is currently over fill right now. Not looking to hire as of right now.

**2) Public Work**

**3) Labor Standards**

PEF requests clarification regarding Labor Standards staff and relocation.

Management advised that staff are not being forced to move to Albany. Work is only stemming from Albany.

PEF inquired about employees from Labor Standards and business services from DEWS, moving to Washington Ave from Building 12 and not receiving notification from management. They asked if the move was across counties and expressed concern about the changes.

Management responded that they make every effort to make PEF aware of changes. Management advised that the move was within the same county, just up the street from the previous location – 175 Central Ave to 155 Washington Ave. This was a better/safer location. Previous location was next to a methadone clinic. Labor Standards were moved from Building 12 to 155 Washington Ave. Management indicated that the information about Business Services may not have been accurate.

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- 4) Special Investigations  
PEF requests discussion of M/C Project Coordinator/Internal Endorsement Officer (Worker Protection)

Management advised they will provide division wide support to field investigators and inspectors. The goal of the position is to ensure consistency in field investigations and inspections statewide. Looking to fill 1 position and are canvassing all major cities where there is worker protection staff. Position would not supervise staff but would report to the deputy and associate commissioner for WP. This is a new position, they are starting as an hourly M/C. If it is successful, will revisit with Personnel to see if it can be a permanent item.

PEF inquired about why it is a M/C position, what the pay grade is, and how these individuals would learn the job with so many different job duties among WP staff.

- 5) Division of Compliance and Education (DOCE, formerly “DIPA”)

**VIII. Division of Administration and Finance –**

**A. Division Update**

- 1) List of lease expiration dates

PEF requests an update on Elmira Career Center

Management received formal request from OGS for financial documents to be reviewed, approved, and signed off. Was escalated to executives for review and approval, can take 2-3 weeks. After that, sending back to OGS to continue the lease process. Program has reviewed and approved new furniture for location. Once agreement is executed, will order furniture. Part of the new agreement is new carpet and paint for DOL section of area. Landlord will initiate this process once agreement is executed, and furniture will come after that.

PEF asked if a dehumidifier could be included on stand-by due to humidity issues in the basement.

Management advised we haven’t seen any concerns come across but will certainly look into it. If those employees are experiencing that issue please have them reach out to property so we can have justification for it.

- 2) Federal update

In continued resolution until Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>. Confident it will be extended.

Increase in UI grants of 10 million dollars (new fiscal year as of 10/1, may help with hiring. Some grants did see slight decreases (Jobs for Veterans state grant, WIOLA) but retaining same number of staff with same level of service. Have a slight increase of BLS grant for Research and Statistics.

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With increasing fringe benefit costs and salary increases, it won't amount to much in hiring.

**3) State update**

DOL submitted state budget request for next fiscal year that starts April 1<sup>st</sup> to DOB. The governor's call letter asked for flat funding so there are no increases in requests to funding for any of our programs there.

PEF requested update on various DOL funds, specifically the Child Performant Protection fund and the DOL Elevator Safety Program Fund. PEF is working with Senator Ramos regarding DOL funds and wants to do more to protect workers.

Management advised DOL doesn't take positions on legislation.

**4) UI Trust Fund Status**

PEF requests update on repayment

Management reported fund being a little bit over 6 billion dollars. Slowly getting paid down. Based on current information and projections, pay off expected sometime in 2027 if all goes well.

**5) Excel Spreadsheet showing all current PS&T members at DOL.**

**a) Current Staffing by Division, including hourlies.**

5 more FTEs, UI went down a little but DEWS increased almost 28 since the last time we met. Tons of active recruitments. NY HELPS has tremendously helped with getting great candidates on board.

PEF asked about the expiration date on NYHELPS program.

Management stated May of 2025. CS has not confirmed renewing or ending NYHELPS in May. Trying to fit as many hires as we can while NY HELPS is active.

PEF asking about titles that are normally perm but are hourly (5 individuals).

Management advised to reach out to Suzanne Piccirillo, Allison Konderwich, and Jennifer Williamson to provide specific information on what positions are being discussed.

**b) Monthly Position Allocation vs. Spending by Division, including if applicable:**

**B. Personnel-**

**1) Unit update.**

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- a) Update NY HELPS program.

915 successful hires.

415 of 915 were through NY HELPS.

There are 186 Active recruitments.

135 of the 186 are NY HELPS active recruitments.

38,000 applications received, 19,000 have been NY HELPS.

Excited to be filling these positions.

PEF questioned long term hourly employees only having 20 days of leave.

Management advised this is dictated by Department of Civil Service.

- b) Update on recruitment and retention efforts across the divisions

- 2) Discussion of any other plans for new titles, reclassification or earmarking of existing titles, redefining job descriptions/duties, or other changes to a title?

- a) PEF requests update on Labor Standards reallocation efforts.

Management reported it is still with DOB, checked for status update yesterday. Still sitting with DOB labor relations team. Will continue to follow up and request updates.

- b) PEF requests update on potential reallocation for Boiler Inspectors

Management advised they have been doing a lot of work on these reallocation packages but have to be careful with how they are submitted to CS. Have to be strategic with when we submit them to not flood their office. Still working on things behind the scenes. Working on other packages for WP as well as other units.

- c) PEF requests update on DOL's efforts in reviewing other WP titles

- d) PEF requests update on Employment Counselor exam

Management advised lists were established 9/30/24. Had 226 eligible on the employment counselor list and 14 on the Spanish language exam. Canvassing these new lists as regular recruitment efforts. In some areas, the number of candidates remains small and at least one of our canvasses (Johnson City) didn't result in any interesting candidates. Continuing recruitment utilizing these lists.

PEF asked if 14 Spanish language list is separate from the 226 or if it is part of the 226.

Management believes to be separate but could confirm if needed.

- e) PEF requests discussion of traineeship fast tracking



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Management advised it is written into Performance Management policy document, information and criteria shared in there. Also, on DOLi, talks supervisors through that process. Only a handful of individuals fast tracked this year, but criteria is out there.

PEF advised they tried to do this in apprenticeship with a person, supervisor did everything correct. Were told DOL doesn't do that, they will not be fast tracked, and employee left agency. Supervisor was told they could not write exceeds expectation in reviews.

Management advised to share some division information so we can look into that.

PEF advised they wouldn't do that.

Management advised this is something that is allowed, there is policy and information/training materials that allows for this to happen. Without specific information, if you are seeing that there are internal operational protocols stating that things can't happen, there is nothing we can evaluate. Would stress that you talk to your people to see if there is any information that can be shared because it is absolutely allowed in the agency. We can reach out to agency leadership in DEWS and other units if necessary with a general message that this is possible and that employees may be able to fast track given their outstanding performance.

**IX. EAP**

**A. General Update**

PEF requests update on EAP vacancies

Management advised vacancies are filled other than Mid-Hudson. Steps have been taken to fill Mid-Hudson region EAP coordinator. NYC and Albany are M/C

PEF asked if that position would be PEF.

Management reiterated that the position will be dependent on who the committee chooses. If a PEF member is elected then they will remain PEF, if an M/C is elected then they will remain M/C. The committee chooses the EAP Coordinator and BU will remain as their job title indicates.

**X. Old Business**

- a) PEF requests consideration of position to occasionally convene in-person with an open invitation to the Commissioner.

Management advised we are considering 1 in person meeting as a trial in 2025. We can confirm that in the next meeting.

PEF asked if Commissioner was invited to meeting today.

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Management advised that Commissioner is aware of meetings but is out of office this week. She is always made aware of meetings and what is happening. Hopefully making some good head way and will have good news to share.

- b) PEF requests discussion of telecommuting program updates.

Management advised the guidance will be reviewed in January. If there are any substantive updates, we will setup a meet and confer and share that document out so necessary steps can be taken.

**XI. New Business**

- a) PEF requests discussion of Prayer/Meditation space.

Management advised the agency is aware of the request. ODEIA is working together with our counterparts to identifying space that is available for something like this. Space is at a premium right now. There was a walk through yesterday and we hope to have an update very soon. Please share if there is a need in other offices across the state for a space like this, will help expedite the review process. While this is continuing to be worked through, staff are always welcome to submit RAs.

- b) PEF requests discussion of DOL outings.

Management requesting to share specific examples so we can identify where there might be an impact. Without additional information, aren't able to research it.

PEF advised it is more about local management and not responding timely, not ERO. It was difficult for planning purposes and when leadership responds late, it is difficult for employees to get tickets before the event. In Albany, some people reported they couldn't get permission until the last minute. This made it difficult to purchase tickets, order the tickets to have for them, arrangements for the event, etc.

Management advised to share specific examples so it can be looked into and determine where the delay is.

PEF advised that ERO was delaying approval in Rochester for the picnic. Had obtained approval from Karen Coleman through Joe Hamm and ERO had not reached out to notify of approval until after PEF had followed up on the request.

Management advised not recalling of any delay in their approval. We make every effort to ensure approval. Joe Hamm reaching out to Karen is not the process. There is a procedure that has to be followed, requests need to be submitted 60 days in advance so the necessary approvals can be obtained, and the event can be approved timely.

PEF advised the SCORE committee event request was initially denied due to the event not including an aspect of comradery, an educational component, and/or reimbursement from the union. PEF said a second request was submitted and denial was not officially issued until October 22<sup>nd</sup>, no reason given.

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Management advised they worked closely with Southern Tier manager Natalie Coleman to work through the process and get it turned around so you could get the event off the ground, having explained what was needed to meet the guidance requirements. It took longer than we would have liked but glad approval was finally granted. Management offered to share the guidance for planning and attending a co-sponsored event.

**XII. Discuss dates/times for 2025 LM meetings and agenda building meetings.**

Scarlett to submit dates to ERO.

**HANDOUTS**

Budget Section:

1. Federal, State Budget, UI Trust Fund Status Update
2. Monthly Summary Position Allocation & Spending by Major Division
3. PEF Count of Employees by Division
4. PEF Permanent and Hourly Employees
5. Summary on Leases

UI Section:

6. Initial Claims