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Correspondence Memorandum

Date: September 1, 2020
To: Employee Trust Funds Board
Teachers Retirement Board
Wisconsin Retirement Board
From: Pam Henning, Assistant Deputy Secretary
Subject: COVID-19 Pandemic Update

This memo is for informational purposes only. No Board action is required.

As reported at the June Board meetings, almost all Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) staff have been working from home (WFH) since March 17 in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. ETF designated only essential onsite staff (about 20 employees) to continue providing necessary business functions such as: mail services, scanning and indexing retirement and other benefit-related documents, preparing and printing retirement estimate information for members, and ensuring that checks to members and vendors are distributed in a timely way. Since June, several additional staff were approved to periodically provide services that are easier to perform onsite (e.g., board mailings).

ETF's physical offices at the Hill Farms State Office Building (HFSOB) continue to remain closed to the public and our members. ETF's daily operations and services continue to thrive, and staff are efficiently providing customer service, education, and application or transaction processing remotely. All retirement appointments are provided virtually or by telephone.

ETF staff continue to complete a Morning Report to indicate their daily work status. These Morning Reports give leadership a full view of the agency's staffing levels by onsite versus WFH status and track illness or staff loaned for assistance to other agencies.

Ten ETF employees assisted with recruitment functions for the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to fill unemployment insurance positions and helped the Department of Health Services with COVID-19 contact tracing efforts; these employees

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returned to their regular ETF jobs at the end of June. One additional ETF employee has been reassigned for up to six months to DWD to assist with unemployment insurance claims processing, due to past experience working for that agency.

ETF's Bounce Back Plan

ETF's Bounce Back Plan, effective in May, highlights three phases for returning to work at Hill Farms. ETF remains in Phase 1, which limits only essential staff onsite while all others WFH. Our philosophy is to move incrementally, emphasizing health and safety first. ETF's metrics have proven WFH is a productive alternative to being onsite, while still providing access to all normal services desired by Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) members.

According to ETF's Bounce Back Plan, Phase 2 was slated to transition after Labor Day on September 8. Since state office buildings are still closed to the public as part of the [Governor's Bounce Back Plan](#) and Dane County has strictly limited the number of individuals indoors and outdoors for public events, ETF has determined it is in our best interest to remain in Phase 1 until the end of the calendar year (December 31, 2020). In addition, the Governor issued [Emergency Order 1](#) proclaiming a statewide mandatory mask requirement effective August 1 through September 28. This now requires ETF staff onsite to wear masks at all times while conducting business, unless in a closed office with a door or while eating or drinking.

ETF will continue to review guidance from state and federal government resources to determine when and if transitioning to a Phase 2 is appropriate. We will consider the restrictions currently in place and take into account the health and safety of our staff and members, and the ability to WFH successfully while providing services to our members.

ETF Communications

ETF's COOP Team continues to assess feedback in a variety of ways to ensure staff have the needed resources to serve our members while WFH. In mid-August, we conducted an ETF Fall Readiness survey to gauge information on a variety of topics including:

- IT technology and equipment needs;
- impact of childcare, adult care or schools with all virtual instruction;
- current challenges and workload;
- returning to the office after COVID is mitigated, to assess preference for WFH or onsite; and
- thoughts on sharing office space.

In addition, the Executive Team solicited feedback from staff on two topics during our August quarterly Section meetings with all business units. We asked two questions:

- What do you need to get through the next six months?
- What do you want your new normal at ETF to look like (following the pandemic)?

Initial feedback from both the survey and the Section meetings indicated the majority of staff like WFH and would enjoy it expanded more as part of returning to the office, but also want to retain some face-to-face time, as they miss the camaraderie and team collaboration opportunities with their coworkers. Also, ETF leadership began discussions on what “the future ETF” looks like and has charged a workgroup with developing recommendations for consideration by the end of the year. This information will be used to prepare and shape a new vision of ETF’s work environment of the future.

I will be available at the Board meeting to answer any questions.

Attachment: ETF Bounce Back Plan

ETF's Bounce Back Plan

(Revised 9/1/2020)

ETF is implementing a gradual plan for returning to the workplace, which includes a multi-phased approach similar to the Governor's [Badger Bounce Back](#) plan but specific to ETF's business needs. The phases of ETF's plan detailed below are unique to ETF's needs and may not align directly with the State plan which moves from one phase to the next.

Phase I: ~~June 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020~~ ~~September 7, 2020 (Labor Day weekend)~~, is the most stringent and restrictive in terms of the number of employees allowed onsite and includes requirements for social distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning standards, travel restrictions, etc. ETF will allow for only those staff (up to 50 maximum agency-wide) that either provide onsite essential services or agree to work onsite as approved by their supervisor (due to productivity and/or morale, WFH restrictions, other).

Phase II: ~~September 8, 2020 through December 31, 2020~~, will allow for more ETF staff to return to the office but limits onsite capacity for all three floors to about one-third of all ETF staff (~125 total). Social distancing, PPE, cleaning and other restrictions will still apply as documented in the chart below.

Phase III: ~~Beginning January 1, 2021~~ through implementation of a COVID-19 treatment (e.g. vaccine) or other medical guidance that provides the safest return possible to the workplace and resumption of near normal business activity and public contact. This will allow more ETF staff to return to the office but limits onsite capacity for all three floors to about 50% capacity overall and per floor (~170 to 190 total).

The chart below summarizes the evolution of how ETF's pandemic response will be managed throughout each phase. This document provides general awareness, guidance, and expectations related to proper hygiene protocols and operations throughout the return-to-work process. The information is based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), and other sources as of the date published and subject to change as that guidance is updated.

Please note that the dates for the phases are initial estimates and may need to be adjusted based on the progression of the COVID-19 virus and further medical recommendations to ensure health and safety. Movement from one phase to another will typically occur as COVID-19 gating criteria (as established by the Badger Bounce Back Plan) are met or more accessible treatment and testing options are made available. All phases are subject to change depending on available treatment and testing options and guidance from federal and state government health experts/authorities.

Action	PHASE ONE	PHASE TWO	PHASE THREE
Wash hands often (20 seconds); cover cough	Yes	Yes	Yes

Don't report to work if ill (fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of smell/taste)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Surface and object cleaning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Increased availability of sanitizers & wipes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Physical distancing to 6 feet when possible (includes conference rooms, common areas)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Allow gatherings (meetings, conference room use)	No - Use video conferencing	Yes-based on posted capacity per 6 feet social distancing per room (10 persons max); use of video conferencing highly recommended	Yes-based on posted capacity per 6 feet social distancing per room (10 persons max); use of video conferencing recommended
Movement between floors within ETF Suite	Limited – remain on floor of your cube/office	Limited – remain on floor of your cube/office unless necessary to meet on another ETF floor	Yes – use 6 feet social distancing guidelines
<u>Face mask required at work</u> (Common areas defined as elevators, kitchenettes, restrooms, conference rooms, lobbies)	Yes – at all times within the HFSOB and ETF space (except closed office)	Yes – in/out of HFSOB; in common areas within ETF suite	Yes – public facing; optional all others in common areas
Business travel restrictions	Yes – no travel	Essential in-state only	Essential in-state only
Quarantine of travelers from high-prevalence areas (as defined by the CDC/DHS)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public facing government services	No – use video conferencing	No – high priority service exceptions only	Yes, with public facing restrictions
Open state office buildings for general business	No – ETF onsite services	Yes - HFSOB to public No – ETF onsite services	Yes, with public facing restrictions
State offices available to employees	Onsite-essential employees & others as approved by ETF supervisor	Yes, but limited number of ETF staff (about 1/3 capacity); WFH encouraged	Yes, but limited to about 50% capacity agency-wide and per floor; WFH encouraged
Daily Morning Reports Continue	Yes	Yes	Yes