

Briefly

APRIL 2023

Deadline: Year-End Employer Reports and Payments are due July 17, 2023

Because July 15 is a Saturday, TFFR's due date for year-end reporting and payments will be **July 17, 2023**. If you are unable to meet the deadline, contact us.

If your report and payment are not received by the 17th and TFFR does not hear from you, a late fee and interest will be assessed to your account per NDCC 15-39.1-23.



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New Electronic Communications Tool



The next time you receive this newsletter, it will look different. Why? Because later this spring, communications from TFFR will begin using GovDelivery, a messaging platform built exclusively for use by government agencies.

Our messages will still land in your inbox; they will just have a new look. We will use GovDelivery to send "Briefly" and will use it to communicate with you about educational events and to share program updates. The TFFR staff will message you in our usual manner before we spring the new format on you, so you know these new communications are from us.

Save the Date: Retirement Education Workshops in July

Retirement Education Workshops (REW) help TFFR members in mapping to their eventual retirement by providing information on their benefits, estate and financial planning presentations, and a discussion of health insurance options. The employees who benefit most from these workshops are within 1-10 years of retirement. TFFR will host a face-to-face workshop in Fargo on July 19 and a virtual workshop on July 25. The content will be the same for both events. The virtual workshop will be recorded. For individuals who prefer a face-to-face event, TFFR plans to rotate locations, hosting a REW in western North Dakota in 2024. Registration information for the 2023 events will be provided in early May.

Signup for ACH Payments Now, Save Time and Money

TFFR is rolling out a new Pension Administration System in fall 2024 that will require your fund payments be made via Automated Clearing House (ACH).

To ensure a seamless transition to the new system, TFFR invites you to start transferring your funds electronically now.

Making payments with ACH will save you time and money by eliminating manual check cutting and mailing. It also offers increased security and fast delivery.

Ready to make the change or have questions, contact our office, (701) 328-9885, and ask for Tami Volkert.

Fiscal Year-End Reminders Checklist

- ✓ **All member records, including reemployed retirees, must be closed with compensated hours and last date worked on the final report.**
- ✓ Active Members: compensated hours should be capped at 700 hours.
- ✓ Reemployed retirees: do not cap hours. Report actual compensated hours, even if it exceeds 700. Do not report reemployed retirees' extra-curricular, professional development, and in-staff subbing hours.
- ✓ Part-time teachers: calculate by taking hours worked per day X number of days worked. Part-time teachers are capped at 700 hours.
- ✓ Salary needs to be reported when **earned** and not when paid. Members contracted over 9 months, but paid over 10, 11 or 12 months, must be expensed out on the June report which is due by July 15.
- ✓ Summer programs salaries need to be reported when **earned** and not when paid. Report June work on the June report, and July work on the July report. (See June -July Reporting of Hourly Wages on page 4.)
- ✓ Unused sick, person and/or vacation leave should **not** be reported to TFFR.
- ✓ No contributions to report, please notify TFFR by e-mail, rio@nd.gov, so we don't send you a late notice.



June-July Reporting of Hourly Wages

Summer reporting isn't routine and it can be confusing. Adhere to the following for best results.

Salary should always be reported in the fiscal year earned, not when paid. If you have Summer School teachers or Drivers Ed instructors, their hours worked in June are reported in June and their hours worked in July are reported in July.

If a salary gets reported in the wrong fiscal year, contact TFFR so we can move the salary to the correct year. If the contribution rates between the two fiscal years are different, we will also correct the over and under payment of contributions.

If you see pay that belongs in a prior year, don't add it to your regular July payroll. Contact TFFR to discuss the best way to report it. If needed, we can do it as a manual entry and avoid having to do an adjustment.



Are you changing Models for 2023-24?

If your TFFR employer payment plan model is changing, i.e., a different model or a change in the amount of pickup under Model 2 Partial, TFFR requires you to complete and return an [Employer Demographics and Payment Plan Model](#).

Model changes must be implemented at the beginning of the fiscal year, on July 1, and must cover all your TFFR members. Administration cannot be covered under a different model.

To ensure the associated reporting is accurate, TFFR requires Employer Demographics and Payment Plan Model form be submitted by July 1.

Connections

A little bit about me . . .

My name is Jennifer Skor. I have been the Business Manager at Ray Public Schools for 15 years. I grew up in Noonan, ND, and moved to Williston, ND, for my first job in the banking industry. My husband, Richard, and I raised our two sons, Ryan and Lance, while working in Williston and farming by Wildrose, ND. After 30 years, Richard was farming full time and both sons had graduated from college and were working on their own. I decided to take the big leap and move out "to the country" full time when the business manager position became available in the Ray School. I remember those first days like it was yesterday, wondering what I had gotten myself into, everything was so overwhelming.

Fast forward to 15 years later, I love this challenging position and being part of the school system. I enjoy learning new things and I have to say we are continuously "learning something new" in this position!



Where is your favorite place to vacation?

As a farm wife, I need to get vacations in during the winter months, so Richard and I have enjoyed "cruising" in January-February which has included the Panama Canal and Hawaii. We are booked next January on an Eastern Caribbean Cruise that will include the Bahamas, Virgin Islands and Antigua. We, as grandma and grandpa, also love taking quick day trips or weekend adventures with our five grandchildren. Hopefully we are making memories with them that they will never forget!

What is your favorite hobby?

I have recently picked up a few hobbies, after several years of not finding time for any. A few years ago, I inherited my mother's piano and sewing machine along with all her sewing notions. I was told it's never too late to learn how to play the piano and I'm loving it! I've started quilting, very basic stages yet, and enjoy the gifts that quilting can produce. And finally, since I live out in the middle of nowhere, I purchased cross country skis a few years back so now I can enjoy the great outdoors during these snowy winter months!

What advice/tips would you offer other Business Managers?

Take advantage of all the resources that are now available to business managers! There are so many means of getting help and building our knowledge within the position of business manager, most of which wasn't out there when I first started. We all rely on each other to get this job done.

TFFR Employee Profile



Sarah Mudder

Communication & Outreach Director

Tell us about life before you joined the Retirement and Investment Office team?

Prior to coming to RIO, I was the communications and events coordinator at North Dakota Housing Finance Agency. I planned and managed educational and promotional events, and I drafted, edited and fact-checked all written communications from press releases to administrative manuals. I also served as the agency's records coordinator.

What is your educational background?

After I graduated from the University of North Dakota, I was recruited to the North Dakota Governor's Office because of my information management education. When they discovered I could write, I was assigned to work with the governor's communications director where I received a hands-on education in public relations and government communications.

Why did you choose to work for the North Dakota Retirement and Investment Office?

The communications & outreach director position is new to RIO. I was drawn to the agency because of my finance background. I was most interested in the position because it included the opportunity to build a communications strategy from the ground up.

What aspects of your job do you find the most challenging?

I've only been at RIO for about a month, so learning about the work the agency does, who RIO serves and familiarizing myself with programs is my first obstacle. I'm working on a strategic communications plan for the agency, and pulling the various pieces together is a big project. Having a plan means the agency's communications will be purposeful and the staff should be able to spend less time creating content and get more out of what we do create and share.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time away from work?

Probably not a surprise for someone who works communications... I enjoy reading. Because of work, my social media feeds are mostly news outlets. When I read for enjoyment, it's often historical fiction set during WWII. Anthony Doerr's "All the Light We Cannot See" is a recent favorite. I'm also a foodie, like to try new recipes and different restaurants. My husband, Layn, and I have a spoiled rotten English Cocker Spaniel named Annie who needs LOTS of exercise, so entertaining her keeps us busy. When we can, Layn and I take our kayaks out and check out local waterways.

Pension Administration Project Update

The development of the new TFFR pension administration system continues to move full steam ahead. We are happy to report that the project is on schedule and on budget. Our target date for the switch to the new system is still fall 2024.

Some features of the new system that will benefit employers include the ability to run model change simulations themselves and streamlined reporting with an error check that makes corrections at the time of upload. The employee enrollment function will also be streamlined.



Starting this fall, TFFR is partnering with North Dakota's School Board Association and the Council of Educational Leaders to host educational sessions intended to prepare you for the switch to the new pension administration system. We are also partnering with software vendors and developers of the school systems' software platforms to develop interfaces between your software and our new pension software.

We know there will be some bumps as we adapt to these changes. In the long run, we believe the new system will create efficiencies and ease for both employers and our members.

Retired Member Reemployment

The Education Standards and Practices Board has once again declared all subject areas as critical shortage, **except** for Administration, for the 2023-24 school year. If you employ a retired TFFR member, a [TFFR Retired Member Employment Notification](#) form must be completed.

RIO Staffing Update

TFFR recently welcomed a couple of new people to our team and is sadly saying goodbye to one terrific member.

Our new Communications and Outreach Director, Sarah Mudder, joined RIO in March. She has over 20 years of government communications experience, first serving in the governor's office and more recently working for the state's Housing Finance Agency. Sarah has a lot of experience in communicating government functions and initiatives, and we are excited to have her help in promoting TFFR's work.

This month, RIO welcomed Jeff Stillwell as our second Business Analyst assigned to the agency from North Dakota Information Technology. Jeff has many years of experience with the North Dakota Court System and significant knowledge of database management and new IT system implementation. He will play a key role in the development and deployment of our new pension administration system.

And finally, we are sad to say goodbye to Isaac Buck, our college intern. While Isaac's internship ended on April 20, he left his mark doing a tremendous job during his semester with the agency. We sincerely hope his time at TFFR was beneficial to him in shaping his career.

National Calendar Events

April 5	Paraprofessional Appreciation Day
April 26	Administrative Professionals Day
May 1	National School Principal's Day
May 2	National Teacher Appreciation Day
May 3	National Bike to School Day
May 5	School Lunch Hero Day
May 7-13	Public Service Recognition Week
May 10	National School Nurse Day
May 17	National Graduation Tassel Day
May 29	National Paperclip Day
June 2	National Leave the Office Early Day



Congratulations to North Dakota's 2023 County Teachers of the Year

Adams: Cynthia Arndorfer, Hettinger Public School, Hettinger

Barnes: Kelly Scott, Barnes County North, Wimbledon

Billings: Jamie Prellwitz, Prairie Elementary, Fairfield

Bottineau: Jocelyn Grann, Westhope Public School, Westhope

Burke: Valerie Bolen, Powers Lake School, Powers Lake

Burleigh: Sheila Peterson, Wachter Middle School, Bismarck

Cass: Amy Braddock, Harwood Elementary, Harwood, and Sara Lichtblau, South High School, Fargo

Dickey: Kelli Gebhardt, Oakes Public Schools, Oakes

Dunn: Mark Zastoupil, Killdeer Public School, Killdeer

Eddy: Laura Hager, New Rockford-Sheyenne Public School, New Rockford

Emmons: Joan Hettich, Linton Public School, Linton

Golden Valley: Denise Dietz, Lincoln Elementary, Beach

Grand Forks: Nikki Polum, South Middle School, Grand Forks

Griggs: Marissa Dahl, Griggs County Central, Cooperstown

Kidder: Jennifer Kallenbach, Kidder County Public Schools, Steele

LaMoure: Dawn Schmitt, LaMoure Public School, LaMoure

Logan: Tina Nitschke, Gackle-Streeter Public School, Gackle

McHenry: Magdeline Brandt, TGU Granville School, Granville

McIntosh: Jessica Schmidt, Ashley Public School, Ashley

McKenzie: Julie Gronos, Badlands Elementary, Watford City

McLean: Randall Hanson, Washburn Public School, Washburn

Mercer: Rebecca Johnson, Hazen Elementary, Hazen

Morton: Cheryl Wehri, Hebron Public School, Hebron

Mountrail: Kyle VanWagoner, Edwin Loe Elementary, New Town

Oliver: Brooke Boeshans, Center-Stanton Public School, Center

Pembina: Anna Mertz, Cavalier Public School, Cavalier

Pierce: Andee Mattson, Ely Elementary, Rugby

Ramsey: Megan Wasness, Central Middle School, Devils Lake

Ransom: Kortney Groettum Vesel, Lisbon High School, Lisbon

Renville: Rebecca Young, Glenburn Public Schools, Glenburn

Richland: Chandra Muller, Zimmerman Elementary, Wahpeton

Rolette: Eric LaRocque, Turtle Mountain Middle School, Belcourt

Sargent: Kimberley Dahlgren, Milnor Public School, Milnor

Stark: Trevor Conrad, Dickinson High School, Dickinson

Steele: Marita Erman, Finley-Sharon Public School, Finley

Stutsman: Danny Fischer, Medina Public School, Medina

Towner: Lindsay Bundermann, North Star Public School, Cando

Trails: Krista Hogfoss, Peter Boe Jr. Elementary, Mayville

Walsh: Haley Ulland, Park River Area School, Park River

Ward: Trisha Schaefer, Erik Ramstad Middle School, Minot

Wells: Kori Jensen, Harvey Public School, Harvey

More information about the recognition is available on DPI's website, [Baessler Celebrates 2023 ND County Teachers of the Year](#)



Innovative Education Summit in August

Award Nominations Due by June 30



The 7th annual Governor's Summit on Innovative Education will be held on Aug. 15, 2023, in West Fargo, ND. The goal of the event is to inspire innovative and reimagined learning. [Register online](#) at no cost and join the movement to transform education in North Dakota.

#InnovativeND Awards recognize students, educators, schools, and districts who lead by example and have embraced innovation. Award recipients are announced and recognized during the Innovative Education Summit. [Nominations will be accepted](#) through June 30, 2023.

TFFR Forms Shortcuts

- Employing a new teacher, TFFR will need a new [Member Action](#) form and a [Designation of Beneficiary](#) form. Please note: Only ND licensed teachers are eligible to become members of TFFR. If you employee a teacher who has a permit or sub-license only, they should NOT be reported to TFFR.
- Employing a TFFR retiree, please make sure to complete the [TFFR Retired Member Employment Notification](#) form. This form must be completed each year a retiree is employed and submitted to TFFR no later than 30 days after employment begins.
- Change of address or a name change, the TFFR member needs to complete and sign a [Change of Name or Address](#) form.
- **Best practice recommendation: always use the forms available on RIO's website, <https://www.rio.nd.gov/teachers-fund-retirement-employers>. Printing and filing our forms puts you at risk of using outdated materials that may require TFFR to ask you to complete a form again.**

Employer Newsletter

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