



EMPLOYER SELF-SERVICE (ESS) PORTAL MANUAL FOR ERS EMPLOYERS

Employer Self-Service (ESS) Portal Manual for ERS Employers

The RSA Employer Services Division is pleased to provide you with this ESS Portal Manual.

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a guide to assist you with navigation through the ESS Portal and the processes for reporting in the ESS Portal. We hope this manual will significantly help in performing your reporting responsibilities in the ESS Portal as the employer of a retirement plan administered by the ERS.

This manual will be updated periodically to reflect any changes in ESS Portal procedures. We encourage you to contact our office if you have any questions related to the ESS Portal or if you need our assistance.

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Monday – Friday

The information provided in this manual is meant to be a resource to assist employers with ESS Portal reporting processes. This manual will not address every scenario that employers may have. For assistance, or ESS Portal related questions, please contact an Employer Services Representative.

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ESS Portal Administrator

For an employer to have access to the ESS Portal, they must first designate someone to be an ESS Portal Administrator. The ESS Portal Administrator is a person who is assigned by an authorized official of the employer to conduct business with the RSA. They will have full access to the ESS Portal. When possible, this person should not be the same individual who performs payroll or HR duties for the employer.

Responsibilities of an ESS Portal Administrator

The ESS Portal Administrator will be responsible for determining what other employees need to be set up as contact persons in the ESS Portal and what access these employees will need. The Administrator will be responsible for setting up and maintaining accounts for the other ESS Portal users. This includes resetting passwords, PINs, and inactivating user accounts. They will also be responsible for entering the employer addresses and bank account information in the ESS Portal. This is done from the Administrator tab in the ESS Portal, and only the ESS Portal Administrator(s) will have access to this tab. If the primary Administrator needs to be updated, an authorized official will need to notify Employer Services of this change.

Designating an ESS Portal Administrator

To establish an ESS Portal Administrator, an authorized official of the employer must complete an ESS Portal Administrator User Registration form (link to form [here](#)) and email it to essadminreg@rsa-al.gov. An employer can have multiple Administrators, however, the Administrator set up by Employer Services will be the primary administrator.

Once Employer Services has set up the Administrator in the ESS Portal the Administrator will receive three separate emails. One email contains their ESS Portal Administrator ID, which will be permanent, one email contains a temporary password, and one email contains a temporary personal identification number (PIN). The temporary password and PIN will expire after 72 hours of the email being sent so it is imperative that the Administrator create their own permanent password and PIN within the 72 hours. If the 72 hours expires before the Administrator has created a permanent password and PIN, the Administrator will need to notify Employer Services who will validate and reset the account.

Please see page 8 for instructions on How to Log into the ESS Portal.

Changing an ESS Portal Administrator

To change the primary ESS Portal Administrator the employer will need to complete and submit two ESS Portal Administrator User Registration forms (link to form [here](#)). The first form should be marked “Remove User” to remove the previous Administrator and the second form should be marked “Add User” to name a new primary Administrator.

Once Employer Services has set up the new primary Administrator in the ESS Portal, the Administrator will receive their Administrator ID, and then receive two additional emails. One email contains a temporary password, and one email contains a temporary personal identification number (PIN). The temporary password and PIN will expire after 72 hours of the email being sent so it is imperative that the Administrator create their own permanent password and PIN within the 72 hours. If the 72 hours expires before the Administrator has created a permanent password and PIN, the Administrator will need to notify Employer Services who will validate and reset the account.

Please see page 8 for instructions on How to Log into the ESS Portal.

How to Log into the ESS Portal

- The ESS Portal Administrator and users who have been given access to the ESS Portal by their Administrator, will need to follow the instructions listed to log into the ESS Portal. Here is a link to the ESS Portal: <https://ess.rsa-al.gov>. This link is also available on the Employer page of the RSA website at www.rsa-al.gov, under Employer Services.
- New users will enter the User ID that was assigned to them and the temporary password they received. They will then be required to check the box indicating they agree with the terms and conditions. The user will be directed to change their password, their 4-digit PIN, and select and answer two security questions. Lastly, new users will need to edit their contact information to set up their Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). Please see additional information regarding the MFA below.
- Current users will enter their ESS Portal login credentials to gain access to the ESS Portal. After logging in they will be prompted to authenticate their account using the Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). Please see additional information regarding the MFA below.

Multi-Factor Authentication

The Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) is the online security presence for employers to access the ESS Portal. When new users log in to the ESS Portal, they will be prompted to edit their contact information. Next, they will select a Contact Type option to have the MFA code sent to them. Then, they will select Send Authentication Code. Once the user receives their code, they will enter it and select Validate Authentication Code. A pop up will come up letting the user know it has been validated. When logging in to the ESS Portal after setting up the MFA, users will enter their ESS Portal log in credentials, then select the delivery method to receive the MFA code.

Note: The MFA generator will not recognize a dial-by-directory or extension, therefore, we strongly recommend providing a direct number to ensure that the user receives their MFA code to successfully gain access to the ESS Portal.

Overview of the ESS Portal Tabs

Report Tab

Submit Report

The **Submit Report** screen is where users will upload Enrollment and Contribution files. Users also have the capability of making manual changes to enrollments by selecting Enter Online under Enrollments. They can also manually enter contribution submissions by selecting Enter Online under Contributions. Users can view submissions in progress, void, or suspend submissions as needed.

View History

The **View History** screen allows ESS users to view current and previous Enrollment and Contribution submissions. This screen defaults to show you the last three (3) months of submissions. In the upper left-hand corner of the screen you can select to view all prior submissions. To view previously submitted Enrollment or Contribution submissions, select the Submission ID number in blue. ESS Users can view, suspend, or void submissions that are in progress.

- Users can Void an Enrollment or Contribution submission from this screen. For example: if users have a lot of errors that need to be corrected in their payroll system prior to submitting payment, the report can be voided.
- Users can also Suspend a Contribution submission from this screen. For example: if a change is needed on an employee's enrollment, the Contribution submission can be suspended rather than voided. Once the necessary changes have been made to the employee's enrollment, the user can navigate back to the Report tab > View History > Unsuspend the submission.
- Once the submission is Unsuspected, the system will go through the validation process again to identify any errors due to enrollment changes. The user will then be able to proceed with any additional corrections prior to submitting payment.

View Reporting Packets

The **View Reporting Packets** screen displays reports that are system generated after each contribution submission has posted. These reports cover various topics, such as Leave Without Pay, Non-Participating Part-Time Status, Post-Retirement Employment, and Overtime Limit. These reports are to be used as tools to track various information.

Download PIDs

The **Download PIDs** screen allows employers to download all PIDs for their active employees.

Invoices

The **Invoices** screen is where RSA sends invoices for various reasons, including, but not limited to, Employer Penalty, Service Purchases, and Manual Corrections. These invoices can be credit or debit invoices and can be applied to the contribution submission on the Summary screen.

- Users can view paid and unpaid invoices in the ESS Portal.
 - To view unpaid invoices, go to Report > Invoices. This screen will automatically show any unpaid invoices the employer may have. Employers are also able to pay invoices from this screen.
 - To view any paid invoices, go to Report > Invoices > Show Paid Invoices.
- Users can pay debit invoices, such as Employer Penalty invoices.
 - To do this, select the check box next to the invoice(s) to be paid.
 - Select Pay Invoice.
 - Select Action > Edit to enter the total amount due, select Action > Apply.
 - Select Continue to Step 2, where the user will review the invoices being paid and the amount. Enter the PIN > Submit.

Payroll Schedules

The **Payroll Schedule** screen allows employers to set up their payroll schedule(s) based on their payroll frequency(ies). This is to notify the RSA when wages are earned and paid by the employer. More information on Payroll Schedules can be found on pages 22 – 23.

Error Correction

The **Error Correction** screen is where uncorrected enrollment errors are displayed when an employer submits and publishes an enrollment file with errors that have not yet been cleared.

- If a user receives an error message on the contribution report stating this enrollment is in Error Correction, navigate to Services > Error Correction and edit the enrollment as needed.

Services Tab

Death Notice

The **Death Notice** screen allows employers to submit a Death Notice to the Retirement Systems electronically for active and retired employees who have worked for their agency.

Submitting a Death Notice is a two-part process for active employees.

- Select Services > Death Notice.
- Enter a valid SSN, PID, or Last Name to retrieve the employee's information.
- Complete the death notice information and select Submit.
- Terminate the active employee's enrollment with the date of death and the enrollment end reason of Death.

Note: The Application for Survivor Benefit is available on the Death Notice screen, if needed.

For retired employees, the user will only need to fill out the death notice information.

Employer Certification

The **Employer Certification** screen allows employers to certify Employee Retirement Requests. Employers can also view any previous retirement requests. More information on Employer Certification can be found on pages 61 – 63.

Employee Information

The **Employee Information** screen allows employers to view previous service credit awarded to an employee based on each plan year.

- This screen does not show any previous service credit from any other retirement systems (TRS or JRF), or any service that may have been purchased.
- This screen also shows the Pensionable Wages and Employee Contributions for the logged in employer.

Search Demographics

The **Search Demographics** screen allows employers to make demographic changes to their active employees, as well as create and update enrollments for new and current employees. Users can also view the employees who are currently and/or previously employed by the logged in employer.

Employer Information

The **Employer Information** screen displays the Current Rates, Historical Rates, Plan Provisions, and Actuarial Information for the employer.

- To view Historical Rates, select Employer Information > Current Rates and select Display Historical Rates.
- To view Plan Provisions, select the Plan Provision Information.
- To generate Actuarial Documents, navigate to the Actuarial Information section at the bottom of the screen and select the appropriate document.
- Employer Contribution Rate changes take effect in the first pay period in which the pay period ends on or after October 1st.

Reports

The **Reports** screen displays different reports that provide various information for employers to use. Information on the different reports can be found on pages 64 – 65.

Message Center

The **Message Center** allows the RSA to send communications through the ESS Portal, so employers can keep their RSA communications in one place. When RSA sends a communication, users will be notified by email of a new message in their Message Center.

- Users can view deleted messages by selecting View Deleted Messages in the bottom left-hand corner.
- Users can submit a question to the RSA by selecting Submit a Question in the bottom left-hand corner.

Question Center

The **Question Center** allows users to view Frequently Asked Questions. Employers are also able to submit a question through the Question Center to Employer Services. Employer Services monitors this daily and responds to the questions in the order in which they are received.

- To submit a question, enter your question in the box at the bottom of the screen titled “Question not answered? Submit it below”, then select Submit.
- An Employer Services Representative may be reached by phone at 334.517.7005, option 1 or by email at Employer.Services@rsa-al.gov.

Account Tab

Change Password

ESS Users are required to change their password every 90 days. The ESS Portal will notify the user 14 days in advance of their password expiring and prompt them to update their password. It is important that users update their password when prompted to avoid being locked out of the ESS Portal.

- To change your password, select the Account tab > Change Password. Enter your Current password > New password > Retype New Password > Your ESS PIN > Update.

Change PIN

The PIN is the user's electronic signature in the ESS Portal. No one else should know or have access to another user's PIN. This PIN is used when paying Employer Contributions and downloading employer reports. ESS Users are not required to update their four-digit PIN after it has initially been set up. However, if users would like to update their PIN, they can do so as needed.

- To change your PIN, select the Account tab > Change PIN. Enter your Current PIN > New PIN > Retype New PIN > Update.

Change Security Questions

ESS Users are not required to update their security questions after they have initially been set up. However, if users do not remember the answers to their security questions, they can update these at any time. The answers to your security questions are case sensitive.

- To change your Security Questions, select the Account tab > Change Security Questions. Select a Security Question > Enter your answer > Retype your answer > Enter your ESS PIN > Update.
- Repeat the steps above for security question number 2.

Edit Contact Information

If users need to edit their contact information for the MFA, they can do so once they log in by going to Account > Edit Contact Information.

Note: The RSA does not retain any log in credentials except for the User ID.

Admin Tab

The **Admin** tab only appears on the ESS Portal menu bar for employees who have been assigned the role of ESS Administrator. Under the Admin Tab the Administrator(s) will be able to maintain the employer's demographics and bank information, as well as establish and maintain contact persons and ESS users.

Payment Account

ESS Administrator(s) can add, delete, or edit the employer's bank account(s) information. Multiple bank accounts can be set up. (Debit blocks need to be removed from these accounts.)

If your employer has changed financial institutions, remember to provide the financial institution(s) with the below ACH Company IDs:

- For Retirement: F636045055
- For RSA-1: H636045055

How to Add a Payment Account:

- Under the Admin tab, select Payment Account.
- Select Add a Payment Account.
- Select the receipt type as EFT, then enter a nickname, the ABA routing number, the account number and re-enter the account number.
- Select Continue.
- Enter your ESS PIN and select Submit.

How to Edit a Payment Account:

- Under the Admin tab, select Payment Account.
- Select Edit next to the payment account you want to edit.
- Select Edit.
- You can update the Payment Account name.
- Enter your ESS PIN and select Update.

How to Delete a Payment Account:

- Under the Admin tab, select Payment Account.
- Select Edit next to the account you want to delete.
- Select Delete.
- Enter your ESS PIN and select Delete.

Office Location

Administrators should maintain the office location addresses. Multiple office locations can be added if the employer has ESS users in different departments or buildings, or if the employer uses a third-party preparer to submit contributions.

How to Add an Office Location:

- Under the Admin tab, select Manage Office Locations.
- Select Add Office Location.
- Enter the effective date, select the status, select the location type, enter the description and the address information.
- Select Submit.

How to Update an Office Location:

- Under the Admin tab, select Manage Office Locations.
- Select Edit next to the Office Location that needs to be updated.
- Make changes as necessary and select Update.

Manage Contact Persons

Administrators will update and add contact persons as needed. The Contact Persons information informs the RSA who the appropriate contact person is for each type, and it will eliminate the need for agencies to notify different divisions of RSA when they have contact changes. When setting up additional contact persons, a contact type must be assigned to them. An employee must first be set up as a contact person before becoming an ESS User.

How to Create ESS Contact Persons:

To **add** an ESS Contact Person the ESS Portal Administrator will select the Admin Tab > Manage Contact Persons > Add a Contact Person. Note: If the contact person being entered needs to have access to the ESS Portal, the ESS Portal Administrator will also need to add them under Manage Users.

The following information is required to create a Contact Person:

- First Name
- Last Name
- Job Title
- Office Location
- Email Address
- Work Phone Number

An employee should be set as Primary if they are the “primary contact” for your agency for that specific job duty. There can only be one primary contact for each Contact Type.

How to Edit ESS Contact Persons:

- To **edit** a Contact Person, an ESS Administrator will select the Admin tab > Manage Contact Persons > Edit > Edit.
- To **edit** a Contact Person’s Contact Type who is not a “primary contact”, select the Admin tab > Manage Contact Persons > Edit > Edit and update the information and Contact Type(s) as needed.
- To **edit** a Contact Person’s Contact Type who is a “primary contact”, the ESS Administrator will first need to designate or add another employee and set them as “primary contact”.

How to Delete ESS Contact Persons:

- To **delete** a Contact Person that is not an ESS User, the ESS Administrator will select the Admin tab > Manage Contact Persons > Edit > Delete.
- To **delete** a Contact Person who is an ESS User, the ESS Administrator will select the Admin tab > Manage Users > Edit > and uncheck Active on their ESS User account. Then select the Admin tab > Manage Contact Persons > Edit > Delete.
- To **delete** a Contact Person who is an ESS User and is a “primary contact”, the ESS Administrator will first need to designate or add another employee as “primary contact” for that Contact Type before inactivating the employee. Select the Admin tab > Manage Users > Edit > Edit > and uncheck Active. Then select the Admin tab > Manage Contact Persons > Edit > Delete.

<h2>ESS Contact Types</h2>	
Agency Head	Receives ad-hoc correspondence from RSA.
Disability Contact	Receives ad-hoc correspondence from RSA.
Enrollment Coordinator	Receives ad-hoc correspondence from RSA.
Human Resources Director	Receives ad-hoc correspondence from RSA.
IT	Receives ad-hoc correspondence from RSA.
Office Coordinator	Receives ad-hoc correspondence from RSA.
Reporting Official	Receives all system generated communications related to the submission of enrollment and contribution reports. This includes balance, post, and Employer Reporting Packets.
Retirement Certification	ESS Users must be assigned this contact type to receive emails regarding Retirement Certifications. The user must have the role of ESS Administrator or ESS Staff to access the Employer Certification screen in the ESS Portal.
RSA-1	Receives ad-hoc correspondence from RSA.
Service Purchases	ESS Users must be assigned this contact type to receive emails regarding Service Purchases. The user must have the role of ESS Administrator or ESS Staff to access the Employer Certification screen in the ESS Portal.
Withdrawal Certification	ESS Users must be assigned this contact type to receive emails regarding Withdrawal Certifications. The user must have the role of ESS Administrator or ESS Staff to access the Employer Certification screen in the ESS Portal.

Please note: PEEHIP Clerk is a Contact Type, however, this Contact Type is only specific to Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) employers.

Manage Users

Administrators can set up other employees as ESS Users. When setting up additional ESS Users a role(s) must be assigned to them based on what Portal access they will need.

How to Create ESS Portal Users and Assign Roles:

- The individual must be set up as a contact person before they can be added as an ESS User.
- Under the Admin tab select Manage Users.
- Select Add User.
- Select the Contact Person that was just entered and assign a User ID unique to them.
- Select the appropriate role(s) for this individual from the following options: ESS Administrator, ESS File Validation, ESS Employer Reporting, and ESS Staff.
- Select Submit and the information will be saved.
- The system will automatically send three emails to this user, which will include their ESS User ID, temporary password, and temporary PIN. These emails will expire after 72 hours. Therefore, it is imperative for the ESS user to establish their permanent password and permanent PIN within 72 hours of receiving these emails.
 - If the 72 hours expires before the ESS user has created a permanent password and PIN, the ESS Portal Administrator will need to validate and reset these records in ESS for the individual.
- Multi-Factor Authentication.
 - If any assistance is needed in editing the contact information for MFA, please refer to page 15.

ESS User Roles

ESS Administrator	Access to all screens including Employer Certification, updating bank account information, add other users, and reset passwords. The primary Administrator can add other Administrators.
ESS File Validation	Can set up payroll schedules, upload/submit enrollment and contribution files, view and resolve errors.
ESS Employer Reporting	Access to everything listed under ESS File Validation and can submit contribution and invoice payments.
ESS Staff	Access to the Services tab, including Employer Certification and some functionality under the Report tab.

Please note: PEEHIP is an ESS Role, however, this role is only specific to Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) employers.

Payroll Schedules

Payroll Schedules must be set up prior to the beginning of each plan year, for each type of payroll frequency. These should be generated prior to July 1st of each year. **Note: ERS cannot process retirement applications or member withdrawals until your agency has entered this information for the next plan year (October 1st – September 30th).**

- A payroll schedule is a schedule created based on an employer's pay frequency and is used to identify when employees are paid and inform the RSA of when contributions are to be expected.
- Payroll frequency is how often the employees receive compensation. Separate payroll schedules should be added for each payroll frequency your agency has.
- A supplemental payroll does not need to be created in the portal but should be reported with the next scheduled contribution submission.
- **Employer Contribution Rate** changes take effect in the first pay period in which the pay period ends on or after October 1st.

How to Create Payroll Schedules:

- Under the Report Tab select Payroll Schedule.
- In the open boxes below, select the following:
 - Plan Year.
 - Payroll Frequency.
 - The initial pay date will be the first pay date in which the pay period ends on or after October 1st.
 - Days in Arrears are the number of days between when the pay period ends and the pay date.
 - Select Generate.
 - **Note:** When generating your payroll schedule, you may see a few dates highlighted in yellow. This is to let you know that the date either fell on the weekend or holiday and the system moved the pay date to the previous business day.
- Some agencies may require a custom payroll schedule.
- Users can make any changes needed to payroll schedules if no wages or contributions have been posted for the date in question. However, changes cannot be made when an enrollment or contribution file is in progress.
- Be sure to review each payroll and make any edits that are needed.

How to Edit Payroll Schedules:

- Steps to edit the criteria used to generate the payroll schedule, like the initial pay date or the number of days in arrears:
 - Select Action > Edit.
 - Make any edits that you need and select Generate to create the new payroll schedule based on the criteria that was changed.

- Steps to edit the payroll information after schedule is created:
 - Open the payroll schedule by selecting the plus sign.
 - Select Action > Edit next to the pay period needing updates. You can also skip a pay period if needed.
 - After changes are made, select Action > Save. You also have options to Delete a pay period or Cancel making any changes.

Enrollments

An enrollment informs the Retirement Systems that an employee is working for your agency, their position status, their contribution group, and how much they are expected to work. Enrollments in the ESS Portal have taken the place of the Form 100 that was previously used. Enrollments need to be entered in a timely manner.

Participation in the ERS is mandatory per the *Code of Alabama, 1975* Section 36-27-4(a)(1) as a condition of employment with an ERS participating employer. If someone is hired as a temporary employee or an employee who works less than half time, and they do not have an existing ERS account, the law prohibits that person from participating in the ERS. Once an employee begins participation in the ERS, he or she is required to continue contributing on future employment even if the employment is of Temporary, Seasonal/Irregular, or Part Time status. If a member terminates their participation with the ERS, any future employment would be the same as “starting over.” In other words, if someone withdraws their account or it closes after 5 years of inactivity, that person would not be required to submit contributions on future employment that is less than half time or that is temporary.

Tier Status

Tier status can be determined by entering an employee’s PID or SSN and selecting Search on the Search Demographics screen. Once the employee is located, select Maintain > Enrollments. The employee’s tier status will now be displayed on the right-hand side of the screen.

Tier 1 Employees

Any member of the Retirement Systems who had service for which they received credit in the Employees’ Retirement System or in the Teachers’ Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013.

Tier 2 Employees

Any member of the Retirement Systems who first began eligible employment with an Employees’ Retirement System or a Teachers’ Retirement System participating employer on or after January 1, 2013, and who had no eligible service in the Employees’ Retirement System or the Teachers’ Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013.

File vs Manual Submission

Enrollments can be submitted by uploading an enrollment file or by manually entering an employee's information into the ESS Portal.

File Submission

- Your agency must be file certified before uploading enrollment files into the ESS Portal. If an employer wants to learn more about enrollment file uploads, please contact the Employer Services Division.
- An Enrollment file can be generated from your agency's software system and uploaded into the ESS Portal notifying the RSA of new hires or changes to existing employees.
 - To upload an Enrollment File, select Report > Submit Report. Select Upload File under the Enrollment section.
- Once you submit your initial full enrollment file you will only need to submit an enrollment file when you have changes or enroll new employees. This is called a partial enrollment submission.
- After the business and load validations run and the file is accepted, select Continue.
- Select your employer's name in blue text, from there you will be able to work and clear any remaining errors you may have.

Examples of when to make an enrollment change via file submission:

- Hiring a new employee.
- Existing employee changes contribution groups or position statuses.
- Existing employee goes on or returns from Unpaid Leave.
- Updating an Employee's Scheduled Work Units.
- Terminating an employee.

Manual Submission

Employers who submit their enrollments manually will enter each enrollment via Search Demographics for a new employee or edit an existing employee.

Examples of when to make enrollment changes via manual entry:

- Hiring a new employee.
- Existing employee changes contribution groups or position statuses.
- Existing employee goes on or returns from Unpaid Leave.
- Updating an Employee's Scheduled Work Units.
- Terminating an employee.

How to add a New Employee (No Prior RSA Participation):

- If the new employee has never contributed to the RSA previously, this employee will automatically be a Tier 2 employee.
- First the user will need to select Add New Employee on the Search Demographics screen.
- Follow the steps to enter the demographic information, select Save Changes > Go To Enrollments.
- Select Add New Enrollment. The enrollment information screen will appear. The user will enter the enrollment information needed to create the new enrollment.
 - Note: If the employee works less than half time with no prior RSA participation they will need to be enrolled as Non-Participating.
 - Note: If the employee works at least half time in a permanent position, they will need to be enrolled as Contributing.

How to add a New Employee (Prior RSA Participation):

- If the new employee has prior RSA participation, they will contribute at their established tier rate.
- The user will search the new employee's SSN or PID in Search Demographics. Next to the employee's name, you will select Maintain > Enrollments.
- This brings up the enrollment screen where their enrollment history can be viewed. Select Add New Enrollment.
- The enrollment information screen will appear. The user will enter the enrollment information needed to create the new enrollment, select Save Changes.

How to update a Contribution Group or Position Status:

- If an employee has a change in their Contribution Group or Position Status, a new enrollment is required for the employee.
- End the previous enrollment with the last day the employee worked under this contribution group or position status, with the Enrollment End Reason of Change in Contribution Group or Change in Position Status.
- Select Add New Enrollment to enter the information for the new enrollment with the Enrollment Begin Date as the first day under the new Contribution Group or Position Status.

Examples:

- If a Non-Participating Local Employee changes to a Contributing Local Employee, this would be a change in Contribution Group.
- If a Regular Local Employee changes to a Seasonal/Irregular Local Employee, this would be a change in Position Status.

How to correct an enrollment with the wrong Position Status or Contribution Group

(No contributions linked to the enrollment):

- This can be done via an enrollment file or manual entry.
- The user will search the employee's SSN or PID in Search Demographics. Select Maintain > Enrollments next to the employee's name.
- Select Edit by the incorrect enrollment and enter an End Date that matches the Enrollment Begin Date. Enter an End Reason of Hired in Error > Save Changes > Exit.
- Create the new enrollment by selecting Add New Enrollment. Enter the information for the new enrollment and select Save Changes > Exit.

How to correct an enrollment with the wrong Position Status or Contribution Group

(With contributions linked to the enrollment):

- This can be done via an enrollment file or manual entry.
- The user will search the employee's SSN or PID in Search Demographics. Select Maintain > Enrollments next to the employee's name.
- Select Edit next to the incorrect enrollment. End the enrollment with the Enrollment End Date as the previous pay period end date, with the Enrollment End Reason of Change in Contribution Group or Change in Position Status. Select Save Changes > Exit.
- Select Add New Enrollment and enter the information for the new enrollment. Select Save Changes > Exit.

Employees That Need to Be Enrolled in the ESS Portal

All employees, including non-participating employees, need to be enrolled and reported.

When a new participating employee is enrolled in the ESS Portal the employee will receive a Welcome Packet containing a beneficiary form from the Employees' Retirement System.

The employing agency can provide the beneficiary form and notarize the beneficiary form if they wish to do so.

FLC Employees

FLC stands for Firefighter, Law Enforcement, or Correctional Officer.

Those working in a Firefighter, Law Enforcement, or Correctional Officer* position (FLC) must be:

- Certified.
- Working in a position that **requires certification**.
- Working **full-time** with at least one employer in that capacity in order to qualify to contribute at the FLC Rate.
- Employees who are certified but working less than full-time must contribute at the Local Employee rate and not FLC.
- **Working in a part-time FLC capacity:** Employees who are certified, working less than full-time, in a FLC capacity and have a full-time FLC job with another RSA participating employer must contribute at the FLC rate. These employees should be enrolled as either Firefighter or Law Enforcement.
- **Working part-time in a non-FLC capacity:** Employees who are certified and working full-time with another agency and are working with your agency in a non-FLC capacity, must contribute at the FLC rate under the contribution group FLC Dual.

**The only employer who will use Correctional Officer is the Alabama Department of Corrections.*

Information that is needed for an Enrollment

- **Retirement Plan** tells the RSA which plan an employee will be a part of. This will also help determine the Tier Status of an employee.

Below are the options for Retirement Plans:

- ERS T1 CONT Local FLC
- ERS T1 CONT Local Regular
- ERS T2 CONT Local FLC
- ERS T2 CONT Local Regular
- ERS T2 to T1 CONT Local FLC (only available to employers who adopted Act 2019-132)
- ERS T2 to T1 CONT Local Regular (only available to employers who adopted Act 2019-132)
- ERS NONP Local FLC
- ERS NONP Local Regular

- **Contribution Group** tells the RSA what kind of job this person will be doing for your agency. Please use the below table to help determine what Contribution Group should be used when you are enrolling an employee.

Contribution Group Codes and Descriptions

Alphanumeric Code	Description
021 – Firefighter	This should be used for employees who are working full-time, they are a certified firefighter, and their position requires certification.
022 – Law Enforcement	This should be used for employees who are working full-time, they are a certified law enforcement officer and their position requires certification.
031 – Elected Official	This should be used for all elected officials. (e.g. Mayor, City Council or County Commissioners)
032 – FLC Elected Official	This should be used for employees who are elected to work in an FLC type position. (i.e. Sherriff)
044 – Local Employee	This should be used for anyone working in a non-FLC capacity.
099 – FLC Dual	This should be used for enrollments where an employee works in an FLC capacity, but also has a job in a non-FLC capacity.

- **Position Status** tells the RSA in what capacity an employee will be working for your agency. Please use the below table to help determine what Position Status should be used when you are enrolling an employee.

Position Status Codes and Descriptions

Alphanumeric Code	Description
01 – Regular	Should be used for employees who have a regular work schedule. Can be used for both full-time and part-time employees.
03 – Seasonal/Irregular	Should be used for employees who do not have a regular work schedule. This should be used for retirees who have returned to work part-time.
04 – Temporary	Should be used for employees who are hired with a pre-determined termination date that is less than one year from their start date.
08 – Ineligible to Contribute	Should be used for employees that are hired in a position that is never eligible for participation regardless of any previous eligibility or full-time/part-time status.

- **Scheduled Units to Work and Full-Time Units**
 - **Scheduled Units to Work per Week** represents the number of units the employee is scheduled to work per week.
 - **Scheduled Full-Time Units per Week** represents the number of units an employee would have to work per week to be considered a full-time employee regardless of whether that employee works full-time or not.
- **Scheduled Type of Units Worked** represents the type of units worked for the employee in this position (Days or Hours).
- **Payroll Frequency** identifies the frequency by which an employee receives compensation for wages earned (Monthly, Semi-Monthly, Bi-Weekly, Weekly).
- **Enrollment Begin Date** represents the date an employee began working for your agency or began working under a new contribution group or position status.
- **Enrollment End Date** represents the date an employee terminated employment with your agency or stopped working under a specific contribution group or position status.
 - The ESS Portal allows users to enter an enrollment end date prior to the employee's last day of work. The system will also accept contributions on wages earned through the employee's end date.

- **Enrollment End Reason** represents the reason an employee’s enrollment is terminated. Refer to the below definitions to help determine what enrollment end reason should be used when terminating an enrollment.

Enrollment End Reasons and Descriptions

Alphanumeric Code	Description
00 – Change in Contribution Group	Is used when an employee changes Contribution Groups, such as going from a Local Employee to a Firefighter.
01 – Retirement	Is used when an employee is retiring.
02 – Death	Is used when an active employee passes away.
03 – Change in Position Status	Is used when an employee changes Position Status, such as going from Seasonal/Irregular to Regular.
04 – Transfer	Is primarily used for PEEHIP, if an employee works in a PEEHIP participating system and they move to another PEEHIP participating system, this would be considered a transfer.
05 – Hired in Error	Is used when an enrollment was created in error. To use Hired in Error the Enrollment End Date must match the Enrollment Begin Date. If the enrollment has an End Reason of Hired in Error, the system will not map any wages/contributions to that enrollment.
06 – Voluntary Termination	Is used when an employee leaves employment of his or her own volition.
07 – Involuntary Termination	Is used when an employee is dismissed from the agency
08 – Gross Misconduct	Is used when an agency determines an offense by an employee is deemed “gross misconduct”.
Merged Employer	Is only used by the RSA when a current agency merges with another existing agency.
Split Employer	Is only used by the RSA when an agency splits into multiple agencies.
Withdrawn Employer	Is only used by the RSA when an agency withdraws participation from the RSA.

LOA Status History

A Leave of Absence (LOA) is when an employee goes on **unpaid leave** that lasts longer than a pay period. This includes, but is not limited to, Unpaid Maternity Leave, Medical Leave, and Military Leave.

In this section, a new line should be created each time an employee goes on or comes off LOA. This allows the employer and RSA to maintain a history of an employee’s LOA.

- To place an employee on LOA, navigate to the Services tab > Search Demographics. Select the employee’s name > Maintain > Enrollments.
- In the section titled LOA Status History enter the effective date, LOA Status, and select Save > Save.
 - The effective date is the date the employee went on LOA and/or when the employee came off LOA. This informs the RSA when wages and contributions should/should not be expected for an employee.
 - Once the employee returns to work or changes LOA status, create a new line with the new effective date and status.

LOA Status Codes

Alphanumeric Code	Description
00 – Not on Unpaid Leave	Is used when an employee returns from an unpaid leave of absence.
01 – Unpaid FMLA	Is used for employees who are approved for Unpaid FMLA. This LOA status should be updated to Unpaid Medical, Unpaid Workman’s Comp, or Other Unpaid Leave when FMLA expires, if the employee is still on unpaid leave.
02 – Unpaid Maternity Leave	Is used for employees who are approved for Unpaid Maternity Leave.
03 – Unpaid Medical Leave	Is used for employees who are approved for Unpaid Medical Leave.
04 – Unpaid Military Leave	Is used for employees who are approved for Unpaid Military Leave.
05 – Unpaid Workman’s Comp	Is used for employees who are approved for Unpaid Workman’s Comp.
06 – Other Unpaid Leave	Is used for employees who are approved for Other Unpaid Leave.
07 – Unpaid Maternity FMLA	Unpaid Maternity FMLA should be used for employees who are approved for Unpaid FMLA Maternity. This LOA Status should be updated to Unpaid Maternity when FMLA expires, if the employee is still on unpaid leave.
08 – Administrative Leave	Is used for employees who are placed on paid or unpaid Administrative Leave.

Enrollment Work Units History

The Enrollment Work Units History keeps a record of when an employee has a permanent change in their work schedule. This history shows how many units (days or hours) an employee is expected to work and the full-time units (days or hours) an employee is expected to work per week to be considered full-time.

- A new enrollment is **NOT** necessary to update an employee's work schedule.
- Use Search Demographics > Maintain > Enrollments to find the employee's work units history.

For file submitters:

- This information can be updated in your agency's software system and will be updated in ESS when an enrollment file is published.

For manual entry:

- Navigate to the Services tab > Search Demographics. Locate the employee's name, select Maintain > Enrollments.
 - Fill in the empty boxes below the current scheduled units effective date.
 - Enter the date their new work schedule became effective with their units to work per week, full-time units per week, etc.
- Select Save > Save.

What is Considered Full-Time

- Each agency determines how many hours an employee must work to be considered full-time for each job position.
- This is based on the job position, not the individual employee.
- Two people who are in the same position cannot work a different number of hours and both be considered full-time.

Temporary ERS Employees

A temporary employee is someone who is employed for a specific time period, not exceeding one year. If that employee is working at least half time, they must begin participation in the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) at the beginning of the second year of employment.

Participation in the Employees' Retirement Systems is mandatory per the *Code of Alabama, 1975* Section 36-27-4(a)(1) as a condition of employment with an ERS participating agency. If someone is hired as a Temporary employee or an employee who works less than half time, and they do not have an existing ERS account, the law prohibits that person from participating in the ERS. Once an employee begins participation in the ERS, he or she is required to continue contributing on future employment even if the employment is of Temporary, Seasonal/Irregular, or Part Time status. If a member terminates their participation with the ERS, any future employment would be the same as "starting over." In other words, if someone withdraws their account or it closes after 5 years of inactivity, that person would not be required to submit contributions on future employment that is less than half time or that is Temporary.

Postretirement Employment

Retirees who are receiving retirement benefits from the ERS and are employed with an agency that participates in the ERS or TRS, are subject to limitations on the compensation they can receive without an adverse impact on their retirement benefits.

A retiree of the ERS who is restored to active service with an ERS or TRS member agency may continue to receive a full retirement benefit provided that the retired member meets both of the following conditions:

- Retiree must not be employed in a permanent, full-time capacity.
- Retiree's compensation cannot exceed the annual earnings limitation, which is based on a calendar year.
 - Compensation is defined as, but not limited to, wages, salary, consulting fees, or contract payments or expenses, other than reimbursement for expenses which are normally reimbursable employee expenses.
 - Retiree annual earnings limitation for the 2023 calendar year cannot exceed **\$37,000**.

(The limit may increase during subsequent calendar years depending on increases in the Consumer Price Index.)

NOTE: FAILURE TO ADHERE TO BOTH OF THE ABOVE RESTRICTIONS WILL RESULT IN THE SUSPENSION OF RETIREMENT BENEFITS.

If an ERS retiree plans to return to work on a part-time basis with an ERS participating employer, they must wait at least 30 days before returning to work.

Retirees are to be enrolled with non-participating contribution groups and reported with pensionable payment reasons (Regular Pay, Lump Sum/Longevity) so they show on the Postretirement Employment Report.

Retirees Who Return to Work Full-Time

If the ERS retiree works in a full-time position for a period of two consecutive years as Non-Participating, the retiree may petition the ERS Board of Control to permit the resumption of participation in the ERS. Upon approval, the member would pay the contributions of the two-year period of non-contributing service and begin contributing on future compensation.

If a TRS retiree returns to work for an ERS participating employer in a full-time capacity, they must begin contributing to ERS immediately.

How to Create New Enrollments for Retirees Who Return to Work

If an incorrect active enrollment currently exists, you will need to end this enrollment using the Enrollment End Reason of “Change in Position Status”. Create a new enrollment effective immediately.

If an ERS retiree begins working **full-time** with an ERS employer:

- Contribution Group: Must be Non-Participating (due to the two-year waiting period for reinstatement).
- Position Status: **Regular**.
- Scheduled Units to Work should reflect full-time requirements for that position.

- **RSA ACTION: ERS retirement benefits will be suspended as of the Enrollment Begin Date.** You will not submit retirement contributions for two years; however, earnings are still required to be reported in ESS.

If this is a **Post-DROP** member:

- Contribution Group: Must be Participating.
- Position Status: **Regular.**
- Scheduled Units to Work should reflect full-time requirements for that position.
- **RSA ACTION: Retirement benefits will be suspended as of the Enrollment Begin Date.** Retirement contributions are required to be submitted IMMEDIATELY. There is no two-year waiting period for Post-DROP members.

If a **TRS retiree** begins working **full-time** with an ERS employer:

- Contribution Group: Must be Participating.
- Position Status: **Regular.**
- Scheduled Units to Work should reflect full-time requirements for that position.
- **RSA ACTION: TRS retirement benefits will be suspended as of the Enrollment Begin Date.** ERS retirement contributions are required to be submitted IMMEDIATELY. There is no two-year waiting period for members who retire in TRS and return to full-time work in ERS. This information also applies to ERS members who return to full-time work with TRS.

If an ERS or a TRS retiree begins working **part-time** with an ERS employer:

- Contribution Group: Non-Participating.
- Position Status: **Seasonal/Irregular.**
- Scheduled Units to Work must be less than the Full-Time Units Scheduled to Work.
- **RSA ACTION: Retirement benefits will continue unless Post-Retirement Restrictions are violated.** You will not submit retirement contributions; however, earnings are still required to be reported in ESS.

Note: All earnings paid to a retiree must be reported in ESS using the payment reason of Regular or Lump-Sum. This includes wages paid by a third-party employer.

Demographic Changes

How to Update an Address in the ESS Portal:

- This information can be updated by an enrollment file or manual entry.
- Navigate to Services, then select Search Demographics.
- Search for the employee by entering their SSN, PID, or search through your list of active employees.
- Locate the employee's name > select Maintain > Demographics.
- Under Address Information, select Display Future Addresses > Add New.
- This populates the Add Address box where you will add the new address information and enter the Effective Date as today's date or a future date, select Save Changes.
 - If you submit an address for an employee that RSA has marked invalid (mail has been returned from that address), you will receive a warning and the address will not be updated. Validate the address with your employee, and if correct, the employee will need to submit an updated change of address form to the RSA.

How to Update a Name in the ESS Portal:

- This information can be updated by an enrollment file or manual entry.
- Navigate to Services, select Search Demographics.
- Search for the employee by entering their SSN, PID, or search through your list of active employees.
- Locate the employee's name, select Maintain > Demographics.
- Under the Personal Information section, you will see the employee's name. This is where you will be able to update the employee's last name, select Save Changes.

Note: Only employees who have a name change due to marriage or divorce can be changed in the ESS Portal. Please contact Employer Services if there is another reason you are making a name change or if this is a full name change.

For changes to an employee's Date of Birth, Gender, or Social Security Number, please contact the Employer Services Division as proper documentation will be required to make these changes.

Severity of Errors on Enrollments

- An **Error** notification will require the agency to fix the problem in the file and re-upload or edit this record via manual entry within the ESS Portal.
- A **Warning** notification will require the agency to review the entry, then override the warning within the ESS Portal if the information displayed is correct.
- An **Informational** notification requires no action from the agency to continue to load the file in the ESS Portal. However, the user should review the information to determine if any changes are necessary.

Most Common Enrollment Errors and How to Correct Them

ER0210: “FLC employees cannot be reported as Part-Time.”

This error message occurs when a user tries to enroll a part-time employee under an FLC Contribution Group or when they put the incorrect Scheduled Units to Work Per Week.

To correct this:

- If the employee is working part-time, they must be enrolled as a Local Employee.
- If the employee is working full-time in an FLC position, the Scheduled Units to Work Per Week and Scheduled Full-Time Units Per Week should reflect this.
- Employees who are working less than full-time and have a full-time FLC position with another employer must contribute at the FLC rate.

ER0211: “Employee has already established eligibility to participate with the RSA: contributions must be deducted.”

This error message occurs when a user enrolls a new employee as Non-Participating when they previously established eligibility to contribute.

To correct this a contributing enrollment must be created in order to be able to report contributions.

ER0212: “Employee is participating in another System. Please either update the employee as Non-Participating or contact the RSA to confirm the end date with the other employer.”

This error message occurs when a user tries to enroll a new employee that recently worked under a different Retirement System and the previous employer has not terminated their enrollment yet.

To correct this:

- If the employee has terminated with their previous employer under another retirement system, send Employer Services an email requesting confirmation on the enrollment end date.
- If the employee is still employed under another retirement system other than ERS, they will need to be enrolled as a Non-Participating employee with your agency.

ER0215: “This employee is working in an FLC position under at least one other enrollment, so the employee must contribute at the FLC rate for this enrollment as well. Please use a 099CONT Contribution Group for this employee.”

This error message occurs when a user attempts to enroll a new employee under a non-FLC Contribution Group.

This error can be cleared by enrolling the new employee as either a Firefighter, Law Enforcement, or FLC Dual (if they are working for your agency in a non-FLC capacity).

ER0244: “The employee has an Enrollment End Reason which requires a new enrollment. Please verify the Enrollment End Reason; if it is valid, please create a new enrollment for the employee.”

This warning message occurs when a user attempts to terminate an enrollment with the Enrollment End Reason of Change in Contribution Group or Change in Position Status.

If the Enrollment End Reason is correct, the user may proceed with overriding the warning message, save the changes and create the new enrollment.

If the Enrollment End Reason is incorrect, the user will need to update or remove the Enrollment End Reason.

ER0267: “The Enrollment Begin Date cannot be more than 11 months in the past or more than 12 months in the future. If the date is in the past, it cannot overlap with a period of time when the employee was Retired, T-Sectioned, or received a refund for previous contributions.”

This error message occurs under the two following scenarios:

- When a new employee was not enrolled within 11 months of their start date.
- If the Enrollment Begin Date provided on the enrollment is incorrect. The user will need to send a statement on letterhead defining the enrollment details and email this information to Employer Services.

ER0312: “The RSA has processed a retirement or refund application for this employee, so this Enrollment End Date cannot be changed. Please contact the RSA if the member is canceling their termination.”

This error message only occurs when a user uploads an enrollment file and the record in error does not have the Enrollment End Date or Enrollment End Reason listed on the file.

To correct this: Manually enter the Enrollment End Date and the Enrollment End Reason that was entered previously, or delete the enrollment record from the enrollment file, as we already have the Enrollment End Date or Enrollment End Reason on file.

Contributions

Contributions must equal the wages multiplied by the applicable contribution rate based on the contribution group reported. Contributions should not be deducted if the employee is in a non-participating contribution group. However, non-participating employees will still have their wages and work information reported.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 36-27-24(g), *Code of Alabama 1975*, as an ERS employer, your organization is required to submit its employer contributions together with member contributions to the ERS on the first day of the month following the month in which the related member salary was paid (the due date).

Contributions not submitted within 30 days of the due date are considered to be delinquent and shall accrue interest on a per annum basis at the actuarial assumed investment rate.

For example: Member contributions deducted from members paychecks in July along with the employer contributions for July are due August 1. If the ERS does not receive the required contributions by August 31, interest at a per annum rate will be levied upon the delinquent balance after the monies are received following August 31.

File Vs Manual Submission

Contributions can be submitted by uploading a contribution file or by manually entering employees' wages and work information.

File Submission

- Your agency must be file certified before uploading contribution files into the ESS Portal. If an employer wants to learn more about contribution file uploads, please contact the Employer Services Division.
- A contribution file can be generated from your agency's software system and uploaded into the ESS Portal notifying the RSA of your employees' wages and contributions for that pay period.
 - To upload a contribution file, select Report > Submit Report.
 - Select Upload File under the Contributions section.
- After the business and load validations run and the file is accepted, select Continue.
- Select your employer's name in blue text; from there you will be able to work and clear any remaining errors you may have.

Manual Submission

Employers who submit their contributions manually will do this through Enter Online under Contributions by navigating to the Report tab > Submit Report.

Examples of what can be done through a manual contribution submission:

- Reporting employees' wages and contributions by pay period.
- Prior pay period adjustments (Retro pay or correction).
- Adding missing employees.

How to Submit Contributions Manually:

- Navigate to the Report tab > Submit Report > Enter Online under Contributions.
- Select the Employer the submission is for.
- Select the Reporting Frequency.
- Select the Pay Period.
- Select the Pay Date.
- Once the screen refreshes, select the previous pay period to copy the Regular Payment Lines.
- After the business validations run, select Continue.
- Select your employer's name in blue text; from there you will be able to work and clear any remaining errors you may have.

Global Changes:

- Wages Multiplier: This multiplier will be used to increase the wages of all employees from the prior contribution submission by a set percentage. (For example: A 2 percent raise awarded to all employees would be entered as 1.02)
- Rate of Pay Multiplier: This multiplier will be used to increase the Rate of Pay for all employees from the prior contribution submission by a set percentage. (For example: A 2 percent raise awarded to all employees would be entered as 1.02)

Note: When submitting contributions manually, users can copy over the Regular Pay payment reasons. All other payment reasons (i.e. Overtime, Lump Sum/Longevity, etc.) will need to be entered for each employee as needed.

Information that is needed on a Contribution Record

- **Payment Reasons:** Use the below table to determine which Payment Reason should be used when reporting wages and contributions.

Payment Reasons and Descriptions	
Alphanumeric Code	Description
00 – Regular Pay	Includes straight time pay, shift differential pay, call-back pay, vacation and sick leave (not paid as a lump sum).
01 – Lump Sum/Longevity and Other Pensionable	Includes pensionable bonuses and other one-time payments, as well as pensionable longevity pay for an employee.
02 – Overtime	Includes wages for time worked over and above the normal full-time work schedule in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). It would not include overtime wages which have exceeded the overtime limit. The overtime limit is applied on a fiscal year basis.
97 – Non-Pensionable Overtime	Once an employee exceeds the overtime limit, those earnings in excess of the overtime limit should be reported as Non-Pensionable Overtime The overtime limit is applied on a fiscal year basis.
98 – Non-Pensionable Lump Sum/Longevity	Includes non-pensionable lump sum comp time payments, bonuses, or other one-time payments.
99 – Other Non-Pensionable	Once an employee exceeds the earnable compensation limit, those earnings in excess of the earnable compensation limit should be reported as (Non-Pensionable Overtime) [recommended] or (Other Non-Pensionable Wages) because they are no longer pensionable.

- **Actual Units Worked** represents how much the employee actually worked for the pay period being reported.
 - How many hours or days a particular employee worked in the pay period being reported. (Including sick and vacation leave being used in the place of working hours.)
 - The ratio between the Actual Units Worked and Full-Time Units is what calculates the service credit an employee earns. It is imperative that the Actual Units Worked and the Full-Time Units are reported correctly for the employee to earn the appropriate amount of service credit.

- **Type of Units Worked** represents the type of units worked for the employee in this position (Days or Hours).
- **Full-Time Units** represents the amount of days or hours an employee is required to work to be considered full-time in the pay period being reported.
 - The ratio between the Actual Units Worked and Full-Time Units is what calculates the service credit an employee earns. It is imperative that the Actual Units Worked and the Full-Time Units are reported correctly for the employee to earn the appropriate amount of service credit.
- **Excess of IRS** represents the portion of wages that is in excess of the IRS limit.
 - The portion of the wages that exceed the IRS limit in a certain month must be calculated by adding up all the wages reported on a plan year basis and comparing against the IRS limit for that plan year.
- **Employee Contributions** represents the portion of the employee contribution based on the employee's wages for the pay period.
 - Contributions must equal the wages multiplied by the applicable contribution rate based on the employee's tier status and contribution group.
- **Employer Contributions** are calculated by the ESS Portal based on the wages reported for that particular employee.
- **RSA-1** represents the employee's RSA-1 deferral amount.
 - If the employee has elected to participate in the optional RSA-1 deferred compensation plan, the amount deducted from the wages reported in this record should be reported here. An RSA-1 deferral is allowed even if the employee is in a non-participating contribution group or if the payment reason is non-pensionable. Only positive numbers can be reported in this field.
- **Rate of Pay** represents the employee's current pay rate.
 - Report only an employee's base rate of pay.
 - Do **NOT** include any additional pay such as overtime, lump sums, etc. in this field.
- **Type of Rate of Pay** identifies the employee's Rate of Pay as Hourly, Monthly, or Yearly.

RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan

RSA-1 is an eligible deferred compensation plan as defined by Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. Under this deferred compensation plan, a public employee may elect to defer receipt of a portion of his or her salary until a later determined date, usually at retirement or termination of service. The RSA-1 Enrollment Packet can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions regarding RSA-1 participation, please call 334.517.7000 and ask to speak with an RSA-1 Representative. RSA-1 Representatives are available Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Currently, RSA-1 contributions are reported in the ESS Portal with your regular Employee and Employer contributions via a contribution file or manual entry.

If you need to manually add RSA-1 contributions for a specific employee, follow the steps below:

- In an active contribution submission, select Edit next to the employee's name.
- Once the employee's contribution information displays under the section titled RSA-1 Contributions, the user will enter the amount of RSA-1 contributions in the total line under this heading.
- Select Save Changes.
- After all contribution information has been verified, select Submit Details. A new section will display on the Summary screen which shows the total RSA-1 contributions for all employees.
- There will be a separate section to pay for RSA-1 contributions on the Payment screen. The user will enter the amount of RSA-1 contributions that are to be paid from the employer's bank account before entering their PIN to pay.

Information on how to do a prior period adjustment for RSA-1 contributions can be found on page 51.

Prior Pay Period Adjustments

Prior Pay Period Adjustments are made in the portal when necessary to correct what was previously reported or left off of a prior pay period's submission.

Users can only process prior pay period adjustments when a contribution submission is actively in progress. It is best practice to process these adjustments as soon as possible.

How to Enter a Prior Pay Period Adjustment

What to do when an employee has been left off a prior pay period:

- With an active contribution submission, select Add Contribution.
- Enter either the SSN, PID, or Last Name for the employee that needs to be corrected.
- Select the Plan Year and Payroll Period in which the contributions were earned, select Search.
- Select Add a New Record with the Information I Entered, select Continue.
- This will bring up a blank contribution record to add the pay information that is being reported, select Submit.

What to do when wages were reported in error:

- With an active contribution submission in progress, select Add Contribution.
- Enter either the SSN, PID, or Last Name for the employee that needs to be corrected.
- Select the Plan Year and Payroll Period the adjustment occurs on, select Search.
- Select the radio button next to the payment record that needs to be adjusted, select Continue.
 - If there are multiple records that need to be corrected, users will follow this process for each payment record.
- This will bring up the payment record screen. Correct the contribution information to what should have been reported, select Submit.

Option for File Submitters:

- If File Submitters would like to process a Prior Pay Period Adjustment in their contribution file, the file will need to have a separate record for each pay period and payment reason they are trying to correct.
 - The file needs to contain the **DIFFERENCE** (variance) in what they are trying to adjust.
 - Example: If the user submitted wages of \$500 and they should have submitted \$400 in wages, the file needs to contain the difference which is -\$100.
 - The screen will display the new net amount of \$400.

Prior Pay Period Adjustments for RSA-1

How to enter a prior pay period adjustment for RSA-1 contributions that were left off:

- With an active contribution submission in progress, select Add Contribution.
- Enter either the SSN, PID, or Last Name for the employee that needs to be corrected.
- Select the Plan Year and Payroll Period in which the RSA-1 contributions should have been submitted, select Search.
- Select the radio button next to the Regular Pay line, select Continue.
- This will bring up the contribution record for the Regular Pay. The user will add the RSA-1 contribution amount in the Total line under the RSA-1 contribution header.
- Select Save Changes.

How to correct RSA-1 contributions that were submitted in error:

The user will need to email a statement on the employer's letterhead requesting a refund for the amount reported. This statement should include the employee's name, PID (or last four of SSN), the pay period(s) the contribution was reported on, and an explanation of the error that occurred. This can be emailed to RSA-1.Info@rsa-al.gov.

How to report sick/vacation leave payouts as RSA-1 contributions:

These wages need to be reported on the last pay period the employee was/will be considered active. If you are reporting these wages after the employee has retired or the employee has terminated, you will need to add these wages to the last pay period the employee was considered active. Please follow the steps below to add these wages:

- In an active contribution submission, select Add Contribution.
- Enter the employee's SSN, PID, or Last Name. Select the Plan Year and the Pay Period the employee was/will be considered active.
- Select Add a New Record With the Information I Entered, select Continue.
- This will bring up a blank contribution record. Select the Payment Reason of Non-Pensionable Lump Sum/Longevity, then select the Type of Units Worked. Enter the amount they were paid out in the Wages section and then enter the amount they want to contribute under the RSA-1 section, select Submit.

Overtime Limits

Tier 1 employees' overtime limit is 120% of their base pay. Tier 2 employees' overtime limit is 125% of their base pay. Once an employee goes over their overtime limit, these overtime wages must still be reported. These overtime wages will be reported as Non-Pensionable Overtime. If there are wages and contributions submitted over the Overtime Limit, you may need to do Prior Pay Period Adjustments to remove these wages and contributions or update the payment reason. **The only salary that counts against the overtime limit is the salary that is paid at the rate of time and a half in compliance with FLSA.**

Examples:

- A Tier 1 employee earns \$50,000/year. Their limit on pensionable overtime wages is \$10,000.
- A Tier 2 employee earns \$50,000/year. Their limit on pensionable overtime wages is \$12,500.

Missing Employees

To view the **Missing Employee(s)**, under the section titled View Contribution Container Details, users will see a table that shows various information regarding the contribution submission. There is a section in this table titled Number of Missing Employees. Underneath this section there will be a number in the form of a hyperlink. Once the user selects the hyperlink, it will download a PDF document showing the employee(s) who are missing.

Reasons an employee might be missing:

- The employee is a new employee and did not copy over from the previous submission.
- LOA Status has not been updated.
- The employee's enrollment has not been terminated.
 - Note: You do not have to void your file to enter a termination date.
- The data on the enrollment record does not match the data on the contribution submission so the system is unable to map to the matching enrollment.
 - Users may see ER0086 as a result of this.
 - For example: The employee is enrolled as a Local Employee but is listed on the contribution submission as a Firefighter.

How to Correct a Missing Employee

If the missing employee is a new hire:

- In the contribution submission, select Add Contribution.
- Enter the missing employee's SSN, PID, or Last Name.
- Select the current Plan Year and Payroll Period, select Search.
- Select Add a New Record with the Information I Entered, select Continue.
- This will bring up a blank contribution record to add the pay information for the missing employee, select Submit.

If the missing employee's LOA Status has not been updated:

- Navigate to the Services tab > Search Demographics.
- Locate the employee's name or search with the SSN or PID, select Maintain > Enrollments.
- The employee's enrollment information will display. Navigate to the LOA Status History section. In the blank boxes towards the bottom of the LOA section, enter the date the employee went on unpaid leave and the LOA Status. Select Save > Save.
- Go back to the contribution submission, the employee will no longer be listed as missing.

If the missing employee's enrollment has not been terminated:

- Navigate to the Services tab > Search Demographics.
- Locate the employee's name or search with the SSN or PID, select Maintain > Enrollments.
- The employee's enrollment information will display. Select Edit next to the employee's enrollment with the agency, enter the Enrollment End Date and Enrollment End Reason, select Save Changes.
- Go back to the contribution submission, the employee will no longer be listed as missing.

If you are receiving ER0086 due to a mismatch between enrollment and contribution data:

- Example: If the employee is truly a Local Employee, but they are on the contribution file as a Firefighter, follow the below steps to correct:
 - Select Edit next to the employee's contribution record.
 - Select the drop-down menu for the section titled Contribution Group, select Contributing Local Employee > Save Changes.

- Example: If the employee works under a Seasonal/Irregular position status, but they are on the contribution file with a Regular position status, follow the below steps to correct:
 - Select Edit next to the employee's contribution record.
 - Select the drop-down menu for the section titled Position Status > select Seasonal/Irregular > Save Changes.

- Example: If the employee should be a Firefighter, but they were enrolled as a Local Employee, follow the below steps to correct:
 - Suspend the contribution submission.
 - Navigate to the Services tab > Search Demographics.
 - Locate the employee's name or search with the SSN or PID, select Maintain > Enrollments.
 - The employee's enrollment information will display.
 - If contributions are not linked to the current enrollment: Select Edit next to the employee's enrollment with the agency, the Enrollment Begin and End dates need to match with the Enrollment End Reason of Hired in Error, select Save Changes.
 - If contributions are linked to the current enrollment: Select Edit next to the current enrollment. Terminate the enrollment with the Enrollment End Date being the end date for the previous pay period with the Enrollment End Reason of Change in Contribution Group, select Save Changes.
 - Select Add New Enrollment. Enter the information for the Firefighter enrollment, select Save Changes.
 - Go back to the contribution submission in progress by navigating to Report > View History > select Unsuspend Report and select the Submission Number.

- Example: If the employee should be enrolled with a Seasonal/Irregular position status, but they are enrolled with a Regular position status, follow the below steps to correct:
 - Suspend the contribution submission.
 - Navigate to the Services tab > Search Demographics.
 - Locate the employee's name or search with the SSN or PID, select Maintain > Enrollments.
 - The employee's enrollment history will display.
 - If contributions are not linked to the current enrollment: Select Edit next to the employee's enrollment with the agency, the Enrollment Begin and End dates need to match with the Enrollment End Reason of Hired in Error, select Save Changes.
 - If contributions are linked to the current enrollment: Select Edit next to the current enrollment. Terminate the enrollment with the Enrollment End Date being the end date for the previous pay period with the Enrollment End Reason of Change in Position Status, select Save Changes.
 - Select Add New Enrollment. Enter the information for the Seasonal/Irregular enrollment, select Save Changes.
 - Go back to the contribution submission in progress by navigating to Report > View History > select Unsuspend Report and select the Submission Number.

How to Apply an Invoice to a Contribution Submission

Once the user has completed making any corrections, select Submit Details.

- Under the Invoices section, select the box(es) to the left of each invoice you would like to apply to the contribution submission.
 - Credit invoices will deduct the invoice amount from the total amount of Employee/Employer contributions owed.
 - Debit invoices will increase the total amount of Employee/Employer contributions owed.

Payment Screen

The Payment screen is the last screen users will see prior to submitting payment for contributions. On this screen, users will enter the total amount of Employee/Employer contributions owed. Users will also be able to enter the total amount of RSA-1 contributions, if they have any employees who contribute to RSA-1.

- Enter these amounts under the corresponding sections.
- The user will enter their ESS PIN > Submit Your Payment.
 - There will be a pop up stating “Once you click OK, the submission will be finalized and no more edits can be made. Would you like to continue?” If you are ready to finalize the submission, select OK . If you are not ready to finalize the submission select Cancel to go back and make any corrections you may need to make.

Results Screen

Once the user has finalized their contribution submission, they will be taken to the Results screen. This screen will show users a table with a breakdown of contributions similar to the Summary screen on the contribution submission. Users are able to print this screen as is, or they can select **Remittance Advice** in the bottom right-hand corner of the table. Doing this will download the Remittance Advice in a PDF format.

Severity of Errors on Contributions

- An **Error** notification will require the agency to fix the problem in the file and re-upload or edit this record via manual entry within the ESS Portal.
- A **Warning** notification will require the agency to review the entry, then override the warning within the ESS Portal if the information displayed is correct.
- An **Informational** notification requires no action from the agency to continue to load the file in the ESS Portal. However, the user should review the information to determine if any changes are necessary.

Most Common Contribution Errors and How to Correct Them

ER0086: “The employee was reported with contributions but either does not have an enrollment or the Pay Period End Date is earlier than the Enrollment Begin Date.”

This error message typically occurs on contribution files when an enrollment has not been created for this employee or the enrollment information does not match what was previously reported.

To correct this:

- The user will need to either create an enrollment under their employer for this employee or validate the enrollment information is correct. Refer to pages 55 – 56 for more information on ER0086.

ER0265: “The Type of Units Worked does not match the Type of Units Worked on the employee’s enrollment record.”

This error message occurs when the Type of Units Worked is blank or incorrect.

To correct this:

- The user must change the Type of Units Worked to reflect the Type of Units Worked on the employee’s enrollment.

ER0272: “The employee is working in an FLC position under at least one other enrollment, so the employee must contribute at an FLC rate for this enrollment as well. Please create a new enrollment for this employee using a 099CONT Contribution Group before providing any additional wages or contributions.”

This error message occurs when an FLC enrollment has been created for an employee and an employer still has them enrolled and being reported under a different Contribution Group.

To correct this:

- The user will need to delete the current contribution record from the submission and terminate the previous enrollment. They will then create a new enrollment as either Contributing Firefighter, Contributing Law Enforcement, or Contributing FLC Dual (if working for current employer in a non-FLC capacity). Once the FLC enrollment has been created, the user can go back to the contribution submission and add the employee back under their new Contribution Group.

ER0317: “This employee is or will be contributing in an FLC position under at least one other enrollment. The system will allow this employee to contribute at the local rate for this pay period, although if this employee is going to continue to work with this agency, please end the current enrollment and create a new FLC Dual enrollment. Keep in mind the FLC Dual will require contributions at a higher rate in the next reporting period after the FLC enrollment begins. Contact the RSA if you have any questions.”

This warning message occurs when an FLC enrollment has been created for an employee with a future begin date, either with the logged in employer or another employer under the same Retirement System. This warning can be overridden. It is recommended that if the FLC enrollment is not under the logged in employer, the user will need to terminate the previous enrollment and begin a new FLC enrollment beginning with the next pay period.

ER0320: “The Actual Units Worked are more (or less) than expected based on the Scheduled Units Worked per Week.”

This warning message occurs when the Actual Units Worked is more or less than what is expected of the employee to work per their Enrollment. If the information reported is correct, the user can select Override Warnings and Save Changes.

Contribution Scenario

How to report contributions for an employee who went from being a Local Employee to a Firefighter (or Law Enforcement) in the middle of a pay period? While it is preferred that employers wait to transition from Local to FLC at the beginning of the following pay period, employers can split the pay period as needed. It is recommended to follow the steps below:

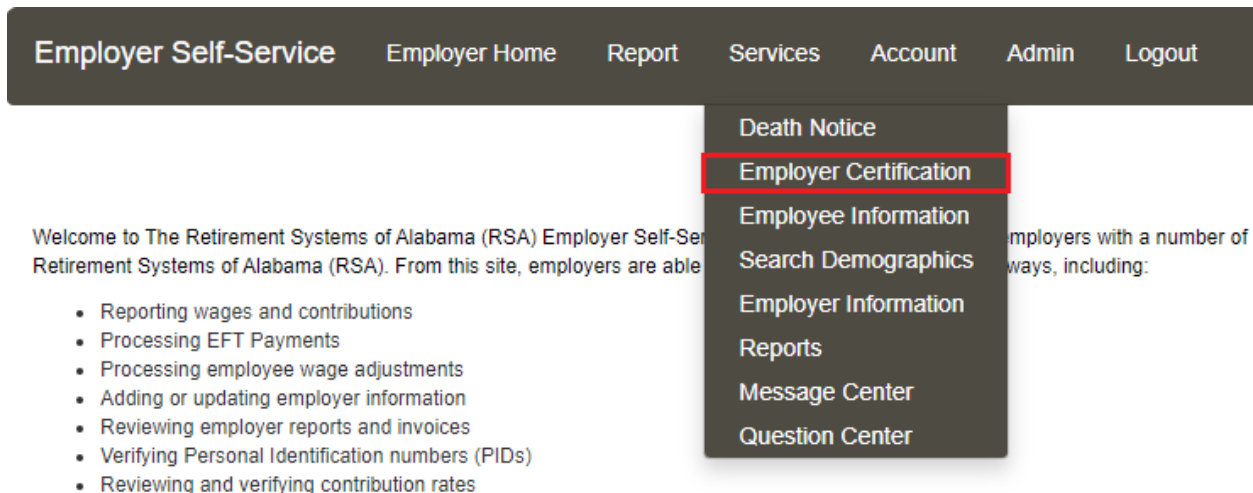
- Make sure the Local Employee enrollment is on the contribution submission with the correct amount of hours worked, wages, and contributions they earned for this enrollment.
- Suspend the contribution submission.
- Navigate to the Services tab > Search Demographics.
- Locate the employee's name or search with the SSN or PID, select Maintain > Enrollments.
- Select Edit next to the Local Employee enrollment. Enter the Enrollment End Date as the last day this employee worked under this enrollment, with the Enrollment End Reason of Change in Contribution Group.
 - Warning message ER0244 will appear. Select the box to Override Warnings > Save Changes.
- Select Add New Enrollment to create a new enrollment for the FLC position with the Enrollment Begin Date being the date the employee began working under the new enrollment.
- Go back to the contribution submission in progress by navigating to Report > View History > select Unsuspend Report and select the Submission Number.
- Select Add Contribution.
 - Enter the missing employee's SSN, PID, or Last Name.
 - Select the current Plan Year and Payroll Period, select Search.
 - Select Add a New Record with the Information I Entered, select Continue.
 - This will bring up a blank contribution record to add the pay information for the new enrollment, select Submit.

Employer Certification

- ERS employers can certify retirement application information through the ESS Portal or have the option to certify retirement information on the *Application for Service Retirement* or the *Application for Disability Retirement*.
- It is extremely important that the employer certification is accurate as this data is used to calculate a member's lifetime benefit.

Employer Certification in ESS

- The agency will be notified by email when an *Application for Retirement* needs employer certification. You can also view the message in the ESS Portal Message Center.
- For your ESS Users to receive communications regarding Employer Certification in the ESS Portal an ESS User must have the role of either "Administrator" or "Staff" and the contact type of "Retirement Certification".
- To access certification requests, select Services > Employer Certification.



- The Employer Certification screen then displays. The status of the request is Pending ESS Certification, which means you must take action to complete the certification.
- To view a history of certifications, select the Show All box. Any previous certifications will be displayed.
- Select the PID hyperlink to open the Retirement Certification screen.

Employee Retirement Request							Show All: ▾
PID	Member Name	Request Date	Approved Date	Contribution Group	Position Status	Status	Employer
10371203	JOHN DOE	09/21/2021		Contributing Regular State Employee	Regular	Pending ESS Certification	

Last Date of Paid Employment and the Termination Date

- The Last Date of Paid Employment is the last day the employee will be paid through. This is not the pay date.
- The Termination Date is the employee's last day of employment. The termination date is always prior to the effective date of retirement, which is the 1st day of the month.
- On the screen, these two dates are populated with the last day of the month prior to the retirement date. Verify the dates and make changes if necessary.

Last Date of Paid Employment:

10/31/2021

Termination Date:

10/31/2021

Projecting Wages and Units Worked

- The screen will populate all pay periods through the retirement date. Enter the projected base wages, the type of units worked, the actual (projected) units worked, and the full-time units for each pay period. The wages and actual units worked for the last pay period may need to be prorated based on the pay period end date.
- Once you complete one contribution row, you can copy the information you entered for salary, units worked, and full-time units. You can paste this information to another contribution row if the information is the same for that particular pay period.
- Users can delete a row that is not needed by selecting the row, then select **Delete** in the bottom left-hand corner.
- Users can also add a row if needed by selecting **Add Line Item** in the bottom left-hand corner.
- Click **Calculate** for ESS to calculate the employee contributions.
- Select **Save** afterwards to see if any errors occur or if the salary breakdown was accepted successfully before adding in the unused sick days if converting.

Final Sick Leave Certification

<input type="checkbox"/>	Payroll Frequency	Pay Period Begin Date	Pay Period End Date	Pay Date	Payment Reason	Wages	Employee Contribution	Employer Contribution	Type of Units Worked	Actual Units Worked	Full Time Units
<input type="checkbox"/>	Semi-Monthly	03/01/2022	03/15/2022	03/15/2022	Regular pay	\$2,500.00	\$187.50	\$370.75	Hours	86	86
<input type="checkbox"/>	Semi-Monthly	03/16/2022	03/31/2022	03/31/2022	Regular pay	\$2,500.00	\$187.50	\$370.75	Hours	96	96
<input type="checkbox"/>	Semi-Monthly	04/01/2022	04/15/2022	04/15/2022	Regular pay	\$2,500.00	\$187.50	\$370.75	Hours	88	88
<input type="checkbox"/>	Semi-Monthly	04/16/2022	04/30/2022	04/29/2022	Regular pay	\$2,500.00	\$187.50	\$370.75	Hours	80	80
<input type="checkbox"/>	Semi-Monthly	05/01/2022	05/15/2022	05/13/2022	Regular pay	\$2,500.00	\$187.50	\$370.75	Hours	86	86
<input type="checkbox"/>	Semi-Monthly	05/16/2022	05/31/2022	05/31/2022	Regular pay	\$2,500.00	\$187.50	\$370.75	Hours	96	96

- The Final Sick Leave Certification box will only be displayed if a member elects to convert unused sick days toward retirement service credit.
- Enter the projected unused sick leave days the employee will have at the time of retirement.

Comments from the RSA

- Review comments from the RSA staff regarding the employee's retirement application, conversion of sick days, etc.
- Click **Complete Certification** to finalize the employer certification.

Final Sick Leave Certification:

Unused Sick Leave Days at Retirement :

Comments from the RSA:

Please complete and return within 7 days.

[← Back to Dashboard](#)

[📧 Complete Certification](#)

Benefit Recalculation After Retirement

- When the retirement contributions submitted for a member do not match the employer certification, ERS recalculates the benefits.
- When an employer becomes aware of major changes to the certified information, they should notify ERS immediately in writing.

Reports

The ESS Portal offers many different reports that provide various information for employers to use. To generate a report, the user will go to the Services tab > Reports. They will then select the report name from the drop-down menu. Below are some of the most common reports used by employers.

Report Name	Description
Agency Retirement Eligibility	Displays retirement eligibility information for employees.
Annual Checklist Report for ERS	Generates a list of employees contributing under the previous plan year for an ERS employer. <u>Note:</u> Data displayed in the report is in real time. Any adjustments/changes made after the original report was run are reflected in this report.
Contribution Adjustment	Provides the users with a list of employees for whom an adjustment (positive or negative) was made between two dates. <u>Note:</u> Data displayed in the report is in real time. Any adjustments/changes made after the original report was run are reflected in this report.
Current Contribution Submission	Provides a list of employees in a selected contribution submission, along with the original amounts from the file, as well as the current/posted amounts for Wages, EECON, Wages that Exceeds IRS limit, and RSA-1, so the changes can be identified.
Current Enrollment Detail	Displays details of the enrollments for all current employees (having non-ended enrollments) for the selected employer.
Current Enrollment Summary	Displays a summary of the enrollments for all current employees (having non-ended enrollments) for the selected employer.
Demographic Errors	Lists all demographic errors for the selected period of an employer. Errors like address, name, etc.
Earnable Compensation Limit	Displays employees that are near, have met, or exceeded the IRS Wage Limit per the selected Plan Year.
Employer Invoice Report	This report allows users to view the list of credit and debit invoices available for the selected employer.
Employer Remittance	Allows users to view the contributions for Contribution Groups within a payroll date range for an employer.

Enrollment Submission Summary Report	Provides a breakdown of the number of new enrollments created by the Publish process, number of existing enrollments updated by the Publish process, and enrollment records pending the Publish process due to the number of errors.
ERS – Annual Statement Listing	This report provides employers with an overview of their employees Member Account Balances and Beneficiary Data as of the end of the previous fiscal year. If this information is incorrect then they would need to notify RSA as soon as possible to get this information updated.
Error Summary	This report shows a summary of errors within a specific report period.
Exception Report for ERS	Lists all ERS employees who have not received full-service credit for the plan year.
Hired in Error Enrollments	List of member enrollments marked Hired in Error or Invalid Members with outstanding balance.
Leave Without Pay	Displays all employees for the selected employer who were on an approved unpaid leave of absence for at least one day between the selected begin and end dates.
Member Enrollment	Displays member enrollment information by Retirement system and Employer.
Missing Employees from Contribution	This report displays contributing regular employees who are expected to be reported by an employer for a particular payroll frequency and pay period, but who are not included in that submission.
Non-Participating Part-Time Status	Displays all employees reported in a non-participating group reported under one employer, as well as all non-participating employees reported by more than one employer.
Outstanding Edit Errors	Provides the user with the list of outstanding Edit errors by employer code and submission ID.
Outstanding Load Errors	Provides the user with records that triggered a Load validation.
Overtime Limit	Provides a summary of employee wages for purposes of tracking the earnable compensation limit for employees of a specified employer.
Post-Retirement Employment	Lists all working retirees for an employer and the limitations that apply to the retirees.
Retirees by Employer	List all retirees by employer.
Retirement Requests	This report is to show all Retirement requests that are either in progress/pending or approved.

Temporary Employment	Provides a list of Temporary employees who are being enrolled in multiple temporary enrollments (e.g., to avoid the 1-year Temporary employment limit).
Wages and Contribution	Provides wages and contributions broken down at an employee level in a submission.

The information provided in this manual is meant to be a resource to assist employers with ESS Portal reporting processes. This manual will not address every scenario that employers may have. We also encourage Employers to periodically refer to the RSA website for important ERS information.

If you have any questions, please contact the Employer Services Division at 334.517.7005, option 1, or by email at Employer.Services@rsa-al.gov.