Annual
Report
2019

UI ITSC

NASWA UI Information Technology Support Center

In Partnership with USDOL

ABOUT UI ITSC

MISSION

The UI ITSC fosters partnerships to advance modernization of unemployment insurance and workforce programs, facilitates the exchange of ideas and practices among states, and provides products, services and training that help states leverage technology to meet evolving needs.

VISION

UI ITSC is a trusted partner for the effective use of information technology and related technical assistance to advance UI programs.

WHAT WE DO

▶ **UI IT MODERNIZATION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**
Support states in UI Business Process Reengineering and IT modernization.

▶ **PRODUCTS & SERVICES**
Create and grow online tools and software repository shared by states.

▶ **EDUCATION & TRAINING**
Provide education and training to states related to the UI IT Modernization life cycle.

INTRODUCTION

The Unemployment Insurance Information Technology Support Center (UI ITSC) is a unique national collaboration of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and all state workforce agencies. The UI ITSC promotes the development of information technology solutions and information sharing among state UI agencies. This annual report highlights the accomplishments of UI ITSC from October 2018 to September 2019.

HOW UI ITSC STARTED...
In 1994, UI ITSC was founded through a grant from USDOL. Since 2009, NASWA has operated UI ITSC with funding from USDOL through an agreement with the State of Maryland.

NEW GOVERNANCE

In 2019, the UI ITSC revised its charter to introduce a two-tier governance structure. Under this charter, the UI ITSC Steering Committee (STCO) provides strategic direction and the new Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) provides fiscal and general oversight. In addition, the STCO membership now includes an additional State Workforce Agency Administrator position.

2018-2019 STCO Membership

State Workforce Administrators	
Brett Flachsbarth, *Chair*	KS
Anna Hui	MO
Kay Erickson	OR
Unemployment Insurance Directors	
Daryle Dudzinski	CT
Kevin Burt	UT
Nellie Spangler*	NE
William Walton	VA
Information Technology Directors	
Jeff May, *Vice-Chair*	GA
Gail Overhouse	CA
Sue Anne Athens	NM
U.S. Department of Labor Representatives	
Jim Garner	USDOL
Subri Raman	USDOL

* Served until June 2019.

UI IT MODERNIZATION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The UI ITSC provides states support by identifying and sharing best practices, coordinating communication and information sharing among states, and conducting short quality assessments to ensure that projects are following best practices and meeting requirements.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

State Engagement

UI ITSC assists consortia and single states that are actively involved in different stages of UI IT Modernization. In addition, UI ITSC provides all states with ad-hoc or informal advice and consultation on UI IT Modernization.

Advisory Support Services
In 2019, UI ITSC provided support to CA, ND, NH, NY, OH, OK, and TX. These states are currently in the early stages of their modernization projects.

Ongoing Sustainability and Support
UI ITSC is continuously working with several states and consortia, including but not limited to CT, ID, MD, ME, MO, MS, ND, RI, VT, WV, and WY that have modernized and continue to collaborate to sustain their systems and ongoing operations.
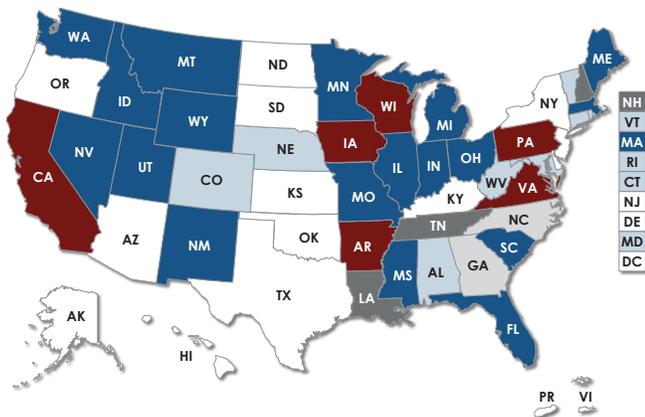
Status of State UI IT Modernizations

COMPLETED	IN DEV	UI SYSTEM
3	2	Benefits System Only
6	0	Tax System Only
18	8	Benefits and Tax System
16		Planning

Pre-Implementation Checklist

On May 31, 2019, USDOL released an updated version of the "UI IT Modernization Pre-Implementation Checklist" in Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 29-18. This checklist includes steps to verify data used for labor market information (LMI) Federal reporting functions.

In 2015, USDOL and UI ITSC developed this checklist to assist states in planning for modernization projects and preparing to "go-live" or launch a new UI IT System. This checklist incorporates lessons learned and best practices gathered by UI ITSC and states' experiences in implementing UI IT systems.

The checklist is found in the "UI Business Process and IT Modernization Guidebook" on UI ITSC's website.

Partnership to Improve UI Data

UI ITSC joined a partnership with USDOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to improve the quality of UI data provided by states to BLS.

BLS receives UI tax and wage data from state UI systems to support the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) report, and UI benefit data to support the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) report.

Under this partnership, UI ITSC will work with states through the UI modernization lifecycle to assure that QCEW and LAUS data extracts meet BLS standards.

More information is available on UI ITSC's website, http://itsc.org/Pages/UI-IT-Mod.aspx, or on the BLS site, https://www.bls.gov/cew/unemployment-insurance-modernization/home.htm.

UI IT MODERNIZATION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

"Innovate UI"

The ReEmployUSA Consortium (MS, ME, RI, and CT), along with Wyoming and Missouri, is working with UI ITSC to conduct a feasibility study and develop a model for the shared management of maintenance and operational costs that meet the common needs of the participating states. The study will determine if an investment in technologies will promote further alignment and commonality among the three similar systems (ReEmployUSA, MO, and WY) and allow for additional cost savings.

This project, known as "Innovate UI," will focus on the following:

1. Build a comprehensive technical inventory across the three systems.
2. Establish overarching factors and principles in building a technical roadmap.
3. Build roadmap using the factors and principles as drivers, with the aim of optimizing and reducing operational sustainment costs among the collective systems.

MODERNIZATION TRENDS

Collaboration

UI ITSC is working with states that share a common vendor to establish a forum and process to collaborate on the development of shared components and cross-state leveraging. Currently, there are six groups of states that share a vendor and are collaborating on best practices and fixes.

Microservices & Containerization

Microservice architecture promotes the sharing of independent components across systems. Containerization of microservices promotes the sharing of microservice components across different hosting platforms.

Idaho developed the Interstate Connection Network (ICON) Relay as a microservice in .NET. It will be containerized and deployed in a Java stack in ReEmployUSA.

ICON Relay - As a Microservice
Idaho, the lead state of the Internet Unemployment System (iUS) Consortium (ID, VT, and ND) is working with Mississippi, the lead state of the ReEmployUSA Consortium (MS, ME, RI, and CT) on setting up the ICON Relay as a microservice between the two states. Mississippi will be the second state to use this microservice and will go live in 2019. Once completed, the Relay will be shared with consortia states and other interested states.

The ICON Relay is an ICON capability that sits between the state benefit system and the ICON hub. The Relay cleans and validates data transmitted through ICON messages. The Relay identifies errors within the messages and automatically fixes common errors. Any other errors can be manually fixed in the Relay and corrected messages are sent to ICON.

Use of Cloud in UI

On May 13, 2019, the UI ITSC held a call on the use of the Cloud in UI. Participants from 25 states attended. Six states (ID, MD, MA, MS, NC, and WY) shared their experiences when implementing the Cloud. States covered topics such as acquisition, setting up, migration, security, monitoring and backup, and costs. Some lessons learned include:

Start Early. Make contact with Social Security Administration (SSA) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Experiment with the Cloud. Gather resources from security and network engineering teams.

SSA & IRS Data. Most states have SSA and IRS data handled state-side or use an Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) co-location approach. USDOL is engaging SSA and IRS to explore a better approach.

Cloud Resources and Service Optimization. This is a continuous challenge for the Cloud. States continue to monitor their environments and scale when needed to optimize environments and costs.

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

The UI ITSC provides states with products and services that multi-state consortium and individual states can leverage cost-effectively. The UI ITSC develops, distributes, and supports these products such as UI components or modules, model projects and prototypes, and other various tools. The UI ITSC's website www.itsc.org serves as a portal for states to access products and resources.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

eMRP Launched in Oklahoma

On May 6, 2019, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) became the first state to successfully implement the Workforce Connect: My Reemployment Plan (eMRP). The eMRP is a comprehensive job search guide developed by USDOL in 2015, and announced in TEN 2-17. In 2017, USDOL and UI ITSC developed the paper-based version into an interactive online tool.

The eMRP is a web-based and mobile-friendly tool that guides the jobseeker through the different modules and assists them with useful guides, tips and activities. As one of the pilot states for the eMRP, OESC worked with UI ITSC to develop requirements, test functionality, and conduct focus groups. OESC's jobseeker focus groups provided valuable first-hand feedback that was incorporated directly into the eMRP. The eMRP is available in all Oklahoma Works American Job Centers and on OESC's website at https://okjobplan.oesc.ok.gov/.
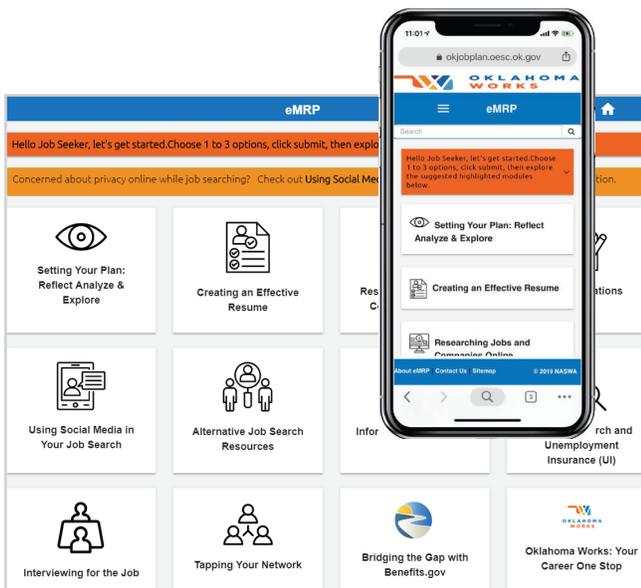
PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Workforce Connect

Since 2013, UI ITSC has managed the Workforce Connect software suite of tools. These tools were developed in partnership with USDOL and state workforce agencies.

Workforce Connect (WFC) Framework
Three components: Single Sign-on for jobseekers to create and use one user ID and password for all workforce programs, a Common Registration across programs, and a Workforce Dashboard displaying all user information (across the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners) in one view. *The WFC Framework is available for states.*

My Reemployment Plan (eMRP)
The eMRP is a web-based and mobile-friendly tool that guides the jobseeker through the step-by-step modules and assists them with useful guides, tips and activities. *The eMRP is available for states.*

WIOA Common Case File
A tool for state staff working with WIOA participants. The tool overlays with existing state systems enabling better communication and workflow between the different WIOA partners. The case file information is gathered and curated from existing platforms allowing a 360° view of all services delivered to the state's WIOA participants. *The Common Case File is in development and available by the end of 2019.*

Workforce Connect: State Status

WFC Framework	Pilot: **MS, NY, OR** Development: **MA, NH** Implemented: **MT, NJ**
eMRP	Pilot: **AR, CT, ID, MT, NH** Implemented: **OK**
Common Case File	Pilot: **AR, CT, ID, MT, NH, OK**

PRODUCTS PORTFOLIO

The UI ITSC Product Portfolio highlights the products available to all states. This portfolio describes each product and the benefits to state UI agencies.

Visit **www.itsc.org** for more information.

UI ITSC's WEBSITE

A unique online resource for the UI community to access information on UI IT tools, solutions, and resources.

Benefits of the UI ITSC Website

- Share UI and IT information with the UI community.
- Learn online and in-person on a wide range of UI program and technical topics.
- Access product information, documentation, security information and other useful resources.

PROJECT PORTALS

A collaborative environment for state project teams to interact and share information during the IT project lifecycle.

Benefits of Project Portals

- Create and manage state specific portals for UI IT Modernization projects.
- Interact with the UI Community, UI ITSC, NASWA through document sharing and discussion boards.
- Secure SharePoint Environment.

UI IT GUIDEBOOK

The "UI Business Process and IT Modernization Guidebook" is a collection of best practices and lessons learned from state projects.

Benefits of the Guidebook

- Snapshot of UI IT Modernization projects across the nation.
- Compilation of best practices and lessons learned from state projects with references and examples.
- Resource for states at any stage of their projects from strategic planning to go-live.

SUTA DETECTION (SDDS)

The SUTA Dumping Detection System (SDDS) is an automated system designed to help states detect employers who may be engaged in SUTA dumping.

Benefits of SDDS

- Quick access and easily interpreted snapshots of employment, wages, and tax data.
- Snapshots help UI staff, analysts, and auditors analyze employer accounts and movements.
- Predefined and customized queries to drill down into the data snapshots.

OCCUCODER

A job code matching software application developed to automatically assign occupational codes to UI claims, job orders, resumes, and more.

Benefits of OccuCoder

- Assigns O*NET-SOC Codes to job titles and descriptions.
- Provides a user interface for users to choose the best job code result from OccuCoder.
- Support for Spanish Language queries.

WORKFORCE CONNECT

A software suite of tools that helps states implement WIOA by connecting partners and providing a seamless experience for jobseekers when accessing services.

Benefits of Workforce Connect

- Aligns and connects the IT systems and data of WIOA programs to ensure integrated services.
- Improves coordination of services among WIOA partners.
- Supports high-quality and streamlined services provided to the jobseeker.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

The UI ITSC develops educational materials and training programs for state UI Agencies focused on UI IT systems and processes. In addition, the UI ITSC provides training and education to the vendor community on the UI program to expand and improve the UI IT Modernization vendor community.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Business Analyst Boot Camp: New York

On February 26-27, 2019, UI ITSC delivered instructor-led training to 13 state staff from New York Department of Labor in preparation for the state's UI IT Modernization project. UI ITSC created a customized version of the Business Analyst Boot Camp curriculum providing specific training for New York that was tailored to their project needs.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) Online Training

USDOL and UI ITSC released the DUA online training on October 26, 2018. The purpose of this training is to increase State Workforce Agencies' knowledge and understanding of the DUA program, and to serve as an online training resource when disasters strike and DUA services are required. This training is intended for DUA coordinators and UI staff responsible for accepting DUA claim applications, adjudicating DUA claims, and hearing DUA appeals. On November 9, 2018, USDOL released TEN 8-18 announcing the availability of this training.

UI Lower Authority Appeals Hearing Officer Online Training

USDOL and UI ITSC released the Appeals online training on June 16, 2018. This training addresses the Federal criteria by which UI Lower Authority Appeals quality is measured. This training is intended for all staff responsible for conducting, reviewing, and evaluating Lower and Higher Authority appeal hearings. On September 7, 2018, USDOL released TEN 7-18 announcing the availability of this training.

Cultural Awareness and Language Sensitivity

UI ITSC released this training on October 31, 2018. This lesson on cultural awareness and sensitivity helps UI agency staff to work with interpreters and explores various situations in which staff would engage with a limited English proficient (LEP) individual. Throughout this lesson, strategies and best practices for effective communication with LEP individuals are presented. Originally a part of the UI Lower Authority Appeals Hearing Officer Online Training, this lesson is also offered as a standalone lesson.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

BAM Investigator Online Training

USDOL and UI ITSC converted the instructor-led courses for UI Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) provided to states by UI ITSC to a blended online and webinar training format. There are three levels of this online training: BAM Basic Investigator, BAM Intermediate Investigator, and BAM Supervisor.

These courses have been reviewed and piloted by: CA, IA, ID, KS, MO, MT, NM, OK, PA, RI, UT, and VT. USDOL is expected to release this training by the end of 2019.

BAM Basic
Investigators learn about the history, purpose, and methodology of the BAM program.

BAM Intermediate
Investigators learn data collection and coding processes for paid and denied cases.

BAM Supervisor
Supervisors learn how to sample and assign claims. They are introduced to methods for reviewing and closing all cases completed by BAM Investigators.

2020 OUTLOOK

Strategic Plan: 2019-2020

In 2019, UI ITSC began the process to update its strategic plan developed in 2013. The UI ITSC Steering Committee reached out to the UI Community to gather information and conduct an environmental scan to help inform UI ITSC's strategic direction.

On May 2-3, 2019, the UI ITSC Steering Committee reviewed a draft framework of the strategic plan. Members discussed the mission, vision, and goals for UI ITSC. The committee will finalize the strategic plan in preparation for the upcoming year.

U.S. Virgin Islands Initial Claims

UI ITSC is working with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) to integrate an initial claims internet application, as well as direct deposit of UI payments, to enhance their UI system. VIDOL's operations and systems were dramatically impacted by the 2017 hurricane season. This project will help improve VIDOL's service delivery and better prepare their UI System for the future.

UI ITSC and VIDOL will be considering and leveraging both business models and technology solutions developed by other states that can be transferred and customized to meet VIDOL's needs. This project is targeted for completion by the end of 2020.

UI Program Peer Review System

On a yearly basis USDOL works with states on conducting annual, biennial, and triennial reviews of certain program areas within state UI agencies. USDOL and UI ITSC will create and pilot an automated solution that will allow paperless peer reviews of Benefits Accuracy Measurement (BAM), Benefit Timeliness and Quality (BTQ), and Appeals.

Currently, the reviews are conducted through a manually intensive, paper-based process. UI ITSC will build an online document management system. This solution will be hosted on a secured Cloud for states to upload required documents. This solution will allow for task assignment based on user role and provide workflows to route documents through the different stages of the review.

UI ITSC will work with USDOL in the selection of a solution that will be customized for the peer review process. UI ITSC will reach out to states for input into the project design.

The target completion of this solution will be before the 2020 Appeals Program Review.

CONTACT

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For more information on UI ITSC
visit **www.itsc.org**

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