

A photograph showing the silhouettes of several people standing in a room with large windows. The sun is shining through the windows, creating a bright glow and long shadows. The people appear to be in a meeting or collaborative work environment.

Unemployment Insurance ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Employment Security Department
WASHINGTON STATE

Agenda



- I. Approval of June 26, 2024, meeting minutes
- II. UI Program Evaluation & Decision Package Context – JR Richards
- III. UI Customer Improvement Operations – JR Richards
- IV. UI Customer Improvement Product – Matt LaPalm
- V. Customer Compliance Intro & UI Relationship – Matt Buelow
- VI. UI Navigators Community Partnerships - Stephanie Sams
- VII. Other ESD Decision Packages – Caitlyn Jekel
- VIII. Public comment
- IX. Adjourn

UI Program Evaluation & Decision Package Context

JR Richards, Unemployment Insurance Customer Support Director, ESD



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UI Program Evaluation



- Analysis of existing resources (federal and state) investment across ESD and the impact on customer service.
- Peak season mitigation strategy.
- Decision Package (customer service improvement plan).
- Legislative report (due November 1).

UI Program Evaluation



Immediate Actions

People	Streamline ID verification	Systems
Adjusted internal processes to save staff hours	Established compliance division	Made work search log optional in eServices system
Cross-trained across the division	Established ability to verify identity in-person at WorkSource	Eliminated 2-day hold
Implemented CBO UI navigator program	UI Call center / customer compliance division collaboration	Performance dashboard
	Reduced indicators impacting false positives	

Improving Service Delivery Gaps and Access to Unemployment Insurance Services



Performance Outcomes	Goal Level of Performance	2023 Performance	Peak Season Performance*	Current Performance**
Customer Calls Answered Timely	80% of calls answered within 20 minutes	32%	41%	51%
High Call Volume Unique Callers	0 during non-peak Limited during peak	299,241	237,085	52,263
First Pay Promptness	≥ 87%	55.3%	56.7%	68.7%
Non-Monetary Determination Timeliness	≥ 80%	55.3%	52.6%	56.9%
Improper Payments	< 10%	10.8%	10.5%	TBD

*Peak season October 2023 – March 2024

**Current Performance April 2024 – June 2024

Improving Service Delivery Gaps and Access to Unemployment Insurance Services



Funding Proposal Introduction: The Employment Security Department (ESD) seeks additional funding to bolster our Unemployment Insurance (UI) services. Our goal is to bridge the gap between federal revenue, existing state resources, and the staffing needs within our UI Customer Service and WorkSource teams.

Challenges:

- Federal funding currently covers only approximately 72% of the costs to operate the state's UI program.
- Long wait times and service backlogs impact claimants and employers alike.
- Our existing staffing levels fall short of meeting customer expectations and USDOL performance standards.

Proposed Solution: We propose ongoing funding to hire additional staff in UI Benefits, Employer Services, and WorkSource offices. These dedicated professionals will provide direct customer service support both in person and over the phone. Coupled with process and system improvements, this investment will elevate program performance to meet acceptable USDOL standards and enhance the overall customer experience.

Improving Service Delivery Gaps and Access to Unemployment Insurance Services



- **UI Benefit Intake Staff:**

Create five new Intake teams who will focus on answering customer calls and email for initial claims, weekly inquiries, and eligibility issues. These experts will bolster customer support and streamline access to essential services.

*99 FTE Total =
\$11.6 Million
annually*

- **Employer Services Staff:**

Employer services workload has increased steadily the past 3 years. This ask reflects the staff needed support the increase in employer calls, registration and tax filing to keep within acceptable performance levels.

- **WorkSource Staff:**

Provide meaningful UI assistance in-person at local WorkSource offices across the state. These staff would help with UI navigation, general questions, and increasing access for claimants. Additionally, it will provide scalability to support the workload increase during peak season.

UI Customer Improvement Product

Matt LaPalm, Product, Planning and Performance Interim Director, ESD



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UI Customer Improvement Product



- **Background:** The Employment Security Department (ESD) plays a critical role in supporting individuals and employers through the UI system. Benefits are managed by a software application called UTAB, developed by FAST Enterprises.
- **Challenge:** UI claimants and employers have poor experiences navigating our benefit management system, resulting from outdated software, technical debt from earlier projects and overly complex business and system processes.

UI Customer Improvement Product



The Employment Security Department (ESD) seeks additional federal funding to improve the customer and staff experience in Unemployment Insurance.

Proposed Solution

- We will upgrade UTAB to the newest version, called Core21.
- While updating, we will improve business and technology processes to directly improve UI program performance measures.
- We will develop a long-term technology and process improvement plan for the entirety of the UI program.
- We intend to ask for federal Reed Act funding for this decision package.
 - This project will have 25 dedicated ESD FTE's and 5 additional FAST Contractors
 - We expect this project will cost \$6.4 Million in FY 26, and \$3 Million in FY 27

Customer Compliance

Matt Buelow, Customer Compliance Director, ESD



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Customer Compliance



- Employer audits
- Fraud prevention, detection, and investigations
- Collections
- PFML illegal acts investigations
- UI online access support

Customer Compliance



- Integrate compliance activities across programs
 - Consistent customer experience and outcomes
 - Gain efficiencies across programs
 - Consistent and comprehensive fraud detection tools and investigations
 - Timely and accurate determinations
- Examples:
 - One audit for three programs
 - Shared fraud detection - use the same intelligence to correlate attacks, combined incident management
 - Prevent receipt of benefits from multiple programs
 - Common repayment collection handling and escalations

Fraud



- Fraud landscape has changed significantly, and we must adapt accordingly
 - Identity fraud has increased significantly since start of pandemic
 - Currently less priority on administrative fraud
- Reduce legitimate customers flagged with an ID issue by refining crossmatches and additional technology improvements
- Increase avenues for customers to prove identity

Compliance goals and outcomes



- Benefits and customer service are highly accessible
- Outcomes across customer demographics are equitable
- Most Issues/Concerns are addressed with little to no staff intervention
- Acknowledge and design our processes and approaches for our most barriered customers
- Low rates of invalid payments
- Employer responsibilities are fulfilled with little impact on their business
- Interruptions or pain-points in the customer journey are exceptions
- We have the people, processes, technology, and culture to enable continuous improvement.

Next steps



- Decision package being worked on
- Will share with UIAC when ready

UI Navigators & Community Partnerships



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Stephanie Sams, UICS Policy & Legislative Implementation Manager, ESD

UI Navigators & Community Partnerships



Purpose: Reduce barriers to UI by helping unemployed workers learn about, apply for, and if eligible, receive UI benefits and related services with an emphasis on workers who are from historically underserved and marginalized communities and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.

Program design:

- Educate, inform, and prepare CBOs to design and create materials that are culturally and linguistically meaningful to their communities;
- Fluid and successful collaboration between ESD & CBOs while maintaining integrity of UI information and system;
- Recognize how each CBO is different and what their needs are to adjust as needed to be more inclusive and learn how to better serve these communities and beyond

UI Navigators & Community Partnerships



- 9 Community-based organizations awarded Jan 2024
- Federal-funded grant; period of performance ends June 2025
- Outcomes (January – May 2024)
 - 1,100 UI claimants served
 - 60 education/workshop sessions
 - 2,400 engaged at events
 - 6,700 materials distributed
- 2025 Decision Package to continue community partnerships
- Chinese Information Service Center (www.cisc-seattle.org)
- Drivers Union (www.driversunionwa.org)
- Korean Community Service Center (www.kcsc-seattle.org)
- La Oficina (www.laoficina.biz)
- Native Action Network (www.nativeactionnetwork.org)
- Neighborhood House (www.nhwa.org)
- People for People (www.pfp.org)
- TRAC Associates (www.tracassoc.com)
- Washington State Labor Council (www.wslc.org)



Other ESD Decision Packages

Caitlyn Jekel, Government Relations Director, ESD



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Other ESD Decision Packages



- Paid Family and Medical Leave Caseload adjustment DP
 - This is an annual maintenance level DP to adjust FTE to increased workloads related to increased program utilization
- WA Cares Operations
 - Policy level request for FTE to support the full implementation of WA Cares after the WA Cares system is complete
- WorkSource Information & Technology
 - Maintenance level request for ongoing maintenance and operations FTE
- Service Corps Support
 - Policy level request to offset program dollars for GF-S to support FTE who operate the program

Other ESD Decision Packages



- Re-Entry Employment Services
 - Policy level request in support of Gov. Inslee Executive Order and in coordination with Dept. of Corrections regarding justice impacted individuals and connecting them with employment services in every correctional facility upon release.
- Economic Security for All
 - Maintenance level request to consolidate funding under GF-S
- Agricultural Workforce Services
 - Maintenance level request to offset costs from state resource to GF-S
- Website Modernization
 - Policy level request to support the improvement and maintenance of ESD's customer facing websites

Public Comment



- If you would like to make public comment, please state your name and spell it so we can capture it correctly for the minutes, as well as the organization you represent if any.
- **Reminder:** Your comments are being recorded.
- If you would like your comments to be included in the meeting minutes, please submit them in writing via email to Camille Galeno at camille.galeno@esd.wa.gov. *(Camille's email will be posted in the chat)*
- Please limit your comments to **two minutes**.

Thank you

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**Break
Return at ()**