

2016 FULL EMPLOYMENT AWARD

Each year, the American Institute for Full Employment gives its Full Employment Award to a state that demonstrates exceptional commitment to helping Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants more effectively and efficiently return to work and avoid long-term unemployment.

In the past few years, many states have developed an organizational focus on the reemployment of UI claimants and instituted notable policies and initiatives for the active, early and meaningful engagement of UI claimants in reemployment strategies. This year, the Institute is proud to present its Full Employment Award to the **Nebraska Department of Labor** for its new reemployment services system.

Program Initiative – Nebraska Re-employment Services Program Enhancement

In evaluating their re-employment services for UI claimants, the Nebraska Department of Labor identified that services were being provided inconsistently and to an inadequate percentage of UI claimants with work search requirements. This was not in line with the department's vision for UI claimant re-employment services, prompting its leaders to explore ways to improve and expand services to assist claimants in finding jobs more quickly through early intervention and a full range of re-employment services.

Key Initiative Objectives

To meet their vision for claimant re-employment services, the department established the following primary objectives:

- Connect with all UI claimants who are required to search for work
- Combine Nebraska's Worker Profiling Reemployment Services (WPRS) and Reemployment Eligibility Assistance (REA) program into a single-service, state-wide strategy under the Reemployment Services Eligibility Assistance (RESEA) program
- Mandate participation of all non-exempt UI claimants
- Provide similar services to any voluntary job seeker wishing to participate
- Meet the federal requirements of the Reemployment Services (RES) and RESEA
- Provide universal services to maximize agency resources and eliminate duplication of services
- Enhance alignment between employment and training and UI systems to improve communication and data cross-matching and strengthen program integrity
- Increase customer awareness of all workforce services available to them
- Institute an overall focus on talent development to help claimants develop skills that are in demand
- Assist claimants in moving to new employment more quickly through early intervention and enhanced self-service

Initiative Design

The state redesigned its reemployment efforts in two stages. It implemented its Nebraska Re-employment Services (“NEres”) Phase I on October 1, 2014 and combined its Worker Profiling Re-employment Services (WPRS) and Reemployment Eligibility Assessment (REA) programs to allow customers to receive beneficial reemployment services via a single service strategy. NEres Phase I invited Employment Services and UI customers to participate, but only profiled UI individuals were required attendees.

The state fully launched phase II of its NEres program on October 1, 2015 providing a single comprehensive re-employment program to accelerate opportunities for individuals to obtain gainful employment. Phase II replaced Phase I, incorporated the RESEA program, included mandated participation of all non-exempt UI claimants and invited participation by employment services customers, including UI applicants who are determined ineligible for benefits. The new design also:

- Allowed a single-sign-on for customers who use services through both NEworks (Nebraska’s virtual One Stop labor exchange system) and the UI system
- Used a scheduler and attendance tracking case management system
- Provided virtual services and a user-friendly mobile application to give NEres participants 24/7 access to services
- Scheduled a group orientation for each claimant, after their waiting week, which included NEworks registration, LMI, skills assessment overview, and work search requirements
- Provided one-on-one services which include a UI eligibility assessment, creation of an individual employment plan, and a review of skills assessments and work search requirements
- Provided referrals to services which may include workshops, training services, veteran services and community agencies
- Provided up to three additional reemployment follow-up check-ins with claimants

Initiative Performance Measures and Results

The new program was a significant improvement and produced solid results, especially in exhaustion rates, despite not having reached full maturity in its implementation and impact in some other areas. Nebraska developed the following measures and achieved the following results for their full employment initiative:

1. Lowered its exhaustion and duration rates and increased its reemployment rate even as Nebraska’s total unemployment rate was increasing during year two (ending 9/30/2016) of implementation from 2.8% to 3.1%
2. Reduced the average exhaustion rate of UI claimants:
 - a. From 35.9% to 32.6% (a 9.2% drop) in year one and
 - b. From 32.6% to 27.1% (a 16.9% drop) in year two
3. Achieved increasing completion rates for claimants with NEres requirements:
 - a. 53.7% of claimants completed all of their requirements in year one
 - b. 67.5% of claimants completed all of their requirements in year two
4. Achieved estimated costs (staff, IT and other resources) in year two, as the program began to mature, of:

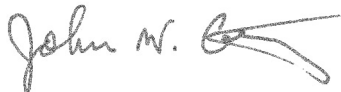
- a. \$151 for each of the 7,299 completers
- b. \$88 for each of the 3,515 noncompleters
5. Saved an estimated \$2.9 million to Nebraska's UI Trust Fund from lower duration rates and improved work search integrity for the two years since Phase I of NERes implementation.
6. Gained an overall return on investment of approximately \$1.50 for every \$1.00 expended during the two years of implementation for a 50% ROI.

In sum, Nebraska successfully and universally provided meaningful reemployment engagement for all of its nonexempt claimants and did so early in their claims, to help them navigate the job market and land a job as soon as possible. In doing so Nebraska efficiently integrated three reemployment programs – RES, RESEA and WPRS - for a highly effective approach for both staff and claimants.

Please join us in congratulating the Nebraska Department of Labor for their hard work and new program design that helps return UI claimants to employment and avoid long term unemployment. We encourage other states to consider their best practices and we welcome submissions for our 2017 Full Employment Award.

An overview of previous award winning programs can be found on our website at www.fullemployment.org.

Sincerely,
American Institute for Full Employment



John W. Courtney
President