

## Reemployment Grant Application Plan Program Narrative

The RI Department of Labor and Training continues to develop strategies to improve the quality and quantity of services for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants. UI Claims statistics indicates that Rhode Island continues to experience steadily climbing UI exhaustion rates. This data supports the use of PY04 reemployment funds to implement a refined methodology to determine the selection of UI claimants.

The Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training received funding for Program Years 2001-2003 to provide rapid and intensive reemployment services to UI claimants. Our experience in providing reemployment services during this time period has consistently demonstrated that early intervention and intensive services are effective approaches to returning people to work more quickly, thereby reducing the average UI duration.

As a result of these encouraging findings, all UI/ES initiatives (i.e., the Eligibility Review, Worker Profiling and the Reemployment Program) to provide services to UI claimants were restructured to ensure that all reemployment efforts encompassed the critical component of early intervention as the basis for customer selection. We expect that this consolidation of reemployment programs will result in an increase in the total number of claimants receiving staff-assisted direct services and have acknowledged this as one of the PY04 project's outcomes. The Department of Labor (DOL) has recognized and supported the value of this approach and Rhode Island's success in meeting and exceeding program outcomes for prior years attests to its effectiveness.

In PY04 we plan to target services to those UI claimants most in need of this early intervention and intensive service, i.e., those most likely to exhaust UI benefits. The current program year offers an opportune time for Rhode Island to utilize newly implemented automated resources in this focused effort.

This program years project will continue to focus on the following elements: integrated UI/ES services, early intervention of reemployment services to UI claimants, intensive staff-assisted reemployment services to UI claimants, and an LMI analysis of the project utilizing a controlled research component. The close proximity and accessibility of staff from these divisions optimize the key elements of communication, planning, development, implementation and analysis of the project.

All reemployment services will continue to be delivered through the state's One-Stop system, known as *ne/WORkri*. Project staff resides in *ne/WORkri* offices and the One-Stops offer both customer convenience and a wide array of services to facilitate participants' return to work. Reemployment project staff will readily provide linkages to other partners in the One-Stop, such as the Office of Rehabilitation Services, WIA, etc.,

when appropriate. Project staff will be utilizing America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS) as their case management tool to document all project activities. The ability of AOSOS to currently capture all records of UI claimants in receipt of their first payment makes this product ideal for reemployment activities. In addition, AOSOS was recently customized to identify and track all activities relating to the reemployment program.

RI has recently automated and consolidated the Reemployment/Profiling selection process, which currently replaces the three separate selection processes previously utilized. This program year's project emphasis is placed upon serving those UI claimants who are most likely to remain on UI for the duration of their claim. Lists of UI customers receiving first payments are now available to project staff via the Internet. The combined list will now be sorted by the highest to lowest ranking score as determined by the state's current statistical model used to identify those UI claimants who do not have a return to work date and are most likely to exhaust their benefits. Staff now have the ability to identify and select those hard to serve customers, many of who may have barriers affecting their probability of quickly returning to the workforce. This ambitious approach is reflected in the second projected project outcome.

After staff selects appropriate project participants, letters will be automatically generated and sent to all selected participants notifying them of a date and time to report in person to a *netWORKri* center in their geographic area for an orientation. This session will occur within the third to fourth week of the UI claim. This intervention at the beginning of the UI claim signals the importance of the reemployment project to the individual claimants. Our research has shown that claimants benefit from the program when contacted early, when in receipt of personalized, intensive staff efforts, and when it is clear that their continued receipt of UI payments is contingent upon participation in program activities.

The orientation, as well as all subsequent program activities, will focus on the personalized assistance given to each claimant designed to facilitate their return to work. Counselors will present each claimant with: LMI information specific to each participant's needs; referrals to positions which are timely and suitable; a personalized strategy for effective job search; and a schedule of intensive future activities centered in the One-Stop career facility, including attendance at workshops and employer recruitments, and meeting with the Employer Services Representative to explore on-the-job training possibilities and job development.

The RI Department of Labor and Training will continue to conduct research to compare the outcomes of those receiving rapid reemployment services to those who do not in order to determine the effectiveness of intensive services in achieving the desired outcomes.

PY04 program activities will also address areas earlier identified for continuous improvement. A large proportion of those on the lists of first UI payments were subsequently discovered to have confirmed dates to return to work to the same employer. We discovered that up to 44% of the customers who were selected for the project

subsequently returned to work with the same employer. This information is verified and documented by project staff which resulted in an unanticipated staff intensive effort on the part of the staff in the initial selection process. We will continue to work with UI to refine the participant pool by removing individuals from the list who are not appropriate for program participation.

## **OUTCOMES**

As stated previously, we have refocused our outcomes to reflect our goal to continue to increase services to UI claimants while focusing on those hardest to serve.

Specific program outcomes and measurement methods for PY2004 are indicated below:

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>MEASUREMENT</b>
Increase one-on-one service to UI claimants by 10%	Report of staff assisted services to UI claimants
Decrease the number of project participants who exhaust their UI claim by 10%	Report and comparison of UI claimants' exhaustion rates