

## Introduction

In accordance with Chapter 151 of the Acts of 2020, this is the second quarterly report from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) regarding the comprehensive modernization and transformation for “the deployment of an online delivery system for unemployment insurance compensation benefits” initiative. In addition to legislative instructions to focus on unemployment, EOLWD has continued its focus on post-pandemic and long-term re-employment goals in order to provide the workforce and employers of Massachusetts with a seamless and efficient job-loss-to-job gain experience. EOLWD is thankful to the Legislature for providing the funding to enable the Secretary’s mission to achieve the following goals that have been expanded and enhanced since the prior quarterly report:

- **Provide outstanding service to the workforce and businesses of MA.** Provide an improved customer experience, that is accessible to all, is compliant with the law, and available online, by phone, and in person. Deliver timely and accurate benefits and use the taxpayer’s money efficiently.
- **Be a national leader.** Be among top performing states on federal performance measures focusing on timely and high-quality services and ensuring accessibility and equity in providing services to the workforce.
- **Operate efficiently and ensure program integrity.** Ensure that benefits are being disbursed to valid and legitimate unemployment claims and eliminate ineffective or unnecessary business processes to better provide streamlined service to customers.
- **Provide accurate, timely and responsive reporting.** Ensure that data is accurate and is provided timely and can flexibly respond to stakeholder needs and inquiries.

## Program Strategy and Status:

As specified in the first quarterly report, the primary focus of the program remains the Commonwealth’s unemployment benefits delivery system and operations. Additionally, EOLWD continues to aggressively pursue a modernization and transformation strategy to fully serve the workforce and businesses of the Commonwealth. EOLWD has made significant progress in the four-phase plan that it presented in the first quarterly report. In chronological order, the plan calls for the modernization and transformation of:

- 1) The Department of Unemployment Assistance’s (DUA) operations and the underlying technology systems for claims processing, certification, disqualification, appeals, revenue, tax management and reporting, benefits administration, collections, etc.
- 2) The MassHire Department of Career Services’ (MDCS) re-employment operations and the underlying technology systems for career counseling, job search, training, re-employment grants and programs, virtual career pathways, employer support, etc.
- 3) The contact center operations and technology for both DUA and MDCS
- 4) The overall financial operations of DUA and MDCS

EOLWD is proud to report that since the first report significant progress has been made, and the program is on or ahead of schedule, as follows:

1. As planned, on August 27<sup>th</sup>, EOLWD released to the public, the vendor community, the advocacy community, and the Advisory Council a preliminary version of the Request for Response (RFR). These stakeholders were given two weeks to provide comments and input to EOLWD. EOLWD received approximately 400 comments from 15 interested parties. This stakeholder input resulted in significant changes and improvements to the final RFR.
2. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, the RFR was formally released to the vendor community with responses due on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Because the procurement is an RFR, and not an RFQ, any and all bidders are invited to bid. EOLWD has established a scoring approach that is fair and open to all. EOLWD has determined that it is in the best interest of all stakeholders that bids from organizations with proven successful experience and expertise in unemployment products receive priority. Such services will therefore be given a scoring incentive in order to reduce risk for our taxpayers.

3. An RFR for modernization and transformation of MDCS's re-employment operations and systems is in development and significant progress has been made over the past three months. EOLWD strives to have a version ready for public comment by early 2022.
4. Approaches and procurement plans for the modernization and transformation of the EOLWD contact center technology and operations will be finalized after the successful and timely execution of the unemployment and re-employment priorities.
5. The same holds true for the modernization and transformation of the EOLWD overall financial management systems.

#### **Progress on Accessibility and Engagement with the Advisory Council**

EOLWD continues to regularly engage with the Advisory Council regarding accessibility for the unemployment benefits system. The Advisory Council provided EOLWD with input in many forms including a large number of comments on the draft RFR. EOLWD addressed and incorporated nearly all of the Advisory Council's input regarding accessibility.