

Introduction

In accordance with Chapter 151 of the Acts of 2020, this is the fifth 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.” In addition to focusing on unemployment, EOLWD has continued its focus on post-pandemic and long-term re-employment goals 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 EOLWD to fulfill its mission to achieve the following goals:

- **Provide outstanding service to the workforce and businesses of MA:** Provide an improved customer experience that is accessible to all, delivers timely and accurate benefits, is compliant with the law, is available online, by phone, and in person, and uses taxpayer 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 eligible 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.

The following are the status and plans for each requirement where EOLWD owns the responsibility to act in Section 1790-3009 of Chapter 151 of the Acts of 2020 that relates solely to the “*development, implementation and deployment of an online delivery system for unemployment insurance compensation benefits*” as follows:

Ref	Bond Language	Current Status	Future Plan
3	provided further, that prior to the selection of consultants and prior to and during the development, implementation and deployment of the online delivery system, the secretary of labor and workforce development and the consultants after so chosen shall consult with an advisory council of the state workforce development board established in section 7 of chapter 23H of the General Laws	As soon as the selection of a vendor was no longer protected by procurement regulations, EOLWD informed the public and specifically the Advisory Council that FAST Enterprises was selected as the “Apparent Successful Bidder pending successful negotiations”. Shortly thereafter, the council provided EOLWD with the council’s feedback. EOLWD responded to the council, informing them that EOLWD had addressed most of their usability and accessibility concerns and would take the council’s input regarding software engineering and commercial contracting under consideration.	During the development, implementation, and deployment EOLWD looks forward to consulting with the council regarding their expertise and their community leverage in the areas of accessibility, access and adherence to unemployment law.
4	provided further, that the advisory council shall focus and provide feedback on the unemployment online delivery	The council continues to provide input and questions regarding alternate methods of access for individuals with	Ongoing

	system including alternate methods of access for individuals with barriers to online systems	barriers to online systems. EOLWD has expressed concern to the council regarding their input on matters outside of the focus indicated in the bond language.	
7	provided further, that the advisory council shall submit input to the secretary on the criteria to be utilized for the selection of the bid evaluation	The council has submitted to EOLWD various documents relating to recommended requirements and selection criteria that were incorporated into the RFR, were used for bid evaluation, and now have been incorporated into the draft contract(s) predominately as they relate to accessibility and access.	Requirement fulfilled and completed
8	provided further, that the secretary and the advisory council shall meet quarterly	The secretary has met with the council on the following dates: • March 18, 2021 • November 17, 2021 • February 25, 2022 • August 23, 2022 • Next meeting is scheduled for December 6, 2022	The secretary or the secretary's delegate will continue to meet with the council quarterly or as close to quarterly as calendars allows.
9	provided further, that the secretary shall submit quarterly reports on the progress of the development, implementation and deployment of an online delivery system for unemployment compensation benefits to the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate	EOLWD has submitted reports on: • June 30, 2021 • October 19, 2021 • March 4, 2022 • July 8, 2022 • November 4, 2022	EOLWD will continue to submit reports on a quarterly basis.
10	provided further, that the last quarterly report of 2021 shall include a plan for the deployment of the online system and an update on the progress of the development of the online delivery system, including a demonstration of the design and access to the online system and alternate methods of access for	Since the prior report EOLWD has worked with our selected partners to fully develop, plan, and contract for the deployment of the online unemployment system. This plan has been shared with the Advisory Council including a demonstration of the design and access to the online system. This plan takes into	Requirement fulfilled and completed

	individuals with barriers to access, including, but not limited to, individuals without internet access, individuals with limited English proficiency or individuals with disabilities; provided further, that the design shall comply with federal and state requirements for unemployment delivery systems and standards for digital accessibility, including the most recent version of web accessibility standards	consideration and has requirements and key performance indicators in the contract to address individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities. The contract requires compliance with relevant federal and state requirements for unemployment delivery systems and standards and incorporates the current version of web accessibility standards.	
11	provided further, that not later than 90 days of the submission of the development plan, the secretary shall hold a public hearing and solicit testimony on the plan; provided further, that not less than 30 days' notice shall be given for said public hearing	On September 19th, a notice of public hearing was posted for an October 18 th public hearing. The notice posted by EOLWD on the Legislature's website contained links to information on the development plans, timeline and a video demonstration of the accessibility and fair access aspects of the system for the public to view in order to allow sufficient time for the public to prepare testimony. The hearing was minimally attended and most of the attendees were members of the Advisory Council or others closely associated with the Advisory Council. No verbal testimony was provided. Only one submission of written testimony was provided the next day from the MA Employment Rights Coalition. A summary of the recommendations can be found following this status table.	Requirement fulfilled and completed
12	provided further, that not later than 120 days before the online delivery system becomes available for public use, the secretary shall submit a final report on the development of		EOLWD will comply with this requirement not later than 120 days after the final release to the public of the overall unemployment system. It is important to note that the system

	the system to the clerks of the house and senate that shall include, but not be limited to: (i) a summary of testimony received through the public hearing; (ii) a description of the recommendations received; (iii) a description of actions taken as a result of testimony received; and (iv) if action was not taken on a recommendation, a description as to why no action was taken on said recommendation		will likely be released in two or more modular releases.
13	provided further, that after consultation with the advisory council, the final report shall also set forth a process for user acceptance testing and for soliciting, accepting and resolving stakeholder feedback for continual improvement, including a public service announcement plan to keep all stakeholders informed about access and changes to the online delivery system		EOLWD will comply with this requirement in advance of the final report and looks forward to consulting with the advisory council on the matters of acceptance testing and stakeholder feedback at the appropriate times throughout the development, implementation, testing, and deployment of the system.

Program Status:

The primary focus of the program remains the Commonwealth's unemployment benefits delivery system and operations. On-schedule progress continues as follows:

1. The first modular phase of the project is the tax and revenue aspects of the unemployment system with a planned deployment date to the employer (and their authorized agents) community on June 19, 2023.
2. The entire project team has been re-trained on the latest standards and best practices by a company that is expert in fair-access, accessibility, and plain language. This same company will provide continued support to the project team throughout the development life cycles and will provide testing support.
3. An initial base definition and configuration of the system has been implemented and is currently undergoing review by EOLWD experts, external usability experts, and unemployment policies and guidelines experts.
4. Plans are being formulated for external accessibility and usability testing in the early part of 2023 along with extensive EOLWD and employer engagement for overall system functionality testing.
5. EOWLD and public stakeholder organizational change management and system usage training planning has started with needs analysis and formulation of communication, training, and post go-live support delivery and materials.
6. A plain language committee has been established and is being supported by external plain language experts for the review and revision of all tax/revenue related notices.

Progress on Accessibility and Engagement with the Advisory Council

EOLWD continues to work with the Advisory Council regarding accessibility for the unemployment benefits system. The Advisory Council continues to provide EOLWD with input and EOLWD continues to address and incorporate input from the Advisory Council regarding accessibility and equity.

Summary of Employment Rights Coalition (ERC) Written Testimony Related to the 10/18/22 Public Hearing:

- Considering worker and employer feedback throughout modernization
- Using plain language
- Accessible to all
- Alternate means of access by those that do not have access to technology
- Opportunities for employers, workers, and stakeholders to engage with system during all stages of development
- Limit automation of decision making
- Take advantage of opportunities to incorporate expert knowledge, particularly those offered free of cost by other government agencies
- Build on the experience of states with FAST Enterprises UI systems
- Facilitate ongoing public engagement and feedback