

Introduction

In accordance with Chapter 151 of the Acts of 2020, this is the seventh 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 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 in providing services to the workforce including timely and high-quality services, accessibility, and equity.
- **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 improve streamlined service to customers.
- **Provide accurate, timely, and responsive reporting:** Ensure that data is accurate and is provided timely, flexibly responding 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	<p>EOLWD has continued to consult with the Advisory Council on a bi-weekly basis on matters relating to accessibility, fair access, plain language, and adherence to unemployment law.</p> <p>During the past quarter, the Advisory Council was invited by EOLWD to participate in hands-on testing of the new system to verify employer accessibility, fair access, plain language, and adherence to unemployment law.</p> <p>Additionally, EOLWD engaged the services of an independent third-party consultant with nationally-recognized expertise in compliance with federal and state requirements and national best practices in accessibility and fair access.</p> <p>All testing results have been shared with the Advisory Council and identified issues are being resolved.</p>	EOLWD plans to continue to consult with the council regarding their expertise and 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 system including alternate methods of access for individuals with barriers to online systems	The Advisory Council continues to provide input and questions regarding alternate methods of access for individuals with barriers to online systems.	Ongoing
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 Advisory Council has submitted to EOLWD various documents for 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	<p>The secretary has met with the Advisory Council on the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 18, 2021 • November 17, 2021 • February 25, 2022 • August 23, 2022 • December 6, 2022 • March 28, 2023 • August 9, 2023 	The secretary 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	<p>EOLWD has submitted reports on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 30, 2021 • October 19, 2021 • March 4, 2022 • July 8, 2022 • November 14, 2022 • March 1, 2023 	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 individuals with barriers to		Requirement fulfilled and completed

	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		
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		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 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		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 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		EOLWD will comply with this requirement in advance of the final report and looks forward to consulting with the Advisory

<p>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</p>		<p>Council on the matters of acceptance testing and stakeholder feedback at the appropriate times throughout the development, implementation, testing, and deployment of the system.</p>
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Program Status:

The current focus of the program is the Commonwealth’s unemployment employer registration and administration, and tax administration delivery system and operations (Phase 1 – Tax). Over the next 3 months, work will begin on the benefits phase of the program. The updated deployment of Phase 1 will go-live on September 12, 2023. Since the last quarterly report:

1. Thorough testing of the Phase 1 – Tax system continues, with a focus on proper functional and operational legal compliance, usability, accessibility, and fair access.
2. The Phase 1 system has completed, and continues to test and verify, full and proper functionality of the system. Over 2,000 discrete functionality verifications and 300 end-to-end tests have been run multiple times. All test failures are fixed and retested immediately.
3. Formal accessibility and usability tests by independent third parties have been executed and all findings have been either resolved or are being tracked for resolution in collaboration with the independent testing organization.
4. The Advisory Council has participated in accessibility, usability, and fair access testing for Phase 1. All results of both Advisory Council and independent third-party accessibility testing have been shared with the Advisory Council.
5. EOLWD continues to inform and engage the employer and employer’s Third-Party Administrators (TPAs) communities to ensure they have had a chance to ask questions, make recommendations for improvements and perform initial tests.

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.