

Introduction

In accordance with Chapter 151 of the Acts of 2020, this is the fourth 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’s 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.

In this report, and in all future reports, EOLWD will provide the following 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 |
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| 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 | |

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| | 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. | |
| 8 | provided further, that the secretary and the advisory council shall meet quarterly | The secretary has met with the council on the following dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 18, 2021 • November 17, 2021 • February 25, 2022 | The secretary or the secretary's delegate will continue to meet with the council quarterly or as close to quarterly as the secretary's calendar 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 30, 2021 • October 19, 2021 • March 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 individuals with barriers to access, including, but not limited to, individuals without internet access, individuals | EOLWD assumes that the bond bill had anticipated that a fully developed plan would be available by the fourth quarter of 2021. However, the plan is being finalized as of this report. | Once the plan is finalized, EOLWD will provide the Legislature with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An update on the progress of development; 2. A demonstration of the design focusing on access as detailed in the language. |

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| | 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 | | EOLWD will hold a public hearing no later than 90 days after the submission of the development plan (e.g., sometime in September) that will be announced not less than 30 days in advance. |
| 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 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 | | 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. Since the March 2022 report, significant progress has been made, and the program is on schedule, as follows:

1. Since the last report, which indicated that EOLWD received six qualified bids in response to the RFR. The Source Selection Team (SST), which comprised key executives from EOLWD, the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS), and the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD), completed its review and evaluation of the bids and put the highest priority on accessibility and access. The SST completed its final selection recommendation to the Secretary of EOLWD and the Secretary of EOTSS and upon careful review and approval of the Secretaries contractual negotiations with the Apparent Successful Bidder, FAST Enterprises commenced. As of the submittal date of this report the contract has been fully executed, which will enable EOLWD to finalize the development plan for presentation and demonstration to the Legislature. Work will commence on the development immediately after being signed by EOLWD and FAST Enterprises.
2. Approaches and procurement plans for the modernization and transformation of the Department of Career Services re-employment operations and EOLWD contact center technology operations will be finalized after the successful and timely execution of the unemployment and re-employment priorities. 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 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.