



Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund Report

Outlook Report February 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

This Outlook Report provides the current status and updated projections of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund for the 2016 through 2020 outlook period.

As required by MGL Chapter 151A, Section 14F, DUA publishes quarterly outlooks for the Trust Fund based on forecasts for total unemployment rate, annual wage and salary growth rate, and annual labor force. DUA also provides monthly reports updating the current status of the Trust Fund.

New economic assumptions from Moody's economy.com used in this projections show higher average annual unemployment rates in the outlook period for all years as compared to the assumptions used in the October 2015 Outlook Report. For 2016, the average annual unemployment rate is up from 4.5 percent to 4.7 percent followed by an estimated 4.6 percent annual rate in 2017 which is one-tenth of a percentage point higher than the rate used in October. Total labor force is lower in 2016 to 2019 with an average annual decrease of 34,298. The annual wage and salary growth rates are lower in 2016 to 2018 but slightly higher in 2019.

The outlook presented is for the regular UI program based on 2015 employer experience rates, as well as benefit payments and employer contributions.

Estimate for the private contributory account are based on the experience rating table and \$15,000 wage base enacted in June 2014.. The legislation also sets private contributory employer contributions on rate schedule C for 2015 through 2017 payrolls.

The revised 2016 year-end projections indicate employer contributions, based on rate schedule C and a \$15,000 taxable wage base, will be \$1.270 billion or \$17 million more than the previous estimate of \$1.253 billion. This is due to an estimated increase in the projected taxable payroll. Estimated benefit payments of \$1.398 billion are \$11 million lower than the previous estimate of \$1.409 billion first released in the October 2015 Outlook Report. As a result, the private contributory account year-end balance estimated at \$717 million is \$28 million higher than the previous estimate of \$689 million released in January. However, the projected 2016 ending balance of \$717 million is \$110 million less than last year's ending balance.

Employer contributions for 2017 payrolls on schedule C and the \$15,000 taxable wage base are expected to be \$1.326 billion. Benefit payments are projected to be \$1.501 billion with a year-end balance of \$557 million that is \$16 million more than the published estimate of \$541 million released in the January 2016 Outlook Report.

In 2018 tax rate schedule F is projected to trigger for employer contributions and with a \$15,000 wage base generate contributions estimated at \$1.956 billion. Benefit payments are projected at \$1.570 billion. The 2018 year-end private contributory account balance is estimated at \$960 million, \$17 million more than the balance of \$943 million released in January.

Tax rate schedule F is again projected to trigger for 2019 employer payrolls and also on a \$15,000 taxable wage base. Employer contributions are projected to be \$1.905 billion and benefit payments estimated at \$1.609 billion. The year-end private contributory account balance is projected at \$1.284 billion.

Based on the current economic assumptions and statutory provisions, no borrowing from the federal unemployment account is anticipated in 2016 through 2020. The 2020 year-end balance is expected to be \$1.263 billion.

ECONOMIC ASSUMPTIONS

DUA utilizes independent economic forecasts as the basis for its estimates of income and expenditure for the Massachusetts Unemployment Insurance program. Moody's Economy.com January 2016 forecasts were used in the benefit financing simulations for this report. The current assumptions, along with assumptions used to produce the simulation estimates published in the August and October 2015 Outlook Trust Fund Reports are provided in Table 1.

The January 2016 Moody's Economy.com Annual Wage and Salary Growth Rate forecast for 2016 to 2018 were all revised down, while the 2019 rate was revised upwards. The 2016 wage and salary growth rate was revised downwards from 5.9 percent to 4.8 percent and the 2017 rate reduced from 6.3 percent to 5.1 percent.

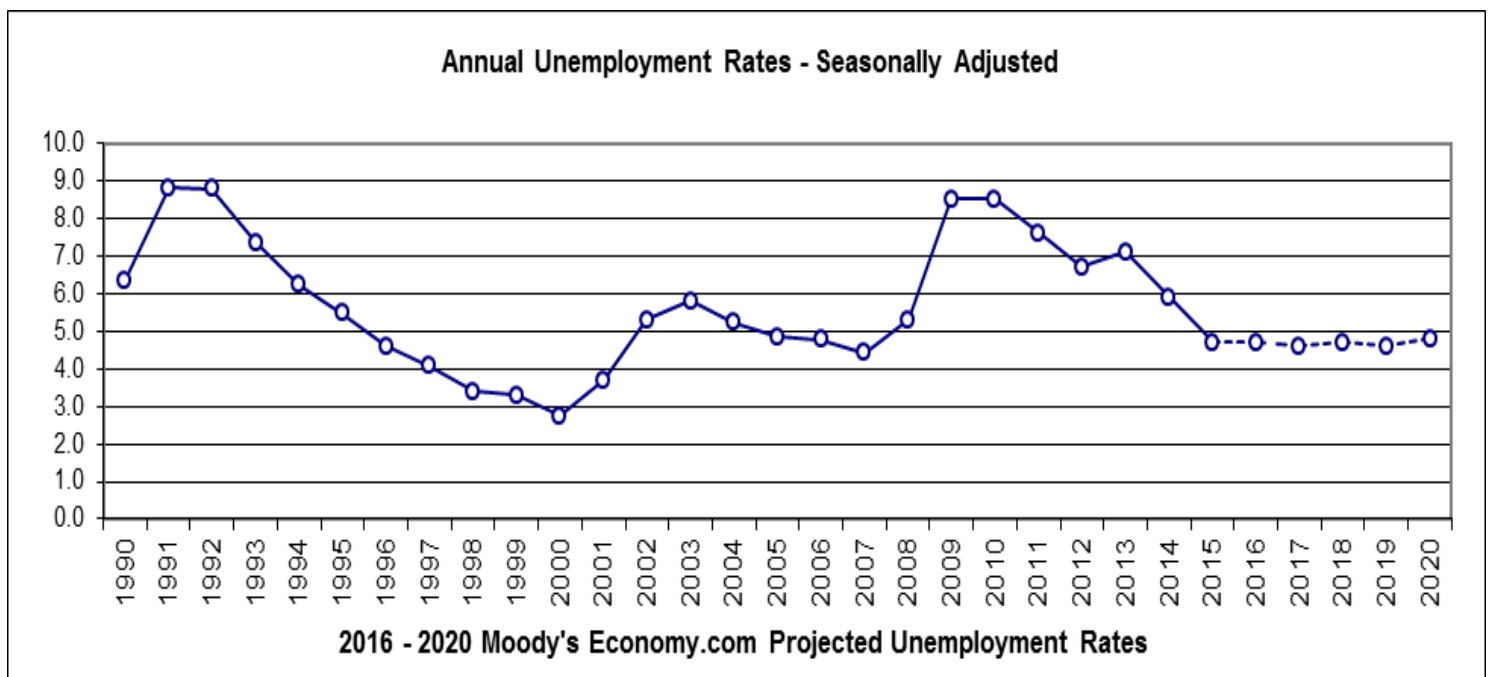
The projected annual average total unemployment rates for 2016 to 2018 were all revised upwards. An increase of two-tenths of a percentage point revisions were made in 2016 and 2018, from 4.5 percent to 4.7 percent for both years while in 2017 the rate went from 4.5 percent to 4.6 percent.

The annual labor force projections for 2016 to 2019 showed a large average annual decrease of 34,298 from the Moody's economy.com projections released in September. The 2016 labor force showed the largest decline of 63,890. The labor force is projected to be 3,716,592 in 2020.

Table 1: Moody's Economy.com Forecasts, Three Most Recent Reports

	Wage & Salary Growth (%)			Total Unemployment Rate (%)			Labor Force		
	15-Jul	15-Sep	16-Jan	14-Jul	14-Sep	15-Jan	15-Jul	15-Sep	16-Jan
2016	6.0	5.9	4.8	4.5	4.5	4.7	3,665,754	3,661,779	3,597,889
2017	6.4	6.3	5.1	4.5	4.5	4.6	3,679,647	3,678,275	3,640,585
2018	6.5	6.6	6.3	4.5	4.5	4.7	3,693,980	3,692,401	3,672,751
2019	5.1	5.3	5.4	4.6	4.6	4.6	3,715,541	3,713,301	3,697,339
2020	NA	NA	3.9	NA	NA	4.8	NA	NA	3,716,592

Source: Moody's Economy.com



UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TRUST FUND BALANCE

As of January 31, 2016, the Massachusetts Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund ending balance was \$855.2 million. The private contributory account balance was at \$743.1 million and the preliminary governmental contributory account balance was \$112.1 million. The private contributory account balance is \$11.8 million more than projected due to the combination of higher than expected employer contributions and lower benefit payments in the month of January.

The private contributory account is projected to have a balance of \$717 million at the end 2016, a reserve of \$557 million in 2017 and a projected balance of \$960 million by the end of 2018.

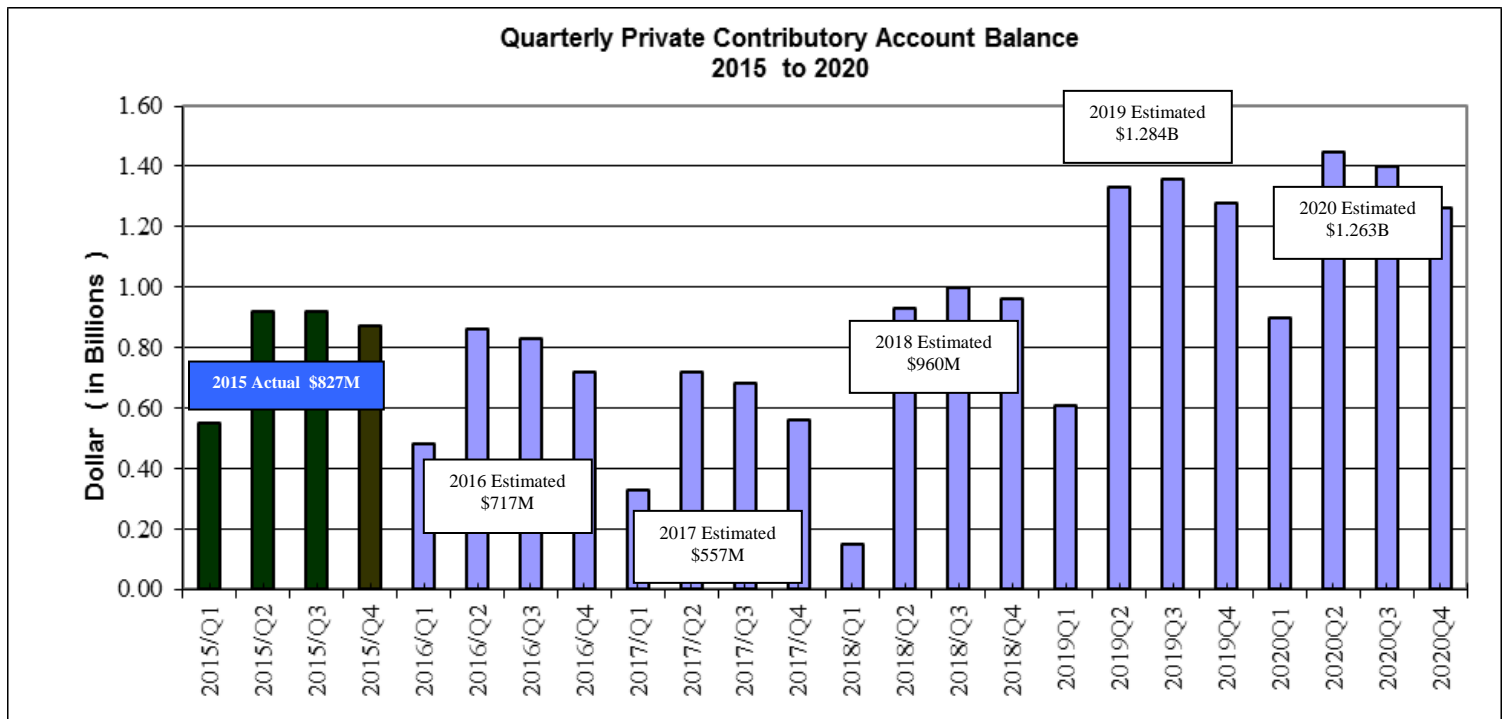
The 2016 year-end private contributory account balance of \$717 million is \$28 million higher than the previous estimate of \$689 million published in the January 2016 Outlook Report. The difference in the year-end balance is primarily the result of a projected increase in contributions due to larger estimated taxable payrolls. Year-end reserves as a percent of total wages are expected to be four-tenths of a percentage point.

The year-end 2017 account balance is expected to be \$557 million, a \$16 million increase from the previous estimate of \$541 million. The difference is a carryover of the higher 2016 year-end balance despite a projected increase in benefit payments.

The year-end 2018 account balance is expected to be \$960 million; \$17 million higher than the previous estimate of \$943 million. The difference is due to a projected increase in contributions caused by an estimated increase in taxable payrolls

The year-end 2019 account balance is estimated at \$1.284 billion, a \$55 million increase from the January released balance of \$1.229 billion. As in previous years, the difference was the result of a projected increase in employer contributions due to an estimated increase in taxable payrolls.

It is anticipated that no borrowing from the federal unemployment account will be required in the outlook period. The chart below shows the 2015 actual and projected quarterly private UI Fund balance through 2020.



BENEFIT OUTLAYS

The updated simulation for the outlook period resulted in a small decrease in benefit payments in 2016 but increases in 2017 to 2019.

Benefit payments in January 2016 totaled \$126.8 million, a \$4.5 million decrease from the January 2015 payment of \$131.3 million. The January benefit payments were \$6.6 million lower than the projection of \$133.4 million.

Initial claims in January 2016 were 5.8 percent lower than last year's January total and weeks compensated were 8.9 percent less. The average weekly benefit amount of \$453.74 was \$30.24 more than the \$423.50 amount in January 2015. The average duration of a claim was 18.1 weeks.

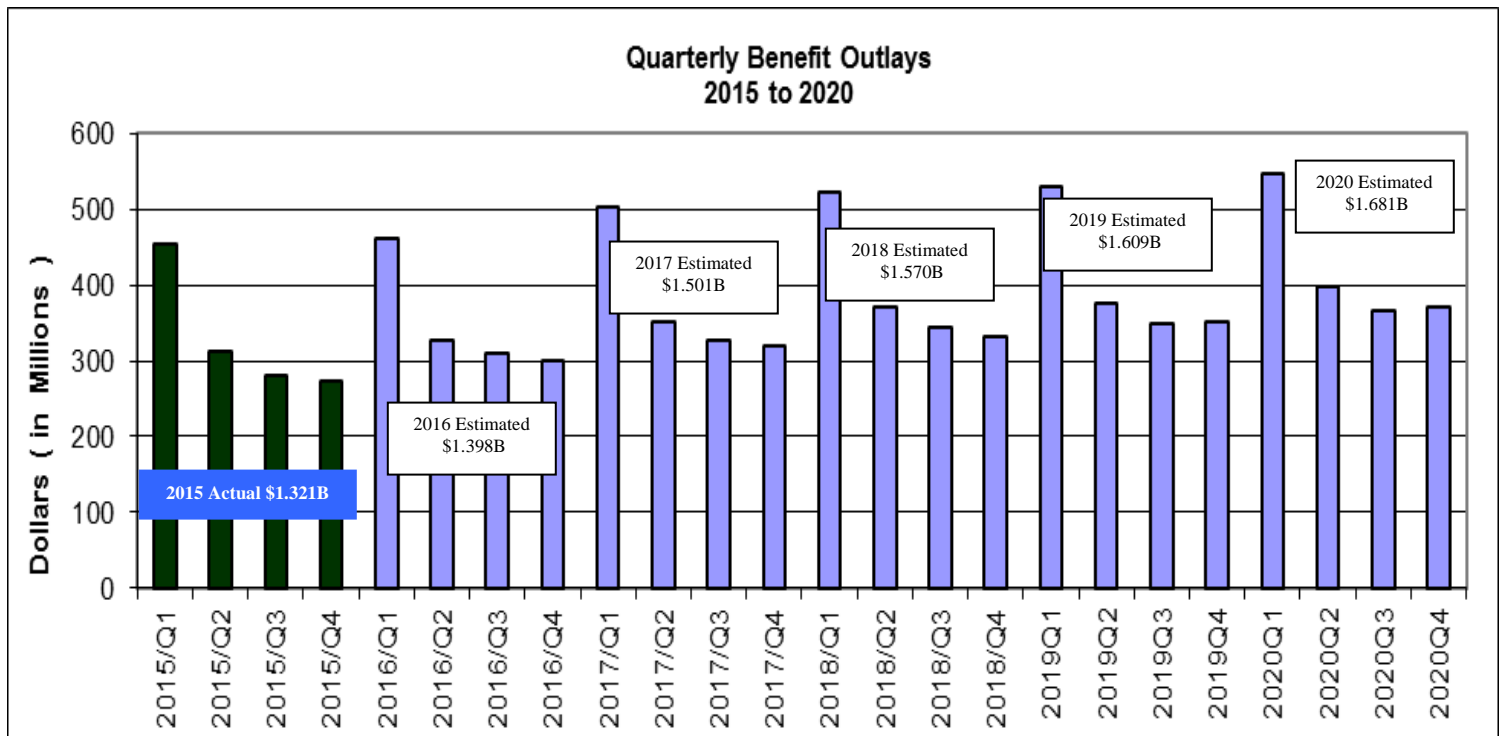
Benefit payments for 2016 are now estimated to be \$1.398 billion, \$11 million less than the previous estimate of \$1.409 billion first released in the October 2015 Outlook Report. The difference is due to a projected decrease in total weeks compensated and insured unemployment.

In 2017, benefit payments are projected to be \$1.501 billion, an increase of \$12 million from the previous estimate of \$1.489 billion caused by a projected increase in total weeks compensated.

For 2018, benefit payments are projected to be \$1.570 billion or \$22 million more than the previous estimate of \$1.548 billion. As in the previous year, the revision was caused by a projected increase in total weeks compensated due to two-tenths of a percentage point increase in the annual average unemployment rate.

For 2019, benefit payments which are now projected to be \$1.609 billion, at just one million dollars higher, are in-line with the previous estimate of \$1.608 billion

In 2020, benefit payments are expected to be \$1.681 billion, as the annual average unemployment rate is projected to be higher than 2019 rate.



EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS

Legislation enacted in June 2014 introduced a new experience rate table and a \$15,000 taxable wage base which started last year. Further, rate schedule C was set for employer contributions for 2015 to 2017 payrolls.

Employer contributions in January 2016 totaled \$43.1 million, a decrease of \$10.8 million from the January 2015 contributions of \$53.9 million. Employer contributions in January were \$5.3 million higher than the projection.

Updated projections for employer contributions for 2016, 2018 and 2019 show increases from the previous projections first released in the October 2015 Outlook Report

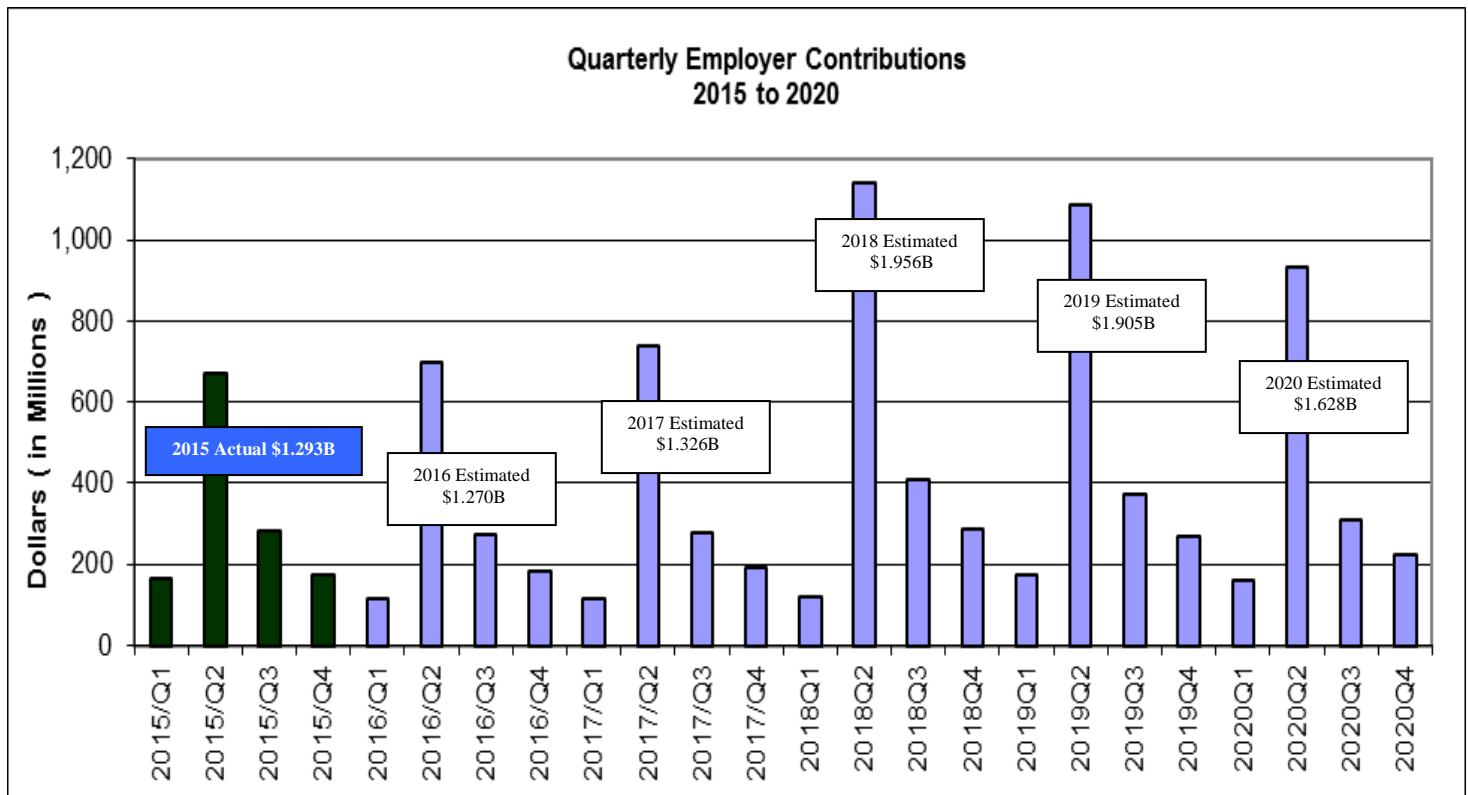
For 2016 employer contributions on rate schedule C and a \$15,000 taxable wage base are estimated at \$1.270 billion, a \$17 million increase from the previous estimate of \$1.253 billion. The increase was due to a projected increase in taxable payrolls in 2016 from the previously published estimate.

Employer contributions in 2017 on schedule C are estimated at \$1.326 billion, in-line with the previous estimate of \$1.328 billion.

For 2018, rate schedule F is projected to trigger for employer contributions generating an estimated \$1.956 billion in contributions, an increase of \$24 million from the previous estimate of \$1.932 billion. The increase was the result of a projected increase in taxable payrolls.

As in 2018, rate schedule F is projected to trigger for 2019 employer payrolls generating \$1.905 billion in contributions, \$38 million more than the \$1.867 million projection first released in the October 2015 Outlook Report.

Rate schedule E is projected to trigger for 2020 payrolls with an estimated employer contributions of \$1.628 billion. Table 2, on page 7, contains the new experience rate table that took effect in 2015.



TRUST FUND SOLVENCY

Federal regulations require States to meet several standards for interest free federal advances taken during the first five months of a calendar year and repaid in the fall. The first measure requires that in at least one of the five years prior to the calendar year the advances are taken, the trust fund reserves must be equal to an average high cost multiple solvency measure. The measure is phased in over five years from a multiple of .50 for 2014, .60 in 2015 up to 1.0 for advances in 2019. For 2016 the AHCM must be met based on 2015 performance.

The Average High Cost Multiple (AHCM) is computed based on the average benefit cost rate for the three highest years in the last twenty or the last three recessions whichever is higher.

Benefit costs are measured as a percent of the total UI wages, the total liability of the UI system, is the second measure. Using this measure indexes the benefit costs to total wages. The measure is designed to encourage

States to build sufficient reserves to finance an economic downturn similar to ones in the past. For Massachusetts the measures are done for the overall trust fund and include both private and governmental contributory accounts. The ratio of the average tax rate and the benefit costs rate over the previous five years must be at least 75 percent.

The chart below arrays the new federal regulations, the actual and projected year-end all contributory account AHCMs, the ratios of average tax rate and total wages (federal standard at 80 percent of previous year) and the average tax rate and the benefit cost rate over the preceding five years (federal standard at 75 percent).

If federal advances are necessary in 2016 through 2020, Massachusetts will not meet the federal standard for AHCM and therefore be subject to federal interest for all loans.

**Funding Standard for Interest-Free Loans Started in 2014
All Contributory Accounts (Estimated 2016 to 2020)**

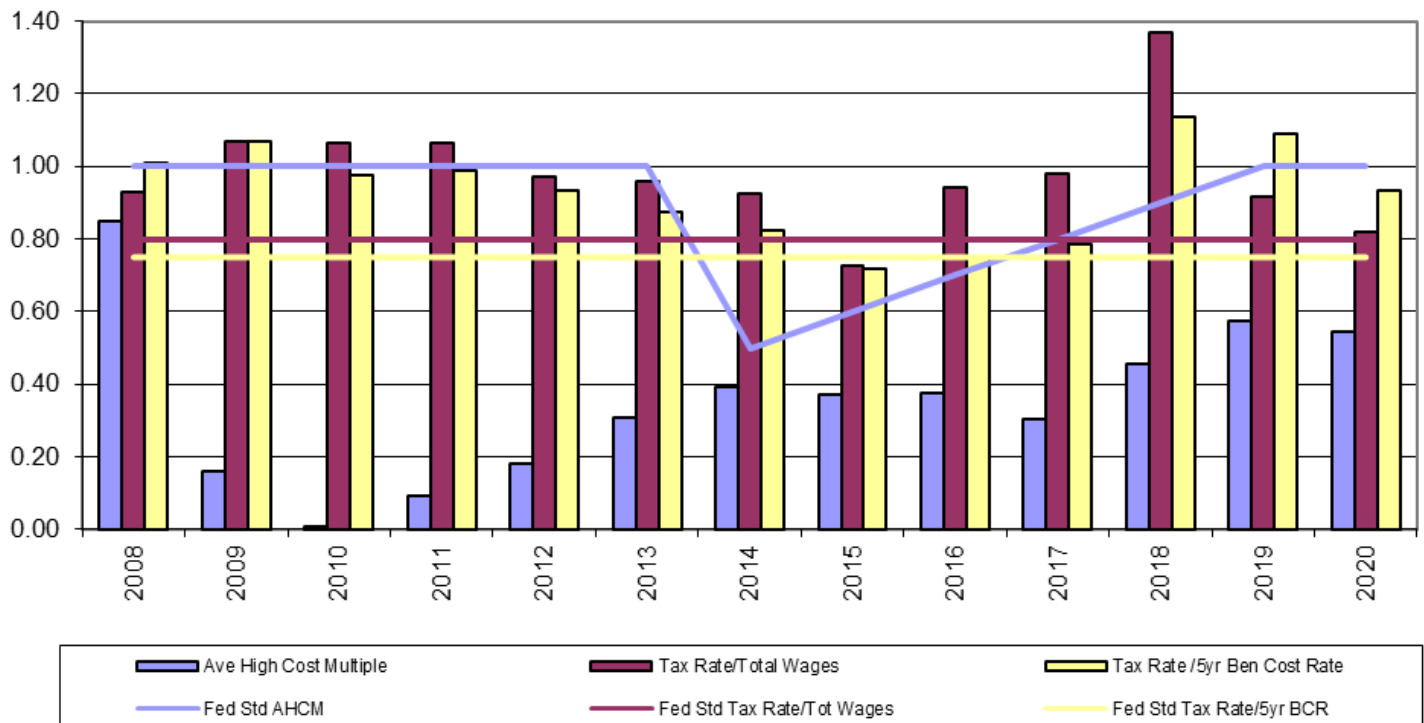


Table 2: Experience Rate Table

Employer Account Reserve Percentages	Unemployment Compensation Fund Reserve Percentage						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	1.65% and over	1.5% or more less than 1.65%	1.2% or more less than 1.5%	0.9% or more less than 1.2%	0.6% or more less than 0.9%	0.3% or more less than 0.6%	less than 0.3%
Negative Percentage	Employer Contribution Rate*						
23 or more	8.62	9.79	11.13	12.65	14.37	16.33	18.55
21.0 but less than 23.0	8.25	9.37	10.65	12.11	13.76	15.63	17.76
19.0 but less than 21.0	7.88	8.96	10.18	11.57	13.15	14.94	16.97
17.0 but less than 19.0	7.52	8.54	9.71	11.03	12.53	14.24	16.18
15.0 but less than 17.0	7.15	8.13	9.24	10.49	11.93	13.55	15.39
13.0 but less than 15.0	6.78	7.71	8.76	9.95	11.31	12.85	14.60
11.0 but less than 13.0	6.42	7.29	8.29	9.42	10.70	12.16	13.81
9.0 but less than 11.0	6.05	6.87	7.81	8.88	10.09	11.46	13.02
7.0 but less than 9.0	5.68	6.46	7.34	8.34	9.48	10.77	12.23
5.0 but less than 7.0	5.32	6.04	6.86	7.80	8.86	10.07	11.44
3.0 but less than 5.0	4.95	5.63	6.39	7.27	8.26	9.38	10.66
1.0 but less than 3.0	4.58	5.21	5.92	6.72	7.64	8.68	9.86
0.0 but less than 1.0	4.22	4.79	5.45	6.19	7.03	7.99	9.08
Positive Percentage							
0.0 but less than 0.5	3.14	3.57	4.06	4.61	5.24	5.96	6.77
0.5 but less than 1.0	3.06	3.48	3.96	4.50	5.11	5.81	6.60
1.0 but less than 1.5	2.98	3.39	3.85	4.38	4.98	5.65	6.43
1.5 but less than 2.0	2.90	3.30	3.75	4.26	4.84	5.50	6.25
2.0 but less than 2.5	2.82	3.21	3.65	4.14	4.71	5.35	6.08
2.5 but less than 3.0	2.75	3.12	3.54	4.02	4.57	5.20	5.90
3.0 but less than 3.5	2.67	3.03	3.44	3.91	4.44	5.05	5.74
3.5 but less than 4.0	2.58	2.93	3.33	3.79	4.30	4.89	5.56
4.0 but less than 4.5	2.50	2.84	3.23	3.67	4.17	4.74	5.38
4.5 but less than 5.0	2.42	2.75	3.13	3.55	4.04	4.59	5.21
5.0 but less than 5.5	2.34	2.66	3.02	3.43	3.90	4.43	5.04
5.5 but less than 6.0	2.25	2.56	2.91	3.31	3.76	4.28	4.86
6.0 but less than 6.5	2.17	2.47	2.81	3.20	3.63	4.13	4.69
6.5 but less than 7.0	2.09	2.38	2.71	3.08	3.50	3.97	4.51
7.0 but less than 7.5	2.02	2.30	2.61	2.96	3.37	3.82	4.35
7.5 but less than 8.0	1.94	2.20	2.50	2.84	3.23	3.67	4.17
8.0 but less than 8.5	1.85	2.10	2.39	2.72	3.09	3.51	3.99
8.5 but less than 9.0	1.78	2.02	2.29	2.61	2.96	3.37	3.82
9.0 but less than 9.5	1.70	1.93	2.19	2.49	2.82	3.21	3.65
9.5 but less than 10.0	1.61	1.83	2.08	2.36	2.69	3.05	3.47
10.0 but less than 10.5	1.53	1.74	1.98	2.25	2.56	2.91	3.30
10.5 but less than 11.0	1.45	1.65	1.87	2.13	2.42	2.75	3.12
11.0 but less than 11.5	1.37	1.56	1.77	2.01	2.29	2.60	2.96
11.5 but less than 12.0	1.29	1.47	1.67	1.89	2.15	2.45	2.78
12.0 but less than 12.5	1.21	1.37	1.56	1.77	2.01	2.29	2.60
12.5 but less than 13.0	1.13	1.28	1.46	1.66	1.89	2.14	2.43
13.0 but less than 13.5	1.05	1.19	1.35	1.54	1.75	1.99	2.26
13.5 but less than 14.0	0.97	1.10	1.25	1.42	1.61	1.83	2.08
14.0 but less than 15.0	0.81	0.92	1.04	1.18	1.34	1.53	1.73
15.0 but less than 16.0	0.73	0.83	0.94	1.07	1.21	1.38	1.57
16.0 but less than 17.0	0.64	0.73	0.83	0.95	1.08	1.22	1.39
17.0 or more	0.56	0.64	0.73	0.83	0.94	1.07	1.21

Employer Contribution Rate is applied to the first \$15,000 of wages per employee.

The current law simulation estimates for 2016 through 2020 are displayed in Tables 3 and 4, below.

Table 3: Unemployment Trust Fund Projections for the Private Contributory Account, 2016 - 2020

(All \$ in Millions except Average Cost/Employee)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Balance, January 1	\$836	\$827	\$717	\$557	\$960	\$1,284
Income	\$1,293	\$1,270	\$1,326	\$1,956	\$1,905	\$1,628
Trust Fund Interest	\$19	\$18	\$14	\$17	\$28	\$31
Benefit Outlays	\$1,321	\$1,398	\$1,501	\$1,570	\$1,609	\$1,681
Federal Loan Interests						
Balance, December 31	\$827	\$717	\$557	\$960	\$1,284	\$1,263
Schedule*	"C"	"C"	"C"	"F"	"F"	"E"
Average Cost/Employee	\$491	\$481	\$497	\$727	\$704	\$598

* 2015 to 2017 rate schedules set by Legislation, 2018 to 2020 rate schedule projected based on current statutory triggers. Taxable Wage Base of \$15,000 effective beginning 2015.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance benefit financing simulation

Figures may not add up due to rounding.

Table 4: Benefit Financing Simulation Output

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Covered Payroll (\$Billions)	\$169.4	\$175.7	\$186.8	\$200.2	\$212.5	\$222.0
Contributory Payroll (\$Billions)	\$40.6	\$40.7	\$41.4	\$42.2	\$42.8	\$43.3
Contributory Wage Proportion	24.0%	23.2%	22.2%	21.1%	20.1%	19.5%
Nominal Contribution Rate	3.1%	3.1%	3.2%	4.8%	4.4%	3.7%
Contributions as % of Total Payroll	0.76%	0.72%	0.71%	0.98%	0.90%	0.73%
Benefits as a % of Total Payroll	0.78%	0.80%	0.80%	0.78%	0.76%	0.76%
Trust Fund Balance as % of Total Payroll	0.49%	0.41%	0.30%	0.48%	0.60%	0.57%
Solvency Assessment	1.00%	0.81%	1.03%	1.06%	1.04%	1.06%
AHCM	0.28	0.24	0.17	0.28	0.35	0.33
Covered Employment (Thousands)	3,371	3,378	3,415	3,444	3,467	3,483
Total Unemployment Rate	4.7%	4.7%	4.6%	4.7%	4.6%	4.8%
Insured Unemployment Rate	2.1%	2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%

Source: Economic assumptions are based on Moody's Economy.com forecasts and Massachusetts benefit financing simulation.

Figures may not add up due to rounding.

APPENDIX UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE DEFINITIONS

AVERAGE HIGH COST RATE:

The average of the three highest calendar benefit cost rates in the last 20 years (or a period including three recessions, if longer). The benefit cost rates private UI contributory employers benefits paid (including the state's share of extended benefits when applicable) as a percent of their total wages.

AVERAGE HIGH COST MULTIPLE (AHCM):

The ratio of the year-end trust fund balance as a percent of total wages divided by the Average High Cost Rate.

BENEFITS PAID:

The unemployment insurance benefits paid to individuals funded through the state program. This includes all weeks compensated including partial payments.

CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE:

The estimated average number of Massachusetts residents who are either employed or unemployed in the week of the 12th for the three months of the quarter.

COVERED EMPLOYMENT:

The number of employees covered by Unemployment Insurance reported to the state by employers. The numbers represent the count of all employees for the payroll period that includes the 12th of the month.

HIGH-COST MULTIPLE (HCM):

The ratio of the Trust Fund balance as a percent of total wages divided by the High Cost Rate. The High Cost Rate is the highest historical ratio of benefits paid to total wages for a 12-month period.

INITIAL CLAIMS:

Any notice of unemployment filed by an individual (1) to request a new determination of entitlement to and eligibility for unemployment compensation or (2) to begin a second or subsequent period of eligibility within a benefit year or period of eligibility following an additional separation from employment.

INSURED UNEMPLOYED:

The average number of weeks claimed for the three months of the quarter.

INSURED UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (IUR):

The rate computed by dividing Insured Unemployed for the current quarter by the average Covered Employment for the first four of the last six completed quarters.

OUTSTANDING LOAN BALANCES:

Balance, as of the end of the quarter, of advances acquired by the state under Title XII of the Social Security Act which allows states to use repayable advances from the federal UI account.

SOLVENCY ASSESSMENT:

The annual factor assessed to employer taxable payrolls to cover the net balance of charges and credits not directly assigned to individual employers.

TAXABLE WAGES:

Wages paid to covered employees that are subject to State Unemployment Insurance taxes. For Massachusetts, the first \$15,000 in wages per employee is covered by UI,

TAXABLE WAGE BASE:

For each State, the maximum amount of wages paid to an employee by an employer during a year in which their employment is subject to UI taxes. Wages above this amount are not subject to UI tax.

TOTAL UNEMPLOYED:

The estimated average number of residents, 16 years of age or older, who do not have a job but are available for work

and actively seeking work in the week of the 12th for the three months of the quarter. This includes individuals on layoff and waiting to report to a new job within 30 days.

TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (TUR):

The rate computed by dividing Total Unemployed by the Civilian Labor Force.

TOTAL WAGES:

All wages or remuneration paid to workers on all payrolls covered by Unemployment Insurance.

TRUST FUND BALANCE (TF):

The balance in the individual state account in the Unemployment Trust Fund. Outlook estimates are for the private contributory account within the Trust Fund.

TRUST FUND AS % OF TAXABLE WAGES:

Year-end Trust Fund Balance as a percent of estimated taxable wages for the most recent 12 months; also referred to as the Reserve Ratio. Estimated wages are based on the latest growth rate in the 12 month moving average (MA).

UNEMPLOYMENT TRUST FUND (UTF):

A fund established in the Treasury of United States which contains all monies deposited by state agencies to the credit of their unemployment fund accounts.

WEEKS CLAIMED:

The number of weeks claimed for UI benefits, including weeks for which a waiting period or fixed disqualification period is being served. Interstate claims are counted in the state of residence.

WEEKS COMPENSATED:

The number of weeks claimed for which UI benefits are paid. Weeks compensated for partial unemployment are included. Interstate claims are counted in the paying state.