



## **Retooling Washington Work Group 1**

*Coordinated Outreach to  
Unemployment Insurance (UI) Exhaustees*

**Progress Report**

*October 2010 - May 2011*

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## Executive summary

Washington State is facing the most difficult economic times since the Great Depression. At the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's (WTECB) Retooling Washington's Future meeting on October 5, 2010, participants discussed ideas about how Washington's workforce system can make a difference in the near term. While many agencies are already providing services to this specific population, it became evident that coordinating efforts would be beneficial and provide valuable information to exhaustees.

The specific directive for Work Group 1 is "coordinated outreach to UI exhaustees, including demographic breakdown of who is in the pool, some market analysis of skills available and work history, development of service tool chest and identification of service points for referral. Also includes development of the actual outreach strategy (collateral materials, single website, etc.)."

To effectively coordinate outreach activities to the growing population of those exhausting all unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, Work Group 1 has met monthly since its inception last fall.

This progress report details the accomplishments of Work Group 1 and provides a clear plan for the next steps in each of the three key deliverables:

- 1) Data;
- 2) Exhaustee Outreach Plan/Resource referral information for exhaustees; and
- 3) Resource referral toolkits for service providers.

## Members

Members of this workgroup are comprised of staff from multiple organizations that provide a diverse collection of services to exhaustees.

Organizations below are listed in alphabetical order:

- Department of Commerce (COM)
- Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)
- Employment Security Department (ESD)
- Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB)
- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)
- WA Workforce Association (WWA)
- WorkForce Central
- Workforce Development Council of Snohomish County (WDCSC)
- Workforce Development Council of Spokane
- Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB)

## **Deliverables**

### **Data**

To help inform outreach efforts and service provision statewide, Employment Security Department (ESD) publishes updated exhaustee data reports each month.

#### *Collection*

Unemployment Insurance (UI) data staff within ESD runs a report at the end of each calendar month to collect relevant exhaustee data. After collection, this information is analyzed and published on the WTECB Retooling WA Work Group 1 web site: (<http://www.wtb.wa.gov/UIExhaustereports.asp>).

#### *Demographics*

The data collected from this report provides demographic information including:

- age;
- education;
- gender;
- occupation;
- industry;
- veterans status; and
- disability status.

Exhaustee benefit information is provided statewide, by county and by legislative and congressional districts.

#### *Stakeholders*

ESD shares monthly updated exhaustee data with a variety of internal and external stakeholders:

- Workforce, Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB);
- Workforce Development Council Executive Directors;
- Employment Security Department Area Directors;
- Agency partners;
- Key legislators; and
- Work Group 1 members.

#### *Trends*

ESD staff examined exhaustee demographic information to identify trends that may be useful for outreach purposes. Analysis is provided from November 2009, when the first claimants began exhausting all entitlements, through March 2011. Staff found:

- Exhaustions began to rise in February 2010 and hit an early peak in March 2010.
- Starting in December 2010 through early 2011, weekly exhaustion rates remained high at over 1,000 new exhaustees each week.

ESD staff also examined exhaustions over time to identify trends connected with various demographic and employment factors. The initial analysis shows:

- The relative proportions of exhaustions by industry, occupation, gender, education, and ethnicity remain relatively stable over time even as the absolute number of exhaustees rises.
- ESD's Labor Market and Economic Analysis (LMEA) branch is conducting a more in-depth review of exhaustee data including regression analyses which may reveal more useful information in the future.

Detailed charts summarizing this trend analysis are available on the WTECB Retooling WA Work Group 1 web site: (<http://www.wtb.wa.gov/UIExhaustreports.asp>).

### *Accomplishments to date*

#### *Survey*

- ESD's Labor Market and Economic Analysis branch (LMEA) conducted a survey of the exhaustee population by email. Before deploying into the field, both internal and external stakeholders reviewed the survey and provided feedback. This survey closed April 29, 2011 with results being used to inform future strategies of this workgroup.
- ESD continues to provide updated monthly data reports statewide, by county, by legislative district, and congressional district.
- ESD has expanded exhaustee data to include benefit information by congressional district.
- Work Group 1 has partnered with WTECB to identify the number of exhaustee data web hits: approximately 1,400 since February 2011.

#### *Next steps*

- Final exhaustee survey results of the population and resource guide will be published and shared with WTECB and Work Group 1 when available.
- ESD is researching ways to expand exhaustee data that includes wage and re-employment information.
- ESD is exploring methodologies to project the number and location of those claimants most likely to exhaust.

### **Exhaustee Outreach Plan/resource referral information for exhaustees**

Outreach goals and strategies continue to be developed in collaboration with local partners; as well as identifying and providing resource referral information to the growing population of exhaustees.

### *Accomplishments to date*

#### **Statewide**

#### *Auto-dialer messages sent to exhaustees*

- The sub-group that included members of Work Group 1 met to identify what the state workgroup can do to support local areas in terms of communication and messaging; sub-group discussions have been incorporated into Work Group 1 meetings and ESD is launching a statewide communication message via the

auto-dialer system that will begin on May 5, 2011 and run through the end of the year with an assessment occurring at the three-month mark. The series of three messages aims to provide WorkSource service information to exhaustees. Initially, these calls will focus on the current number exhaustees<sup>1</sup> starting with the most recent, and then target new exhaustees each week.

- ESD made modifications to the Telecenter script so callers are now referred to the statewide resource guide and other services available through WorkSource.
- The Chair of the WTECB sent a letter to state and federal legislators regarding Retooling WA that included a brief description of efforts thus far and updated exhaustee data for both legislative and congressional districts statewide.

#### *Resource guide*

- Workgroup 1 developed a Resource Guide to assist individuals who were about to exhaust their UI benefits. The Resource Guide includes resources that may be of assistance to claimants and their families.
- The Resource Guide is available in Spanish.
- Last December, 230,000 claimants who were about to exhaust all UI benefits received this one-page resource guide. This resource guide is available online at [www.esd.wa.gov](http://www.esd.wa.gov) [type “community resources” in the search box] and other state agency partner websites, including WTECB’s Retooling WA site.
- All providers on the resource guide were contacted before their organization was listed on the guide.
- All providers on the resource guide have been contacted a second time. ESD confirmed contact information was still correct. It was also confirmed that providers were still comfortable being listed on the guide.
- An online survey is linked to the resource guide. For the next 90 days, ESD will continue to gather feedback to measure the effectiveness of the guide and help improve future service delivery. The online link to the survey has also been sent to partner agencies.
- The survey is also available in Spanish. Initial survey results show users find this resource guide to be helpful and would refer others to this guide for assistance.

#### *Triage unit established to serve exhaustees*

- ESD established a new unit of employees (over 50 employees) and phone number just to handle questions from individuals about to exhaust emergency unemployment compensation (EUC). When individuals had questions about exhausting, they contacted this unit and were notified about the resource guide and WorkSource services.

#### **Ongoing local efforts**

Due to the unique needs of each local area and the varying availability of local resources, each Workforce Development Area (WDA) has flexibility to meet the diverse needs of their customers. Many WDAs have begun developing plans and implementing new, focused strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhaustee data count as of April 30, 2011 is 50,457.

- **Auto-dialer messages** - frontline staff continue to reach out to those claimants about to exhaust UI benefits, to ensure they're aware of all available services. Auto-dialer messages either by mail, email or phone are being explored as the mechanism for communicating with future exhaustees. These messages briefly explain WorkSource services and offer a testimonial to present the value of WorkSource to the job seeker. These messages are being piloted in several WDAs statewide.
- **Emergency unemployment compensation (EUC) orientations** - EUC claimants are invited to attend new, targeted orientations at their local WorkSource office. These orientation sessions are designed for these claimants to motivate and explain available employment services. These sessions also focus on overcoming barriers many long-term unemployed claimants face, such as depression, loss of confidence or the need to access other community resources to assist with possible financial needs.
- **Continuous employment groups (CEGs)** - several WDAs are developing CEGs, which are designed to engage and motivate job seekers. Participants will have the opportunity to work one-on-one with an employment counselor and a CEG Industry Team based on employment goals. Teams are emailed information about job openings relevant to that industry and are offered support.
- **New workshops and workgroups** focusing on the realities of today's economy and the changing needs of the long-term unemployed are currently in use or are being developed:
  - **Dealing with Job Loss** –This is a detailed workshop to assist job seekers in understanding their feelings of grief and depression during a period of unemployment and helps job seekers start over.
  - **Surviving the Recession information session** –This connects job seekers to services within the county, including tips on how to avoid evictions and utility disconnects.

*Next steps*

- ESD is looking into translating the resource guide and survey into additional languages, other than the Spanish and English versions currently offered.
- The statewide auto-dialer message is being explored as a mechanism for local areas to communicate with the long-term unemployed. ESD is currently working with specific WDAs to tailor messages using this system to highlight local efforts underway.
- Work Group 1 will continue to identify effective and efficient mechanisms to capture local activities and share information about those activities, including success and barriers to success, both at local and state levels.

## Resource referral toolkits for service providers

### *Accomplishments to date*

The workgroup is sharing information with frontline staff in WorkSource offices statewide that are directly working with claimants who are exhausting or have exhausted all UI benefits. Some examples include the resource guide and other resources from local partners.

Equally important is how the workgroup can support the frontline providers themselves:

### *Training*

- DSHS/DVR offered unspent ARRA federal funds for ESD to provide Motivational Interviewing training to roughly 240 frontline staff in 6 WorkSource locations<sup>2</sup> statewide. Training is scheduled to begin at the end of May and run through October. Motivational Interviewing has been shown to help staff engage more effectively with customers and increase successful outcomes and decrease frustration. Those who have gone through this training report it resulted in a high success rate and improved interaction with customers.
- ESD offers a one-day class focusing on assessing and de-escalating angry, hostile and actual or potentially violent customers.
- ESD developed a curriculum for a one-day class that assists staff in identifying issues related to stress and time management while developing strategies to help meet personal and/or professional challenges.
- DSHS/DVR has recommended a process to refer to clients to DVR services when applicable. This may include an online assessment and instant referral to DVR office closest to the client. DVR and ESD staff have met and are pursuing this idea.

### *Local efforts*

- Data from frontline staff has been gathered to capture how and when claimants likely to exhaust are contacted and other services being offered in WorkSource offices statewide.
- Issue briefs detailing services and activities for serving the long-term unemployed by each WDA statewide, have been developed and are available on the Work Group 1 web site:  
<http://www.esd.wa.gov/newsandinformation/legresources/retoolingwa/wdamap.php>.

### *Next steps*

- Frontline staff and partner staff will register for Motivational Interviewing training; the training facilitator will conduct a survey and share those results with Work Group 1.
- Work Group 1 will explore creating a topical search index that includes WDA information, to be posted on the Work Group 1 web site.

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<sup>2</sup> Trainings are being offered in Spokane, Lakewood, Moses Lake, Vancouver, Lynnwood and Auburn.

- Work Group 1 members will discuss the local data gathered to identify possible messaging activities or opportunities, in close coordination area directors and executive directors.
- Frontline staff will continue to receive training targeted towards de-escalating angry, hostile customers and how to deal with intense, stressful situations.

**###**

## Action plan and milestones

Milestone	Date Completed
Work Group 1 meetings began; initial discussions included members, the development of a charter and outreach plan, as well as a resource guide for those exhausting.	October 27
ESD began publishing and providing regular updates of monthly UI exhaustee data that provides demographics and benefit information at the state and county levels, and by legislative and congressional districts.	October 27
Resource guide with contact information was inserted into a UI mailer that reached 230,000 claimants; this information was posted on the Work Group 1 web site and partner web sites; it is also distributed in WorkSource offices statewide.	December 1
A survey was developed to measure the effectiveness of the resource guide and is posted online with the resource guide <a href="http://www.esd.wa.gov">www.esd.wa.gov</a> [type in “community resources” into the search box].	March 7
ESD’s UI Telecenter script was updated to contain the resource guide information.	March 9
ESD survey of total exhaustee population began; it closed April 29, 2011 with results to be published in the next few weeks.	March 18
Expanded available exhaustee data; provided update to Work Group 1 and linked to WTECB web page (see data section for details).	April 1
Statewide auto-dialer messaging to exhaustee population scheduled to begin; messages will go out each week to reach new exhaustees.	May 5
WTECB – Work Group 1 will provide an update to the Board on progress, including six-month report to date.	May 5
Develop draft dashboard of measures.	June 14
Provide one-year progress report to the WTECB.	October 2011