

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 19-24
	DATE January 17, 2025

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
RAPID RESPONSE COORDINATORS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD CHAIRS AND DIRECTORS

FROM: JOSÉ JAVIER RODRÍGUEZ 
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Announcing *The Disaster Lifecycle from Preparedness through Resiliency: A Guide for State Workforce Agencies*

1. **Purpose.** To help state workforce agencies (SWA) and their partners develop a comprehensive, adaptable and strategic disaster preparedness and response planning process that can be quickly implemented by staff and partners who are well-trained, well-aligned, and fully supported, ETA is publishing *The Disaster Lifecycle from Preparedness through Resiliency: A Guide for State Workforce Agencies (the Guide)*.
2. **Action Requested.** SWAs can use the *Guide* to review their current disaster preparedness strategies and policies; identify changes along with environmental and socioeconomic considerations; and update/create policies that allow for easy adaptation and revision as needed.
3. **Summary and Background.**
 - a. Summary – Between 2011 and 2023, 36 states, representing 72 percent of the United States, experienced ten or more major disaster declarations. As of December 1, 2024, there have been over 170 disaster declarations this calendar year covering everything from severe storms and tornadoes to floods, landslides, and wildfires. Each of these events has a significant effect on the impacted community and in each of these events, the workforce system has a role in the preparation, response, and recovery. It is important that during these events, the functions and services of the public workforce system do not stop. Having the policies and strategies in place ahead of time, and preparing well-trained staff helps ensure continuous, uninterrupted flows of tasks. Based on the successful practices of states experienced in disaster response, ETA recommends all SWAs review and refresh the four elements of the “disaster lifecycle”: readiness, response, recovery, and resiliency. Structuring strategies and processes for all four of these elements can provide a well-organized roadmap for success.

- b. Background – There are three primary programs administered by the Employment and Training Administration that relate to disaster response. Rapid Response allows states and local workforce areas to quickly communicate with workers and businesses and begin to deliver services. Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants provide states with additional resources to provide employment and training services, along with disaster relief employment, after a disaster. Both are authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Disaster Unemployment Assistance is authorized under Section 410 of Title IV of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) (Pub. L. 93-288, as amended, set forth at 42 U.S.C. § 5177) and managed under the Unemployment Insurance program. Each of these programs has a role to play in preparing for and responding to disaster events.

4. **Structure of the Guide.** The Guide consists of three parts:

Part I: Convening, Planning, and Readiness seeks to help states identify disaster risks specific to the state, including natural disasters like hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, as well as unexpected events and to assess current policies and staffing rules to ensure they support rapid, flexible responses in any scenario.

Part II: Organizational Strategic Planning discusses building relationships, developing action plans, establishing roles and processes, and staff training.

Part III: Programmatic Strategic Planning provides program specific materials related to Rapid Response, Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants, and Unemployment Insurance and Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

5. **Inquiries.** Please direct inquiries to the appropriate Regional Office.

6. **References.**

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), sec. 170, Pub. L. No. 113-128, (July 22, 2014);
- Sections 410 and 423 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1974, as amended;
- Stafford Act, Sections 408 and 410 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 5174 and 5177);
- WIOA regulations at 20 CFR part 682 Subpart C – Rapid Response Activities;
- 20 CFR part 687 National Dislocated Worker Grants;
- 20 CFR part 625 Disaster Unemployment Assistance;
- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 19-16](#), *Guidance on Services provided through the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (ES), as amended by title III of WIOA, and for Implementation of the WIOA Final Rules*; and

- [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL 09-24\)](#), *Updated National Dislocated Worker Grant Program Guidance and Application Information*.

7. Attachment(s).

- a. “The Disaster Lifecycle from Preparedness through Resiliency: A Guide for State Workforce Agencies”
- b. Texas Interstate MOU on DUA Services

The Disaster Lifecycle from Preparedness through Resiliency
A Guide for State Workforce Agencies

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 2

Part I: Convening, Planning, and Readiness 2

 Disaster Preparedness Lifecycle 2

 Disaster Preparedness Planning Principles 3

Part II: Organizational Strategic Planning 3

 1. Build Needed Relationships 3

 2. Develop Action Plans in Advance 4

 3. Ensure Roles are Established and Processes in Place..... 4

 4. Train Staff 5

Part III: Programmatic Strategic Planning..... 5

DISASTER PREPARENESS PLANNING: RAPID RESPONSE ACTIVITIES..... 5

Role of Rapid Response Activities in a Disaster..... 5

 A. Policies and Operational Procedures..... 6

 B. Staff Preparation and Training..... 7

Resiliency Planning through Rapid Response..... 7

DISASTER PREPARENESS PLANNING: UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE..... 9

Role of Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) in a Disaster 9

 A. Policies and Operational Procedures..... 9

 B. Staff Preparation and Training..... 11

Resiliency Planning through DUA..... 11

Role of Unemployment Insurance in a Disaster 12

Role of Short-Time Compensation (STC) in a Disaster 12

DISASTER PREPARENESS PLANNING: NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANTS 13

Role of National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWG) in a Disaster 13

 A. Policies and Operational Procedures..... 13

 B. Staff Preparation and Training..... 14

Resiliency Planning through DWGs 15

Introduction

This document serves as a guide to assist state workforce agencies (SWA) and their partners in the critical task of disaster preparedness. While there is some commonality among states in the strategic planning required to be ready when a disaster strikes, the process will be unique for each state.

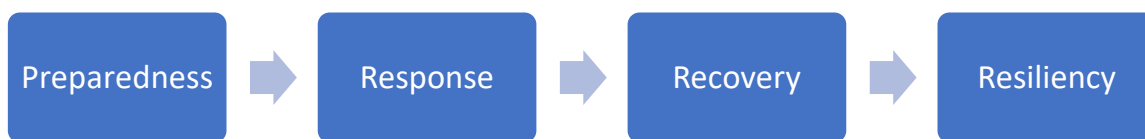
ETA's goal with this guide is to help workforce agencies and their partners develop a comprehensive and adaptable strategic planning process that can be quickly implemented by staff and partners who are trained, well-aligned, and fully supported. This guide provides examples and tools to assist states from preparedness through resiliency. Perhaps most importantly, the guide provides examples of promising practices from across the country that can help users better understand how to carry out their own disaster preparedness project.

Part I: Convening, Planning, and Preparedness

Designing, developing, and implementing a comprehensive disaster preparedness plan is a complicated task with numerous considerations. After establishing a leadership team to carry out planning activities, a successful approach must be practiced and refined. In developing an approach, consider the following:

- What types of disasters are likely to occur, and in what parts of the state?
- How can the state be prepared for disasters that have never happened there before?
- Can existing state policies support disaster planning and response?
- Are state staffing procedures and rules flexible enough to address any situation, regardless of when it occurs?

Disaster Preparedness Lifecycle



NOTE: This model is based on ETA workgroup discussions regarding development of a viable comprehensive disaster preparedness plan.

- *Preparedness:* Developing the disaster preparedness plan, which includes identifying requirements, eligibility, timelines, staffing, backups, systems, and any other factors that must be addressed to ensure the plan is actionable and adaptable.
- *Response:* The steps involved in activating and executing the plan when disaster strikes and the early stages post-event.
- *Recovery:* Longer-term activities as the disaster moves on from the immediate response phase; this phase should also include how and when operations might return to normal status, close-out activities, and monitoring.

- *Resiliency*: Learning from the experiences in disaster response and identifying and making improvements as needed and aligning longer-term workforce development efforts that can help workers and communities be more resilient to future events.

Disaster Preparedness Planning Principles

A successful disaster preparedness plan must be based on the unique details of each workforce area, including geography, population centers, resource availability, existing or potential partners, and state or local program availability. A comprehensive disaster plan should do the following:

1. Maximize flexibility. A plan should consider potential responses based on as many contingencies as possible. While no plan can predict or prepare for every scenario, every plan should allow and encourage staff to adapt in the moment.
2. Build on existing operations. Don't start from scratch. It is very likely that many existing practices or procedures, or the experiences of staff, make a good starting point for the development of a disaster preparedness plan. Consider how existing relationships, activities, resources, and tools designed to identify and prevent or minimize potential layoffs may also apply to disaster preparedness.
3. Ensure strength through partnerships. Coordinate with local officials and partner with other federal, state, county agencies. Establish protocols for engaging with partners and ensure that contractual or other necessary agreements are made in advance. Develop communication plans, both internal and external, to follow during and immediately following a disaster.
4. Support program improvement. While stressful and challenging, disaster response also provides an opportunity to identify areas of weakness that can be improved upon to enable more successful non-disaster program operations. Post-disaster, consider how the state is gathering data and information, and how the state can use this information to improve program operations.

Part II: Organizational Strategic Planning

SWA leadership is responsible for convening stakeholders; establishing the vision; managing the planning process; and ensuring that communications, procedures, resources, and training are aligned.

1. Build Needed Relationships

Develop and maintain a list of areas in the state that are prone to natural disasters, such as hurricanes, flooding, mudslides, snow and ice accumulation, wildfires, excessive heat, and tornados, and establish cross-functional teams in these areas. For each area, identify and include:

- Local leadership and disaster preparedness authorities;
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) contacts; and
- American Job Center (AJC) contacts.

The SWA should ensure that it has representatives on state emergency management committees and that it is appropriately engaged in state planning activities. Further, it is essential to establish relationships with FEMA contacts in disaster-prone areas in advance of needing their assistance. Finally, establish clear roles and responsibilities regarding which federal/state/county official has responsibility for responding and when workforce system services can be applied.

Ensure that local workforce areas prioritize developing relationships with local elected officials, local agencies, and organizations that might be active in disaster recovery so that they already understand what the workforce system can offer as part of a coordinated response/recovery from a variety of potential disaster events.

Job Corps centers can cultivate relationships and partnerships agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with governmental, community-based organizations, and employers that can be leveraged to immediately engage students in disaster relief efforts (e.g., Work-based learning assignments, collection, and distribution of necessities).

2. Develop Action Plans in Advance

Create an action plan that can be implemented on short notice. Include in the plan all appropriate actions by all relevant partners. These actions will be determined by community needs resulting from the disaster and should include the timing of which programs should be based on phase of response. The plan should also ensure appropriate technology, equipment, and supplies are available, and that staff are adequately trained.

In developing the action plan, know what information will be provided to the Governor, the media, and the impacted community. These entities will request and expect frequent status updates on disaster response activities. This may include information on loss of infrastructure; closure of grantee facilities; impact on local employers, including potential or actual layoff information; how to submit unemployment insurance (UI) claims; and how many individuals are being served by workforce programs.

3. Ensure Roles are Established and Processes in Place

Ensure that SWA team stakeholders know their roles and what is expected of them in response to and during the disaster. Further, make sure that human resource policies do not contain unintended limitations, such as only performing work within a fixed time band.

Develop and maintain a list of programs and resources that may play a role in disaster preparedness and recovery. Include details such as eligibility requirements, restrictions,

timing, and whether funds must be requested or are already on hand. If necessary, establish MOUs with other states, neighboring counties, and or organizations to deliver services after a disaster (*see the attached Memorandum of Understanding Template.*) Further, ensure the organization is familiar with the [Emergency Management Assistance Compact \(EMAC\)](#) that allows states to share resources during times of disaster.

4. Train Staff

Staff training is an integral part of readiness. Ensure that staff in all local workforce areas are appropriately trained in:

- Maintaining relationships with community leaders that can be activated in response to a disaster;
- Disaster recovery activities;
- State policies addressing disaster preparedness, response, and recovery;
- How to assess disaster infrastructure damage and identify immediate needs in terms of temporary employment; and
- Program and budget requirements for Rapid Response, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, and National Dislocated Worker Grants.

Part III: Programmatic Strategic Planning

This section provides detailed information on three ETA programs that can be used to respond to a disaster:

- Rapid Response;
- Unemployment Insurance, including Short-Time Compensation (STC) and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA); and
- Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs).

In the discussion of each of these programs, tips and strategies to consider when development of a comprehensive disaster preparedness plan are provided.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLANNING: RAPID RESPONSE

Role of Rapid Response in a Disaster

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires Rapid Response services be delivered in cases of a “mass job dislocation resulting from a natural or other disaster.” As such, it makes sense as a critical component of any disaster preparedness and response system. States can reserve up to 25% of their WIOA Dislocated Worker allotments for Rapid Response activities. Rapid Response is a pro-active, business-focused, and flexible strategy designed to respond to layoffs and plant closings by quickly coordinating services and providing immediate aid to companies and their affected workers. Rapid Response teams will work with employers and any employee representative(s) to quickly maximize public and private resources to

minimize disruptions associated with job loss. Rapid Response services can be delivered by the State, a local area, or a combination.

It is essential that leaders at the state level recognize the value, flexibilities, and opportunities associated with Rapid Response so they can create an environment where flexibility, autonomy, and adaptability are prioritized and rewarded.

A. Policies and Operational Procedures

Ensure that the area's Rapid Response policies address disaster preparedness, planning, and response.

- Flexibility. Review current policies and procedures to maximize flexibility. Rapid Response funds are some of WIOA's most flexible dollars, and the state can likely use them for planning and services. States can also request waivers of many WIOA provisions before or during an emergency. Previously approved waivers are available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/waivers>; states are not limited to previously approved waivers.
 - While this waiver will not be appropriate or needed for every disaster, ETA has previously approved a waiver of WIOA sec. 181(e) to allow WIOA funds to be used to support business capitalization efforts as part of a layoff aversion strategy. This strategy may support disaster preparedness or recovery by allowing employers access to certain types of capital or other resources to ensure they remain operational following a disaster event but may also enable companies to avoid layoffs due to economic conditions. An example of using business capitalization in this manner might be helping a small distillery company transition to production of hand sanitizer during a pandemic event by providing business capitalization funds to help the company purchase supplies or other equipment necessary for the production change so that the company remains operational and avoids layoffs. WIOA funds could also be used in this scenario to train workers on the use of new equipment.
 - Adaptability. A good plan is consistent but adaptable as conditions change or when unforeseen circumstances arise. Consistent but customizable plans will be much more successful than those that are unable to address anticipated situations.
 - Staff capabilities. Staff should be able to carry out the existing plan and empowered to innovate or adapt where necessary. Ensuring that staff are well trained and know where they have autonomy will enable them to effectively use their skills and experience to adapt changing circumstances.
 - Information gathering: Identify the types of information and data that will be needed by stakeholders, including the impacted community, and plan for how

the state can use that information gathered for continuous improvement in the resiliency phase.

B. Staff Preparation and Training

No matter how comprehensive the state's plan, it cannot be successful without staff capable of implementing it in a safe and efficient manner. All staff must understand the policies and procedures and how to implement them under stressful, time-sensitive conditions. Management should also ensure staff know where they have autonomy and what the appropriate protocol is to adapt or revise the plan as conditions warrant.

The state must also be able to rely on staff being available to work when a disaster strikes. States will want to understand in advance, and adjust as needed, so that HR policies allow for flexible work hours, overtime, and other necessary considerations. While quickly staffing up to address emergency situations can be difficult, the state's plan should include some measures, such as hiring retired staff or having a contingent work force that can be called upon in times of emergencies, that could be activated during disaster situations.

Resiliency Planning through Rapid Response

Lessons learned from disaster response experiences can be used to improve the Rapid Response program going forward. Such improvements might include updating policies, operations, and priorities to align Rapid Response activities with longer-term workforce development priorities to ensure the workforce and the community are better prepared to respond to potential future disaster events. Additional improvements might include revising the Rapid Response funding methodology; updating job descriptions or competencies for employees administering the program; modernizing hiring procedures; or reassessing partnerships, contracts, and MOUs.

Consider the following examples of how states have used Rapid Response to support disaster response activities:

- The Mississippi Department of Employment Security used Rapid Response funds to enable dislocated workers to transition to new employment while the state's Disaster Recovery DWG application was under review.
- The Technical College System of Georgia utilized Rapid Response funds to host a convening that addressed strategies for employing the untapped workforce. This included returning citizens, immigrants, and disenfranchised young adults.

Below are a few promising practices on use of mobile units to respond to natural and economic disasters:

- North Carolina has a collaborative employer engagement Rapid Response team consisting of the *NCWorks* Mobile Career Center; Business Edge, the state's layoff

aversion strategy; and Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notice (WARN) response. Each respond to employers' workforce needs at various risk stages in the business lifecycle.

- Both Kansas and Iowa prioritize use of their mobile units to assist communities impacted by a natural disaster. Kansas has purchased two units that comprise the Kansas Mobile Workforce Centers which are prioritized to serve communities impacted by disasters. When not in use in response to a disaster, KANSASWORKS is able to provide workforce services in regions of the state that lack permanent workforce center offices or face unusually high demand for workforce center assistance due to mass layoffs, business closures, or demographic shifts. Iowa coordinates with FEMA or other disaster-response organizations to assist in preparing a multifaceted response to a natural disaster. The mobile one-stop unit is deployed to assist those affected by the natural disaster in filing an unemployment claim or disaster unemployment assistance claim and review the need for dislocated worker services. <https://workforce.iowa.gov/jobs/iowaworks/mobile-center>

Illinois uses a variety of strategies to assist employers and communities impacted by a natural disaster with retaining, retraining, and rebuilding their communities:

- Illinois uses short-term compensation, or WorkShare, to help employers avert layoffs during economic disruptions and disasters. WorkShare IL is a voluntary program that allows an employer to reduce workers' hours to avoid permanent layoffs; workers receive a partial unemployment benefit to offset the reduction in earnings.
- In response to a tornado in 2022, Rapid Response in combination with WIOA funded services were used to assist workers obtain employment at an employer site while a warehouse damaged by a tornado was rebuilt. In one instance, Illinois connected workers affected by a large fire to a local competitor while the impacted employer rebuilt the plant impacted by the fire.
- Further, in response to natural disasters, Illinois instructs local areas to collaborate with employers to see if any training programs can benefit employees while they are unemployed due to the disaster with the goal that the training also benefits the employer once employees return. Local areas are instructed to use Rapid Response funds to employ peer counselors to help encourage and promote training opportunities under this scenario.
- Illinois received a waiver to allow flexibility to use rapid response funds to provide disaster recovery activities, including temporary employment similar to disaster relief employment provided by National Dislocated Worker Grants. In 2020 the Illinois Dept. of Commerce & Economic Opportunity used this flexibility to provide a Local Workforce Innovation Area with a Rapid Response Disaster Recovery grant to support disaster recovery activities in response to a flood disaster north of the metro East St. Louis area. The Rapid Response Disaster Recovery grant created temporary employment opportunities like disaster-relief employment to assist with cleanup and recovery efforts of public agencies and non-profit organizations in disaster-declared counties. The LWIA used the rapid response funds to also provide career and training activities to assist participants in obtaining permanent employment.

DISASTER PREPARENESS PLANNING: UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Role of Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) in a Disaster

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1974, as amended, authorizes the President to provide benefit assistance to individuals unemployed as a direct result of a major disaster. DUA provides financial assistance to individuals whose employment or self-employment has been lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster and who are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance (UI) benefits.

Preparation before a disaster happens is necessary to properly administer the DUA program. This section of the disaster guide is designed to help the state's DUA coordinators carry out the planning and preparation needed to effectively respond when the President declares a major disaster providing for individual assistance in the state.

A. Policies and Operational Procedures

Staff should review DUA policies and procedures annually to: ensure they are up-to-date; that state agency staff understand DOL guidance; and that any recent changes to state laws that may impact the receipt of DUA benefits are incorporated. Policies should also address disaster preparedness, planning, response, and resiliency. The following information can help states prepare for a major disaster declaration that includes the authorization of DUA.

1. Conduct a Risk Assessment. Consider participating in an [Assist Visit with the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency](#), part of the Department of Homeland Security, to assess overall disaster preparedness and identify vulnerabilities. Also become familiar with the [Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment \(THIRA\)](#), FEMA's approach to completing a national-level risk assessment.
2. Plan for the Disaster.
 - Ensure that the DUA Program is included in FEMA's [Threat and Hazard Identification \(THIRA\) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review \(SPR\) Guide](#), as well as the state's Emergency Operations Plan.
 - Ensure [FEMA's state and local level referral list](#) is current.
 - Ensure that staff are familiar with the [Individual Assistance \(IA\) programs provided by FEMA](#). The programs provide financial assistance and direct services to eligible individuals and households affected by a disaster, who have uninsured or underinsured necessary expenses and serious need.
 - Review and be familiar with the forms and current procedural manuals issued by the state agency to ensure proper administration of the DUA program. Further, conduct regular reviews of the DUA claims process with emphasis on

the proper and prompt determination of entitlement and payments to eligible applicants.

- Review DUA forms to ensure they use plain language and are available in languages reflected of populations in communities likely impacted by disaster. ETA has resources on plain language at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/ui-modernization/use-plain-language>.
 - Coordinate with workforce partners to develop protocol for sharing UI claims registrants' information to ensure seamless access to participant information.
3. Develop and/or Maintain Infrastructure and Systems. Ensure the disaster recovery plan includes an annual assessment and risk analysis, generally conducted by the state's information technology provider. Test all information system applications related to DUA and create a plan for data backup and restoration. Consult publications by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Computer Security Division, including the [Contingency Planning Guide for Federal Information Systems](#), and consider a [business impact analysis](#), which gather information needed to develop recovery strategies.
 4. Information Gathering. Determine if the state can partner with other states if a disaster overwhelms the state's capacity. Determine which states have similar UI systems and develop MOUs in advance of disasters that can be activated if necessary.

Any time one state provides services to another state, there must be a MOU in place. This MOU should ensure that the agent state gets reimbursed, all claims taken by the agent state are reported by the impacted state for correct Resource Justification Model (RJM) allocation, and that the impacted state will reimburse the agent state directly. (FEMA will not send money to the agent state.) All adjudication activities must be done only by merit-staffed employees, whether in the impacted state or the agent state.

5. Other Considerations.
 - As with Rapid Response activities, administrative costs to fund staff at Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) are only authorized if special circumstances exist. Special circumstances include the level of damage or destruction of state agency buildings, or such buildings allowing only limited access. Alternatively, if the state plans to staff a DRC with claims takers, the state must obtain prior approval from the Federal Coordinating Officer and the DOL Regional Office.
 - Some states may waive the waiting week and/or work search requirements for disaster-impacted claimants if the level of impact and disruption justifies such action. States interested in using these waivers should work with their ETA Regional Office. If the state waives the waiting week and Extended Benefits

(EB) are triggered on, the state would not receive the full reimbursement for the first week of EB benefits.

B. Staff Preparation and Training.

Ensure staff has adequate training to understand the DUA program and their responsibilities. Resources for DUA training include:

- [ETA's Advisory Webpage](#), which can be searched for DUA-related guidance.
- State Quality Service Plan Assurances Required for Disaster Unemployment Assistance, [TEN No. 13-21](#). This guidance includes a SOP template that can be found here: [WorkforceGPS - Disaster Unemployment Assistance](#). Note: state staff will need to log into Workforce GPS to access this link.
- [Unemployment Insurance Disaster Unemployment Assistance Handbook](#).
- [Code of Federal Regulations, Title 20, Chapter V, Part 625: Disaster Unemployment Assistance](#).
- [Disaster Unemployment Assistance \(DUA\) Online Training](#) via the NASWA Learning Center.
- The [National Preparedness Online Course Catalog](#), a searchable catalog with information on courses managed by FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), Emergency Management Institute (EMI), and National Training and Education Division (NTED).

Resiliency Planning through DUA

DUA policies and procedures should be updated based on:

- Feedback from claim filing staff. Were there parts of process that were unclear or difficult to administer? Determine what can be done to fix these areas.
- Review of data. Were there timeliness and/or quality issues with DUA determinations or payments? If deficiencies are noted, determine what can be done to address them.
- Feedback from internal and external partners. Are there suggestions for process improvements, including communication protocols? Incorporate these suggestions into the state's DUA standard operating procedure.
- DUA State Self-Assessment. What opportunities are there for improving program operations?

Consider examples of promising practices states have used to successfully operate a DUA program to respond to disaster needs:

- The Texas Workforce Commission and the Louisiana Workforce Commission maintain a reciprocal agreement (see Attachment) which in part gives each state limited access to UI and DUA claim information in order to not only prevent fraud and duplicate claim filing when the same disaster affects areas of both states, but also enables each state to assist with claims taking or adjudication of disaster related UI and DUA claims during a Mass Unemployment Event if needed. This agreement allows the continuity of operations

when a disaster strikes and ensures claimants impacted by a disaster can file for and receive DUA benefits in a timely manner.

- ETA Regional Offices often host annual DUA training and coordination sessions with the states in their region. This event facilitates the sharing of best practices amongst states within the Region and encourages state partnerships. States are given training on DUA and they are also encouraged to enter into agreements with partner states and are provided with sample state interagency agreements. States have previously used these agreements to assist other states impacted by major disasters with resources such as call center claims taking assistance, adjudication assistance, and mobile claims taking vehicles.
- Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has implemented an interview process for DUA claimants who remained unemployed which allows DUA claimants to stay in personal contact with agency resources without undue burden to claimants. Every five weeks, the state will interview DUA claimants who remain unemployed to assess why they have not resumed employment or self-employment. The state then connects the individuals to local area employers or other needed resources, which enhances the likelihood of the claimant returning to work sooner.

Role of Unemployment Insurance in a Disaster

In addition to DUA, disaster preparedness is an essential proactive element of any regular UI Program within states that experience high volumes of disaster events. These events can come with little to no warning and prove to be administratively challenging in providing much needed services to a SWA constituency. There are some promising practices State UI agencies can implement to ensuring agency preparedness during disaster events.

These steps include:

- Developing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) or handbook for addressing disaster events;
- Creating and maintaining an updated “call tree” with current contact information and areas of responsibilities for staff;
- Creating a centralized location with emergency equipment to stage an emergency call center;
- Cross training other staff members within the SWA to take UI claims;
- Ensuring open communication with USDOL Regional Office partners, and
- Using an ID verification system to help prevent potential fraud and expedite the adjudication of claims (see Section 4.c. of UIPL No. [11-23](#) and its Changes with respect to the National ID Verification Offering from DOL, providing states with access to digital verification through Login.gov and in-person verification through the US Postal Service).

Role of Short-Time Compensation (STC) in a Disaster

Short-Time Compensation (STC) is another program that can be used as a valuable resource in preparing for and responding to a disaster. Before a disaster strikes, states with STC programs should ensure that eligible employers are aware of the program and the benefits for layoff aversion that it provides.

States can do this by:

- Including STC informational pamphlet in their mailings of quarterly tax statements to employers;
- Leveraging Rapid Response units with information prior to a disaster event to aide in STC awareness’
- Bolstering administrative acumen by cross training benefits staff in STC procedures;
- Implementing a dedicated call center or create a monitored email address to quickly assist employers in real time.

DISASTER PREPARENESS PLANNING: NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANTS

Role of National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs) in a Disaster

DWGs are discretionary grants awarded by the Secretary of Labor under Section 170 of WIOA, intended to provide employment-related services for dislocated workers and other eligible participants. Disaster Recovery DWGs provide funding to create temporary employment opportunities to assist with clean-up and recovery efforts following a qualifying emergency or disaster declaration.¹

A. Policies and Operational Procedures.

- Ensure that staff has access to the most updated DWG program guidance: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEGL/2024/TEGL%2009-24/TEGL%2009-24.pdf>
- When a declaration of a qualifying disaster by FEMA or other Federal agency having jurisdiction over the disaster is made within 45 business days of the date of the emergency or disaster event; and an emergency application is submitted not more than 15 business days after the qualifying declaration.
- Confirm the current name, title, and signature of the Authorized Representative.
- Confirm Workforce Development Board (WDB) policies, and review processes and timelines. Determine in advance whether WDB policies can be revised to increase flexibility regarding participant eligibility when responding to a disaster.
- Ensure that contacts at the state emergency management agency are up-to-date, and if possible develop plans or MOUs for coordination of activities.

¹ Qualifying emergency or disaster declarations include: 1) Emergencies and major disasters, as defined under Section 102 of the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5122), declared by FEMA as eligible for Public Assistance; and 2) Emergencies or disaster situations of national significance, natural or man-made, that could result in a potentially large loss of employment, as declared or otherwise recognized and issued in writing by the chief official of a Federal agency with jurisdiction over the Federal response to the disaster or emergency.

- Maintain an inventory or library of projected timelines and action items.
- Consider contacting neighboring states for additional resources that may be required to respond in case of a disaster. Ensure that MOUs are in place to address participant needs, such as mobile vans for unemployment insurance filing.
- Encourage potential grant subrecipients and project operators to identify appropriate Disaster Relief Employers in advance. This should be based on the potential nature and scope of the disaster and the types of disaster-relief activities that projects will carry out.
- Maintain an inventory of key positions to include in a DWG application. ETA Regional Offices can assist with coordinating identification and description of these positions by title and wage. For example:
 - Disaster Team Member. Provides cleanup and recovery efforts including demolition, cleaning, repair, renovation, and reconstruction of damaged and destroyed structures, facilities and debris in the disaster impacted area.
 - Crisis Team Member. Provides crisis and trauma resources, activities, and counseling to community residents impacted by the disaster.
 - Disaster Navigator. Provides humanitarian assistance, including but not limited to the distribution of food, water, and resources to meet basic needs and protect health and safety.
 - Disaster Specialist. Identifies and provides guidance to community residents impacted by the disaster to access resources from community partners to recover pre-disaster employment status, distribute health and safety information, and provide for basic needs.
- Ensure positions funded by DWG grants are abiding by established participant wage requirements described in ETA guidance. As of the date of this resource guide, the latest DWG guidance is TEGL 09-24 (available here: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEGL/2024/TEGL%2009-24/TEGL%2009-24.pdf>)

B. Staff Preparation and Training

- Develop and conduct Disaster Preparedness training at least annually to ensure staff are clear on roles and responsibilities, policies, and expectations. Include partner agencies in annual preparedness training activities.
- Incorporate review of current guidance and TEGs into annual planning activities ensuring state policies align with current guidance.
- Maintain and update list of internal and external contacts, ensuring phone tree is updated with current information.
- Confirm disaster points of contact within the agency and with partners. Ensure communities most likely to be impacted by a natural disaster have established partnerships at the county level and are incorporated into local/regional/state emergency management plans.
- Continually conduct resource map and environmental scan to ensure all appropriate partners are at the table.

- Ensure staff are familiar with [ETA's Waiver Website](#), and specifically those waivers that have been granted to states to facilitate disaster recovery or apply directly to DWGs. States are not limited to only previously approved waivers and can request other flexibilities.

Resiliency Planning through DWGs

Although every disaster is different, the foundation for initiating a disaster response plan, including leveraging a DWG, is always the same. Review DWG strategies from previous disasters, including related policies, project timelines, disaster team members, needed contact information, and partnerships. Maintain the most recent disaster recovery grant application to use as a template for future disasters as needed. If there is no prior activity, use the template for submitting a grant application found in ETA guidance such as TEGL 09-24.

State and local workforce professionals should also learn from the successful practices of other states. For example:

- Kentucky and Mississippi maintain relationships with a local employment agency to address staffing needs for Disaster Relief Employment positions. These pre-established relationships allow the states to streamline the onboarding process for DRE participants and quickly provide disaster relief services.
- Several states in the Southeast and Midwest have revised their policies regarding the definition of long-term unemployed to remain consistent with the guidance in TEGL 09-24. Notably, Kentucky modified its definition of dislocated worker, which allows greater flexibility when providing services following a disaster. Florida went on to model its policy after Kentucky's. Illinois modified their definition for long-term unemployed to allow greater flexibility in serving individuals in response to disasters.
- Louisiana Watershed Initiative coordinates with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System and Louisiana Economic Development to launch the PRO Louisiana program for "professional resilience occupations." The program funds occupational training courses aimed at the state's flood recovery and resilience efforts. The goal is to develop a skilled workforce that can support flood risk reduction projects and build Louisiana's defense against future natural disasters (<https://watershed.la.gov/pro-louisiana>).

Texas Interstate MOU on DUA Services

The below MOU is between Texas and Louisiana; each state's laws are different and any new MOU should be developed with awareness of those laws.

INTERSTATE AGREEMENT AND CONTRACT BETWEEN THE TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION AND THE LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION

I. CONTRACTING PARTIES

This Contract and Agreement is entered into by and between the state agencies shown below as Contracting Parties:

The Receiving Agency: LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION (LWC)
The Performing Agency: THE TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION (TWC)

II. PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT

This agreement is to reach a cooperative understanding to assist in meeting the needs of the State of Louisiana for providing its citizens with Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) benefits services. The Receiving Agency may use base UI grant funds for regular UI activities and FEMA funds, through LWC, for DUA activities performed by the Performing Agency to address the disruption of the Louisiana economy caused by severe flooding. The State of Texas, through the Texas Workforce Commission, will provide direct assistance and access to resources to enable the Louisianan Workforce Commission to fulfill its mission and duties.

III. STATEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED

The TWC hereinafter referred to as "Performing Agency" shall perform the following services or provide access to the following resources related to UI and Disaster Unemployment Assistance processing, on behalf of the LWC hereinafter referred to as "Receiving Agency":

1. As needed, provide access to a portion of the resources in at least four (4) call center networks to process UI and DUA claims from at least 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Central Standard Time (CST), Monday through Friday;
2. As needed, to process UI and DUA claims or UI and DUA related inquiries and issues, to provide service by making available resources in Call Centers during regular business hours from Monday through Friday and, potentially, on Saturdays and Sundays;
3. Provide a dedicated 1-800 telephone number with AT&T to be used by individuals calling to file UI and DUA claims. TWC will use call distribution systems to route the calls between the 4 Tele-Centers networks as call volume demands.

IV. REIMBURSEMENT FOR SERVICES OR RESOURCES PROVIDED

- A. The Receiving Agency shall reimburse the Performing Agency for the following expenditures related to the provision of the services described in Section III.
- (1) Expenditures for Payroll will include:
 - (a) Salary for current employees for time spent taking Louisiana claims during normal business hours.
 - (b) Salary for current employees who incur overtime while taking Louisiana claims.
 - (2) Expenditures for Telecommunication and Equipment will include:
 - (a) Set up and usage costs associated with the 1-800 telephone number designated solely for taking Louisiana claims.
 - (b) Telecommunications and equipment costs, which are the direct result of taking Louisiana claims
- B. The Receiving Agency shall pay for all services received from funds or reimbursement based upon vouchers drawn by the Receiving Agency payable to Performing Agency.
- C. Payment for services performed shall be made within 30 days of receipt of a properly documented invoice submitted by the Performing Agency on a monthly basis. Upon request by the LWC, TWC shall provide additional supporting information.

Invoices shall not be submitted more often than monthly and should be submitted by the 20th day of the month following the month of service. After termination of this contract the Receiving Agency shall not be liable for any costs incurred by the Performing Agency which have not been billed to the Receiving Agency within ninety (90) days of termination date.

V. DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENT

The Performing Agency shall maintain such records as are necessary to substantiate any costs incurred under the agreement and will make such records available for inspection, examination, and audit by LWC or other State of Louisiana office and by such Federal officials or employees as the Department of Labor may designate or as may be required by law.

VI. CONTRACT AMOUNT

- A. Funding for expenses and costs under the Contract shall be from the following sources:

The Receiving Agency agrees to reimburse the Performing Agency for costs incurred in performing activities on behalf of Receiving Agency under this agreement. This Agreement, relative to UI services, is entered into because the United States Department of Labor is unable to directly fund the Performing Agency for services rendered on behalf of the Receiving Agency.

- B. The Receiving Agency and the Performing Agency may agree to re-negotiate for any UI and DUA services provided in excess of the contract amounts listed herein to be payable from Receiving Agency.

VII. TERM OF CONTRACT

This contract shall begin on August 22, 2016, and shall terminate December 31, 2016, unless extended or terminated sooner by mutual written agreement of the parties. This agreement may be terminated by either party upon fifteen (15) days written notice.

VIII. CONFIDENTIALITY

Texas shall, in compliance with 20 CFR Part 603, maintain the security and confidentiality of all information accessed and obtained under this Agreement and shall take reasonable steps to ensure that all state employees, temporary employees and any other individuals located in the State of Texas that receive confidential information obtained under this agreement shall take necessary steps to maintain the security and confidentiality of all information so received in accordance with applicable Federal and state laws and regulations. Texas agrees that the State of Louisiana confidentiality laws and regulations, including La. R.S. 23:1660.D-H, are applicable to this agreement.

IX. CONFIDENTIALITY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

No record, or any information obtained through this Agreement shall be disclosed except as expressly authorized under Federal and State of Louisiana laws and regulations. Texas is prohibited from entering into any agreement to furnish, or from otherwise disclosing or sharing, any information obtained through this agreement to a third party, regardless of the purpose.

X. STATE LAW APPLIES

All parties subject to this agreement agree that the State of Louisiana Law applies to any and all conflicts, claims or disputes arising out of this agreement.

XI. ENTIRE AGREEMENT

This Agreement is complete and contains the entire understanding between the parties relating a cooperative understanding in the Performing Agency providing assistance to meet the needs of the State of Louisiana for providing its citizens with Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) benefit claims and as to the form of payment. This Agreement supersedes any and all other agreements between the parties regarding the assistance to meet the needs of the State of Louisiana for providing its citizens with Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) benefits claims and as to the form of payment.

THE UNDERSIGNED CONTRACTING PARTIES do hereby certify that,

- (1) The services specified above are necessary essential for activities that are properly within the statutory functions and programs of the effected agencies of State Government, and
- (2) The proposed arrangements serve the interest of efficient and economical administration of the State Government.

RECEIVING AGENCY further certifies that it has the authority to contract for the above services by authority granted in La. R.S. 39:1551 et seq. (the Louisiana Procurement Code), and by State of Louisiana Governor Executive Order 2016-55.

PERFORMING AGENCY further certifies that it has the authority to perform the services contracted for by authority granted in Texas Labor Code §302.002(c).

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL the undersigned parties bind themselves to the faithful performance of this contract. It is mutually understood that this Contract shall not become effective until approved by all parties involved.

**RECEIVING AGENCY
AGENCY
LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION
COMMISSION**

**PERFORMING
TEXAS WORKFORCE**

BY: _____
Ava Dejoie
Executive Director

BY: _____
Larry Temple
Executive Director

Date: _____

Date: _____