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**Evaluation of the
Significant Improvement
Demonstration Grants for
the Provision of
Reemployment Services
for UI Claimants**

Final Report

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Karen Needels
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CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xiii
I INTRODUCTION	1
A. THE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT GRANTS.....	2
B. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	4
C. OUTLINE OF THIS REPORT	10
II CHANGES TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF CLAIMANTS MOST IN NEED OF REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES	11
A. A STYLIZED MODEL OF WPRS SYSTEMS.....	13
B. SPEEDING THE IDENTIFICATION OF CLAIMANTS AT A HIGH RISK OF EXHAUSTING UI BENEFITS	18
1. Potential Advantages and Disadvantages to Profiling at Initial Claim	19
2. The Current Status of Changing the Timing of Call-Ins for Services— The Experiences of Other States	26
3. Identifying and Serving Claimants from Targeted Industries—North Carolina’s Experience	28
C. EXPANDING THE POOL OF WPRS ELIGIBLES	29
1. Including Short-Duration Claimants—Minnesota’s Experience	31
2. Including Additional Claimants in the Selection Pool—Washington’s Approach	33
3. Including TAA/NAFTA-TAA Eligible Claimants in the Selection Pool—Alaska’s Change	34
4. Using Other Methods to Increase the Number of Claimants in the Selection Pool—Experiences of Alaska, Louisiana, and West Virginia.....	35
D. IMPROVING THE CLAIMANT SELECTION PROCESS	36
1. Updates to the Profiling Model’s Specification	38
2. Simplifications to the Process for Conducting Future Model Updates	43
3. Methods to Identify Better Model Fits	44
4. Limitations in How a Better Model Specification Affects Service Delivery	48
III IMPROVING REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES	51
A. IMPROVING ORIENTATION AND REEMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS.....	53
1. Improving Workshops Through Centralized Training and Standardized Materials—Louisiana, South Carolina, New York, and Maryland.....	56

CONTENTS *(continued)*

Chapter	Page
III <i>(continued)</i>	
2. Promoting Local Office Innovation in Workshop Style and Content— Wisconsin	59
3. Developing an Ongoing Dialogue Among WPRS Staff—Alaska	60
B. STRENGTHENING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS	61
1. Linking Claimants to Appropriate Reemployment Services— Washington and New York	63
2. Better Identifying Personal Barriers to Reemployment—Minnesota and Alaska	65
C. ENHANCING FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES	67
1. Reminding Claimants of the Availability of Services—Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Washington	68
2. Requiring Follow-Up Services—South Carolina, North Carolina, New York, and Washington	70
3. Improving Information on Claimants' Employment Status—Louisiana, South Carolina, and Wisconsin	73
D. FACILITATING USE OF SELF-ACCESS RESOURCES	74
1. Teaching Claimants How to Use Computers for Their Job Searches— California	75
2. Encouraging Widespread Use of Career Exploration Tools or Computer Skills Training Software—New York and Alaska	81
3. Enhancing the Accessibility of Internet Resources—Louisiana	82
E. INCREASING SERVICE CAPACITY	83
IV IMPROVING COORDINATION AMONG PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES	87
A. STRENGTHENING DATA SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT WPRS OPERATIONS	88
1. Strengthening the Profiling/Call-In Link—The Experiences of Maryland and Washington	90
2. Strengthening the Link from the Service Delivery System to the UI System—Maryland, Minnesota, and Alaska	93
3. Improving Data Systems to Enhance Service Delivery and Performance Monitoring	96
B. IMPROVING COORDINATION AMONG AGENCIES AND OFFICES	103

CONTENTS *(continued)*

Chapter	Page
V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY.....	107
A. IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES	108
1. The Profiling Model and Claimant Selection.....	109
2. Service Delivery	114
3. Data Systems	118
B. INFERENCES ABOUT WPRS SYSTEMS NATIONWIDE	120
1. Components and Goals of WPRS Systems	121
2. Patterns of States in Providing Key WPRS Components	122
3. Trade-Offs in Designing WPRS Systems	130
C. INFERENCES ABOUT THE WIA	138
1. At The Time of Our Visits, States Varied Significantly in Their Implementation of the One-Stop System	140
2. States Are Challenged When Integrating Data Systems to Provide Better Customer Service and Implement Performance Monitoring.....	141
3. Strong State-Level Leadership Can Facilitate Implementation of WIA One-Stops.....	141
4. Mechanisms for the Appropriate Referral of WPRS Clients to WIA Services Are Important.....	142
5. A Few States Reported That Their Transition to WIA Had Some Negative Effects on Their Ability to Conduct WPRS Activities.....	143
REFERENCES	147
APPENDIX A: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CLAIMANT OUTCOMES	A.1
APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTIONS OF AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR INNOVATIVE STATE ACTIVITIES	B.1

TABLES

Table	Page
I.1	MAIN ACTIVITIES FOR SIG STATES 3
I.2	KEY COMPONENTS OF SIG STATES’ GRANT ACTIVITIES 5
II.1	TIMING OF SIG RECIPIENT STATES’ PROFILING..... 20
II.2	MAJOR CHANGES TO STATES’ MODEL SPECIFICATIONS 39
III.1	REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN SIG STATES..... 52
V.1	IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES OF SIG ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE PROFILING MODEL 110
V.2	IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES OF SIG ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY 116
V.3	IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES OF SIG ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE DATA SYSTEMS AND OPERATIONAL LINKAGES 119
V.4	CLAIMANT GROUPS INCLUDED IN WPRS PROFILING AND ORIENTATION..... 131
V.5	EFFECTS OF WPRS ON WEEKS OF UI BENEFITS PAID 134
A.1	HYPOTHESIZED EFFECTS OF SIG ACTIVITIES ON CLAIMANT OUTCOMES A.6
A.2	HYPOTHESIZED CHANGES IN CLAIMANT OUTCOMES FOR SIG STATES A.9
A.3	UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE OUTCOMES OF SIG STATES A.10
A.4	REFERRAL AND SERVICE OUTCOMES OF SIG STATES A.12
A.5	NONSEPARATION DETERMINATIONS AND DENIALS A.14
A.6	NONSEPARATION DETERMINATIONS AND DENIALS FOR PROFILING REFERRAL REFUSALS..... A.15

FIGURES

Figure	Page
II.1 STYLIZED WPRS SYSTEM	14

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1993, Public Law 103-52 amended the Social Security Act by requiring states to establish Worker Profiling and Reemployment Service (WPRS) systems whose objectives were to identify claimants likely to exhaust unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, refer them to reemployment services, and collect follow-up information on such services received and on employment outcomes. Reemployment services vary widely but often include an orientation workshop that provides an overview of available services; group workshops on topics such as resume writing, interviewing skills, local labor market information, and coping with job loss; staff-assisted or self-service use of career assessment tools and job listings; job clubs; and other activities to help claimants during their UI claim periods to find an appropriate job quickly and efficiently. The law also required claimants who were referred to services to participate in those or similar services as a condition for UI eligibility, unless they had just cause for not doing so. The intent of the legislation was to allocate reemployment services efficiently to UI claimants most likely to need assistance in finding employment (U.S. Department of Labor 1993). Research had also suggested that providing reemployment services to UI claimants was an effective strategy to reduce average durations of UI benefit receipt (Meyer 1995).

Since the legislation was enacted, all states have established WPRS systems, but the systems could be improved in several areas. An external evaluation and an internal review by the U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) (U.S. Department of Labor 1999a and 1999b) suggested updating and revising profiling models more often, increasing resources to serve more claimants, intensifying services, providing flexibility to shift resources across geographic areas to respond to needs, improving the data systems used to track services and outcomes, and furthering coordination and linkages among UI, Employment Services (ES), and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs.

In response to these findings, DOL/ETA awarded Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants (SIGs) to 11 states to improve reemployment services for UI claimants: Alaska, California, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The two-year SIGs were intended to increase the effectiveness of reemployment services for UI claimants by improving the WPRS systems in grantee states. Further goals of the grants were to help shape future policy directions for reemployment services for UI claimants and to support implementation of the WIA.

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) has conducted a process/implementation evaluation of these grants. The evaluation comprised documenting the changes made with the SIGs and assessing the degree to which the proposed activities were implemented. We also documented reasons that states deviated from their implementation plans, when they did so, and provided implications of the SIG experiences for policy.

This final report describes findings from data collection activities conducted during 2000 and 2001. These activities included in-person visits to the 11 SIG states and telephone interviews with their staff. The staff we spoke with included SIG coordinators; UI, ES, WIA, and Management Information Systems (MIS) staff at the central office; and management and

reemployment services staff who conduct WPRS activities in the local offices and one-stops. The data collection also included a review of the grant proposals and relevant documents provided to DOL or for states' own internal use, as well as an analysis of state-level data on UI program activities and reemployment services provided as part of the states' reporting requirements to DOL.

We supplement our discussion of SIG-funded activities with information on some of the other innovative approaches states have taken to WPRS service delivery, even approaches not funded by the SIGs. We noted these improvements in their UI and one-stop systems to provide a comprehensive overview of the service delivery mechanisms of the 11 SIG states, as well as the associated strengths and potential pitfalls, so that DOL and other states can benefit.

This final report is an update to and an expansion of an interim report that described early implementation activities of the states, the problems encountered, and the lessons learned. Important expansions to the report include additional site-specific and cross-site lessons based on the full two years of SIG states' activities and a discussion of how patterns found across the SIG states illustrate how states may have difficulty achieving WPRS objectives. We also examine whether quantitative analysis of changes in service use and UI benefit receipt through pre-post-grant comparisons provides further information on the effects of the SIG efforts. However, this data analysis could not detect systematic patterns in the data over time. Many possible reasons for this exist, such as the effects of other factors on claimant outcomes (like changes in the economy or the broader UI and reemployment service system), poor data quality or changes in data quality, and the use of state-level data when SIG activities in some states were conducted only in some local offices. In addition, many of the grant activities, such as improvements in interagency coordination, are important but are likely to affect client outcomes only in the long run. We therefore view the primary contributions of this evaluation final report to be qualitative, with most of the lessons drawn from the implementation experiences of the states.

The activities of the 11 states awarded grants in June 1999 can be grouped into three main categories: (1) changing the mechanisms to identify and select claimants most in need of reemployment services, (2) improving these services, and (3) improving coordination among programs and agencies. Within these broad categories, the SIG states used a wide variety of approaches to improve their WPRS systems. Each state's experience was different because of the uniqueness of its SIG plans, its existing UI and reemployment services delivery system, and state labor market characteristics. Although there are patterns in the ways states used the grant money, these 11 different experiences provide a rich array of designs and approaches to ensure that claimants most in need of reemployment services receive them in a timely, effective way.

CHANGING THE MECHANISMS TO IDENTIFY AND SELECT CLAIMANTS MOST IN NEED OF REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

A number of states used grant funds to address weaknesses in their WPRS systems resulting from delays in claimants' participation in reemployment services, low levels of participation, or poor identification of claimants most in need. The main strategies used to do so were:

- ***Developing Systems to Select Claimants for Services After Their Initial Claims.*** Calling in claimants at initial claim rather than first payment can reduce the length of time to service receipt, speed their return to work, and reduce their UI benefits. However, such profiling involves trade-offs. After changing to initial-claim profiling, Minnesota gave local offices discretion about whether to call in claimants with separation issues or denials. In contrast, Alaska had planned to change to profiling at initial claim but, because of concerns about the increased staff burden from serving more claimants and investigating the situations of claimants in denial periods, decided against doing so. South Carolina changed to initial-claim profiling but encountered problems calling in claimants who were ineligible for benefits. States that switched to initial-claim profiling were generally successful at reducing time to service receipt.
- ***Expanding the Group of Claimants in the WPRS Selection Pools.*** Some states originally excluded some claimants from their profiling selection pools because of the statistical complexity in calculating scores for them or difficulties accessing the necessary data. Several SIG states developed mechanisms to include groups that had previously been excluded, such as claimants with short potential durations or missing scores. Washington originally planned to include additional initial claimants in the WPRS process so that local office staff could invite them to attend reemployment services; however, the state developed a simpler strategy. Generally, including more claimants in the WPRS process means that more claimants may be required to participate in services when offices have the capacity to serve them. When a one-stop cannot serve all claimants in its pool, increasing the number of claimants in the pool may alter who is called in for services but will not increase the number served.
- ***Improving the Statistical Precision of Profiling Models.*** Several states included additional variables or reconfigured variables already in their models. Most states did so within the SIG period; those that did not alter how claimants in a local office are ranked faced constraints on the availability of programming resources. Many model changes may result in a better identification of high-risk claimants and a greater likelihood that these claimants will be served. However, some model changes, using characteristics that vary only across offices, will not affect how claimants in each office are ranked unless service delivery resources can be shifted from one geographic area to another. More generally, states were challenged in figuring out how to specify their models and implement diagnostics tests. They may benefit from more DOL assistance for the task.

IMPROVING REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Delivering reemployment services is central to WPRS's goal of promoting reemployment and reducing UI duration. Many states used their SIG funds to improve reemployment service delivery or increase their capacity to offer these services. Their main approaches were:

- ***Improving Orientation and Reemployment Workshops.*** Several states used the SIG to improve and standardize the content and style of workshops that one-stops offer, with the common goal of increasing claimant participation and engagement. They also updated the information presented to incorporate changes resulting from

implementation of WIA and new technologies and resources available in one-stops. In several states, central office staff revamped their workshops and trained local office staff on the changes. In contrast, Wisconsin asked several local office staff to assess and improve their workshops. Alaska facilitated sharing of workshop strategies among local office staff through regularly scheduled teleconferences and workshops.

- ***Strengthening the Assessment Process.*** Four states used the SIG to strengthen the ability of staff to tailor service plans to the unique needs of individual claimants. Minnesota and Washington developed assessment forms to identify claimants' needs for reemployment services. Alaska and Minnesota also examined strategies to identify sensitive personal barriers that might interfere with reemployment. New York used SIG funds to provide local offices with commercial career assessment software. As part of these efforts, these states established confidentiality policies.
- ***Enhancing Follow-Up Activities.*** Several states used the SIG to strengthen claimants' involvement in reemployment services during their UI claim periods. Wisconsin developed procedures for contacting claimants at specific intervals to encourage voluntary participation. Other states developed and implemented requirements for claimants who continue to collect UI benefits, often tying these activities to eligibility reviews. These and other follow-up activities facilitate learning about claimants' employment statuses, which can improve statistics on claimant outcomes.
- ***Facilitating Receipt of Self-Access Services.*** WIA's emphasis on self-service activities, along with changes in technology, has influenced state approaches to self-access services. Several states encouraged the use of new technology by making computers, the Internet, and computer-based resources more available. All states, in their regular operations, provide one-on-one staff assistance or special workshops on the use of new technology, but California explored making such assistance a formal part of WPRS. California developed and pilot-tested a WPRS orientation workshop component to teach claimants how to use the Internet to find jobs.
- ***Increasing Service Capacity.*** Because WPRS is designed to allocate resources to claimants most likely to exhaust UI benefits, North Carolina, West Virginia, and Wisconsin allocated new SIG-funded staff to areas with either historically low service capacity or anticipated high needs. North Carolina specifically targeted workers from declining industries to receive intensive reemployment services.

States generally were successful at implementing their proposed improvements to service delivery. A key element of their success was that central office staff directing the SIG efforts either had the authority to implement changes and train local office staff about them or had well-established procedures to work with staff who did have such authority.

IMPROVING COORDINATION AMONG PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES

For WPRS systems to be successful, good linkages are needed among UI, ES, and WIA data systems and agency staff. Developing good data linkages is challenging, since, in most states,

these three programs have separate data systems. Developing linkages and fostering cooperation among staff is also difficult. The goals of the programs differ, and they are managed separately, sometimes through different agencies and levels of government.

Several SIG states used some of their grant funds to address these coordination issues, particularly linkages among data systems. The main data system improvements they made were:

- ***Improving the Link Between Identification of WPRS-Eligible Claimants and the Call-In Process for Local Office Services.*** Maryland developed a new local-office-based WPRS data system that reduced the time between initial claims and delivery of reemployment services. Washington made similar improvements to its system prior to the SIG and considered further improvements, but it put those plans on hold pending development of a new one-stop operating system.
- ***Improving the Link from Service Delivery to UI Adjudication.*** The switch to remote initial-claims filing makes this link important, since adjudicators are no longer based in local offices. Several SIG states developed electronic forms to replace manual communication systems.
- ***Enhancing Reemployment Service Delivery and Performance Monitoring.*** The SIG states used several approaches to achieve this objective.
 - ***Improving Links Among Data Systems and Providing Wider Access to Multiple Data Systems.*** Linking data systems reduces the need to enter data in more than one system. Several states worked on these improvements to enable staff in different programs to cross-reference services and benefits their clients receive from other programs.
 - ***Creating Local Office Claimant-Level Reports.*** Louisiana and South Carolina created additional claimant-level reports to enable local offices to monitor and manage their workloads better, to identify claimants who need follow-up calls to offer additional services, or to record information on obtained employment.
 - ***Creating Local Office Summary Reports.*** Alaska, South Carolina, and Washington created summary reports to measure and monitor performance. In Washington's case, links were developed among separate data systems so that a cross-program measure of the percent of benefits collected could be used. This measure, calculated for profiled claimants who are called in for services and who attend at least one workshop, relies on data from both UI and ES programs.

Many of these data system changes were successfully implemented within the grant period, but because WPRS operates in a broader program environment, some states encountered difficulty. Four states developed ways to improve their tracking systems, but they decided against implementing at least one piece of the improvements because the WPRS computer systems are part of a larger computer system undergoing changes over several years.

Several SIG states also tried to improve coordination and cooperation among programs and between central and local office staff, such as by using some of the data system improvements listed earlier. States used cross-office training sessions to standardize the delivery of services, and Alaska also used them to build relationships among staff from different agencies. That state used annual statewide conferences and monthly teleconferences as forums for various agencies to describe their programs to WPRS staff, with the goal of promoting referrals for profiled claimants. Finally, South Carolina used its SIG to fund field coordinators to improve communication between the central office and the local offices throughout the state.

INFERENCES ABOUT WPRS SYSTEMS NATIONWIDE

Collectively, the 11 SIG states represent a range of strategies for operating WPRS systems, and their systems are probably typical of those of other states. With this in mind, we used our in-depth analysis of the experiences of the SIG states to identify several broad patterns about WPRS systems nationwide. We found that:

- ***States may not have proper allocations of resources across geographic regions to serve the highest-risk claimants.*** Distributional issues within a state may prevent some offices from targeting services to claimants with the highest profiling scores, even when the WPRS model identifies them as most in need. These resource misallocations may arise from historical patterns in funding allocations across regions within a state or from political considerations. Temporary supplemental funds, such as the SIGs, can supplement other funding sources by giving states more flexibility in directing reemployment services to clients who need them most.
- ***States may not be providing intensive and individualized services, coupled with enforcement, as envisioned for WPRS.*** The services we observed in most SIG states were not as intensive or individualized as those envisioned for WPRS (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b). Although the types of services offered may vary across local offices within a state and according to variations in WPRS workloads over time, most states used one of two possible strategies for providing services. Some provided intensive services, which were minimally individualized, by requiring all WPRS claimants to participate in an in-depth workshop that provided advice on a wide range of job search strategies and lasted up to 10 hours. Others provided individualized services that were not likely to be as intensive. These states required WPRS-mandated claimants to participate in a brief orientation that covered the availability of services and sometimes an introduction to job search strategies. Some states required a follow-up service (often selected by the claimants and usually of short duration and low intensity) or one-on-one meetings with staff. Other states required no follow-up services. Staff frequently were reluctant to assign and enforce participation in follow-up services based on their subjective assessments of a claimant's need.
- ***States varied in the strength of their operational linkages between agencies.*** States varied widely in their coordination between UI, JS, and WIA. In several cases, state-level staff involved in the SIG activities commented that the WPRS program is perceived as being run primarily by only one agency (usually either UI or ES). WPRS tasks and authority may have been divided among agencies when the system was designed (in the mid-1990s). One or more agencies within a state may have

failed to become involved in the continual efforts needed to update and improve the system so that potential UI exhaustees are correctly identified, referred to services, and tracked to ensure that their needs are met. This challenge may be exacerbated by the lack of a separate WPRS funding stream. For more effective WPRS programs, states may need to exert deliberate efforts to strengthen their linkages between the programs that serve claimants the WPRS system identifies as likely exhaustees.

- ***Some states were developing non-WPRS orientation workshops to introduce claimants to services and considering how to integrate them with WPRS.*** Some policymakers have been concerned that remote initial-claim filing will reduce the likelihood that claimants will go voluntarily to ES—because claimants are not already in local offices and because call center workers are unlikely to make systematic referrals to reemployment services (U.S. Department of Labor 2000). The WPRS system may counteract this concern in part, since it requires some claimants to visit a local office early in their spells to learn about services. However, other claimants may not systematically be made aware of and be offered services. As a result, some SIG states have begun developing procedures to inform most or all non-job-attached claimants of services by requiring them to participate in orientation workshops that are independent of WPRS. These SIG states were investigating ways either to integrate this workshop with the WPRS-mandated orientation workshop for selected claimants or to ensure that the information presented was not redundant. However, these states have not yet had the opportunity to refine their processes and offer lessons about the most efficient use of staff’s and claimants’ time.

We also identified ways in which states may encounter trade-offs in designing or modifying their WPRS systems:

- ***Changing from profiling at first payment to at initial claim may influence a state’s ability to target services and decrease trust fund expenditures.*** Changing profiling from at first payment to at initial claim is likely to improve a state’s ability to provide services earlier in claimants’ UI spells. States may expect this to lead to decreased UI durations and trust fund expenditures. However, these intended results may not occur, because initial-claim profiling is likely to reduce a state’s ability to target services to potential UI exhaustees. Some claimants who do not receive benefits and claimants who receive only a few weeks of benefits may be called in for services. The later service delivery is, the higher is the concentration of potential exhaustees who receive those services, and the better targeted those services are. For a fixed level of resources, therefore, it is an empirical question whether profiling at first payment or at initial claim is more effective at reducing weeks of UI benefits paid and trust fund expenditures. Policymakers also may want to weigh the effects of providing services to unemployed workers who are disqualified from UI but are at a high risk of long unemployment durations in their decision making.
- ***States face trade-offs between ensuring claimant cooperation in service receipt and enforcing participation requirements.*** States grappled with how to achieve a cooperative and constructive relationship with claimants while simultaneously enforcing participation requirements. Different states may choose different strategies

for balancing these issues, but their decision influences their ability to achieve other WPRS system objectives, such as early intervention and efficient use of staff time. When claimants who do not show up for services fail to contact the local office to provide a reason and reschedule, the state must decide how to respond to this nonparticipation. Some SIG states give claimants several chances to attend an orientation session before they are subject to adjudication. As a result, some claimants who eventually receive WPRS services may do so quite late in their unemployment spells, which would reduce the potential benefits of early intervention. However, allowing claimants more than one opportunity to participate may avoid unnecessary adjudications. In contrast, other SIG states instruct local office staff to report a no-show for UI adjudication the first time a claimant fails to report to a WPRS activity. This speedy enforcement of requirements may help ensure that claimants who receive services do so early in their unemployment spells. However, it may hinder a cooperative relationship between claimants and staff when the claimants eventually do participate, and adjudication rates are likely to increase. If the adjudication identifies primarily claimants who failed to show for just cause, then workloads for adjudication staff may increase without saving UI trust funds or improving program integrity. However, if the quick referral to adjudication is accurately identifying uncooperative claimants, denials also will increase and program integrity may be improved.

INFERENCES ABOUT THE WIA

We also used our data collection efforts to identify several patterns across states as they implemented WIA and integrated WPRS activities in their one-stop environments. Efforts to improve their UI and reemployment services systems most directly pertained to the key WIA principles of streamlining services, providing universal access, empowering individuals, and increasing accountability. States and one-stop staff reported that these efforts were ongoing.

At the time of our visits to states, the states varied significantly in their implementation of the one-stop system. We encountered positive instances of states or one-stops that had made considerable progress toward integration or that were actively working toward this goal. We also encountered other instances in which one-stops still needed to overcome large barriers, such as ensuring that the partners had an adequate one-stop presence, that space was available to conduct activities, and that partners were satisfied with the cost-sharing arrangements. These issues will need to be addressed to foster greater cross-program cooperation and integration at the local level.

States reported facing several struggles when trying to integrate data systems. These included difficulty because of the complexity of the process and inability to obtain enough staff time to overcome the programming hurdles. They also included issues surrounding the confidentiality of the data and concerns about improving existing systems when major upgrades were expected. Often, systems integration lagged behind other aspects of WIA implementation. Nevertheless, state staff recognized the potential benefit of data systems integration to help achieve WIA goals, such as providing better customer service and developing performance measures.

Strong state-level leadership may be able to make successful implementation of the WIA easier. This may be true both as agencies undergo organizational changes and as these systems are refined in response to changes in the program environment and local labor market.

The WPRS system is a key mechanism to introduce claimants to WIA services, so states need to ensure that WPRS staff can make appropriate referrals. Many staff members reported that the WPRS system is an important method to bring customers to the one-stop, possibly especially so in states that no longer require in-person filing of UI claims. However, WPRS and many of the SIG-funded improvements have focused on the linkage between the UI and ES programs and data systems, rather than on linkages with partner agencies. States and one-stop agencies need to ensure that the WPRS system is fully integrated with other one-stop services and that staff who provide these services can make comprehensive and appropriate referrals so that WPRS claimants can better use the full range of services available to them.

Some state and one-stop staff expressed optimism about the effects of the WIA on their ability to administer the WPRS system and serve UI claimants, through increased availability of services, the ability to make more appropriate service referrals, and enhanced quality of services. However, some staff reported drawbacks that have occurred as part of the transition process. These included decreased funding to provide WPRS services or the inability to use WIA funds for WPRS services and inability to expand WPRS services because of space constraints in the one-stops. In addition, states may still be trying to decide how best to meet the needs of WPRS claimants upon implementation of the WIA regulations and the development of one-stops. Care should be taken to ensure that states and one-stops implement the WIA in a way that encourages claimants to benefit from both the WPRS system and WIA so that they receive better services and obtain better post-UI labor market outcomes than before.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1993, Public Law 103-52 amended the Social Security Act by requiring states to establish Worker Profiling and Reemployment Service (WPRS) systems, whose objectives were to identify claimants likely to exhaust unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, refer such claimants to reemployment services, and collect follow-up information on reemployment services received and employment outcomes obtained. The law also required that claimants referred to services participate in those or similar services as a condition for UI eligibility, unless the claimant had already completed similar services or had a justifiable cause for not participating. The intent of the legislation was to allocate reemployment services efficiently to UI claimants most likely to need assistance in finding employment (U.S. Department of Labor 1993). Research had also suggested that providing reemployment services to UI claimants was an effective policy strategy to reduce average durations of UI benefit receipt (Meyer 1995).

Since the legislation was enacted, all states have implemented WPRS systems. However, the systems could be improved in a number of areas, and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) sponsored two reviews to determine where these improvements could be made. An external evaluation (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b) (1) monitored state implementation of WPRS systems through case studies of the first six states to operate such systems, (2) surveyed all states to investigate how they were implementing their systems, and (3) examined the impacts of WPRS on the UI benefit receipt and employment and earnings of claimants referred to it. An internal DOL/Employment and Training Administration (ETA) review (U.S. Department of Labor 1999a) by a WPRS Policy Workgroup composed of state, regional, and federal workforce development staff examined how the systems evolved between 1994 and 1998 and made recommendations toward making them more effective in helping dislocated workers find jobs as

rapidly as possible at wages comparable to those they had been earning. These two reviews suggested improvements in the following areas:

- ***Profiling Models.*** Update and revise models more frequently. Ensure that claimants most likely to exhaust their benefits are referred for services.
- ***Reemployment Services.*** Increase resources for services to greater numbers of claimants and increase the intensity of services. Provide flexibility to shift resources across geographic areas to respond to needs.
- ***Tracking Systems.*** Improve the data systems used to track services and outcomes.
- ***Overall Coordination.*** Improve coordination and linkages among UI, Employment Services (ES), and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs.¹

In response to these findings, DOL/ETA awarded significant improvement demonstration grants (SIGs) to 11 states to improve reemployment services for UI claimants (U.S. Department of Labor 1999a): Alaska, California, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

A. THE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

The two-year SIGs were intended to “increase the effectiveness of reemployment services for UI claimants” by improving the WPRS systems in grantee states (U.S. Department of Labor 1999a). Further goals of the grants were to help shape future policy directions for reemployment services for UI claimants and to support implementation of the WIA. The activities of the 11 states awarded grants in June 1999 can be grouped into three main categories (Table I.1). Some states strove to improve the identification and selection of claimants most in need of reemployment services by speeding the identification of claimants at a high risk of exhausting UI

¹States were making transitions during the pre-grant and grant periods from Job Training Partnership Act and Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance programs to WIA programs. For ease of reference throughout this report, however, we refer to these types of service delivery programs as WIA programs.

TABLE I.1

MAIN ACTIVITIES FOR SIG STATES

	Significant Improvement Grant States										
	AK	CA	LA	MD	MN	NY	NC	SC	WA	WV	WI
Improving the Identification and Selection of Claimants Most in Need of Reemployment Services											
Expediting the Identification of Claimants at High Risk of Exhausting UI Benefits	X			X	X	X ^a	X	X	X ^a		
Expanding the Pool of WPRS Eligibles	X		X		X ^a				X		
Improving the Claimant Selection Process	X		X	X	X ^a	X		X	X	X	
Improving Reemployment Services											
Improving Orientation and Reemployment Workshops	X		X	X		X		X			X
Strengthening the Assessment Process	X				X	X			X		
Enhancing Follow-up Activities			X			X ^a	X	X	X ^a	X	X
Facilitating Receipt of Self-Access Services		X	X			X					
Increasing Service Capacity							X			X	X
Improving Coordination Among Programs and Agencies											
Strengthening the Profiling/Call-In Link				X					X		
Strengthening the Link from Service Delivery to the UI System	X			X	X						
Improving Data Systems to Enhance Service Delivery and Monitoring	X		X		X		X ^a	X		X	
Improving Coordination Among Agencies and Offices ^b	X							X			

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

^aThese activities are not part of SIG activities but are included because of their noteworthy features.

^bSeveral states established management teams of staff in the central office to coordinate implementation of the SIGs. Although these teams may enhance the overall coordination of WPRS activities, we focus only on activities that involved a broader number or range of staff.

benefits, expanding the pool of WPRS eligibles, or improving the claimant selection process. Some states worked to improve the quality, content, or intensity of reemployment services, such as the WPRS orientation workshop or other workshops, the assessment process, follow-up activities, or self-access services. Finally, some states worked to improve their coordination among agencies, which is particularly important because WPRS systems involve UI, ES, and often WIA staff, as well as staff at both central and local office levels.²

Within these broad categories of improvement strategies, the 11 SIG states revised their WPRS systems using a wide variety of approaches based on what they saw as their main weakness in profiling and service delivery and what they deemed most feasible to implement with the resources they had and the time they were allowed (Table I.2). In some instances, states chose to use the grant money for activities that were already underway and had long-range objectives but required additional resources for further progress. Each state's experience is unique because of its unusual SIG plans, existing UI and reemployment services delivery system, and labor market characteristics. Although there are patterns in the ways states have used the grant money, these 11 different experiences provide a rich array of designs and approaches to ensure that claimants most in need of reemployment services receive them efficiently and effectively.

B. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) is conducting a process/implementation evaluation of these grants. This evaluation describes the WPRS systems in use in each of the

²In many instances throughout this report, we use the terms “local offices” and “one-stops” interchangeably, because states continue to make the transition from local offices to one-stops and provide many of the same types of services in each environment.

TABLE I.2
KEY COMPONENTS OF SIG STATES' GRANT ACTIVITIES

Activity	Description
ALASKA	
Improve the profiling model	This includes developing a new model, implementing a method for yearly updates, including TAA/NAFTA-eligible claimants in the profiling selection pool, and recalculating profiling scores weekly for claimants in the selection pool to factor in new information. The state proposed expediting the profiling at initial claim, rather than at first payment, but rejected this idea because of concerns about increases in staff workload and confusion caused by calling in claimants who are ineligible for benefits.
Increase the accuracy of selection and referrals of WPRS-eligible claimants	Through training of UI call center staff on criteria for registration coding and programming changes, claimants who are at high risk of long periods of unemployment and who have been miscoded are reclassified to be eligible for WPRS services.
Clarify responsibilities and procedures for profiling no-shows	These improvements are designed to help UI and ES staff better manage adjudication workloads by clarifying which staff are responsible for rescheduling claimants who did not show up for a workshop and are responsible for adjudicating these issues.
Coordinate within and across programs	Through monthly teleconferences, statewide yearly training workshops, and visits to local offices by the WPRS coordinator, this state has hoped to build relationships among staff, share information, and increase knowledge across program areas.
Improve tracking and outcomes information	The state improved tabulations for the 9048 and 9049 reports, modified and created new versions of these reports for state use, and provided feedback to local staff on data entry.
Increase materials and resources for profiled claimants and workshop facilitators	The state provided job search workbooks to all participants at the WPRS orientation. Some local offices received computer equipment (laptops and projectors) to help with workshops and software to provide a basic computer skills tutorial.
CALIFORNIA	
Develop an Internet module to be included in the orientation workshop	The module helps claimants at high risk of long unemployment spells to develop their skills to use computer-based self-access services and to conduct a more effective job search. Topics include (1) basic computer skills and terminology (such as starting the computer; using basic keyboard, mouse, and Internet manipulation techniques); (2) registration procedures for the state's job-listing system; (3) use of the Internet for job searching; (4) use of several job-related Web sites; (5) use of keywords to define skill sets for job search and resume preparation; and (6) organizational skills (being focused, keeping records, and setting goals) so that they could have an efficient Internet job search. Many of the points in the lesson plan, such as broadening the set of skills that claimants recognize they have, are also useful for a non-computer-based job search strategy.
LOUISIANA	
Improve the profiling model	This is accomplished by adding new variables and eliminating old ones to improve statistical accuracy in the identification of claimants at high risk of benefit exhaustion. The state also changed the score threshold above which claimants are included in the profiling lists.
Improve training and materials for workshop facilitators	This is accomplished by redesigning the video for the six-hour orientation workshop, conducting statewide training sessions for the facilitators to standardize the delivery of this service, and developing a new/updated facilitators' guide and participant workbook for use in the orientation workshop. The state also developed a CD of the workshop material, for claimants to go through on their own in the resource room.
Increase computer-based resources for profiled claimants	Louisiana used grant resources to provide additional PC workstations with Internet access to local offices and one-stops. Most offices received two workstations.

TABLE I.2 (continued)

Increase use of America's Job Bank	The state developed a self-guided CD on how to use America's Job Bank. The state considered developing a lesson plan for a workshop on America's Job Bank, but decided against it because of concerns about the specialized nature of the workshop.
Redesign existing and create new data reports	The new reports to improve local office follow-up and tracking efforts include reports on claimants who received services recently without obtaining employment, claimants with job referrals and claimants who did not show up for required WPRS activities, and claimants who recently attended workshops.
MARYLAND	
Improve the profiling model	The state reestimated the model and updated tables that are used to compute profiling scores. The tables contain data on unemployment rates and changes in employment by industry at the Workforce Development Area level.
Develop and implement new job search workshop manual	The new workshops emphasize experiential learning using group exercises in which the participants discover the concepts themselves rather than having them presented by the instructor (as in the old workshop). Like the old workshops, the new ones are 10 hours in length, but the groups are larger (20 to 30 participants instead of 12 to 15) to improve the mix of issues and diversity of the groups.
Improve the tracking and scheduling system	By increasing automation in the local office operations, the new PC-based system allows local office staff to look at the weekly list of WPRS eligibles, decide whom to call in, print out customized letters, record attendance at the workshop, reschedule no-shows, and send an electronic document to UI staff for each claimant who did not attend.
MINNESOTA	
Conduct profiling after the initial claim	This allows claimants to receive WPRS services earlier in their claims process. In a process that is parallel to changing the timing of profiling, but is not funded by the SIG, Minnesota has added claimants with short potential durations to the profiling selection pool and modified the list of claimant characteristics used to predict those claimants most likely to exhaust their UI benefits.
Develop a comprehensive assessment tool	The tool is designed to help local office staff better identify claimants' needs that may affect their reemployment prospects and to better direct them to appropriate services.
Develop data transfer capabilities between the UI and ES databases	The state can now transfer UI participation and WPRS requirements to the ES system so the information can be viewed more easily by staff working with the claimants.
Improve communication between the call centers and the local offices and one-stops	Adjudicators now receive a standardized set of information from local offices and one-stops when UI eligibility issues arise.
NEW YORK	
Improve the profiling model	Staff developed recommendations for a new profiling model by conducting a survey of state profiling models to examine other states' WPRS systems and investigating the appropriateness of different model specifications in partnership with a local university professor and graduate students.
Conduct training sessions	Local office staff attended training sessions that covered the use of labor market information, career assessment tools, the revised profiling model, profile scoring and rescoring, and case management and tracking.
Distribute career exploration tools	These computer-based career exploration tools are designed to help claimants make better career choices by deciding on a career direction, understanding whether that career is in demand in the labor market, and determining how to update their skills.

TABLE I.2 (continued)

Identify data system improvements	To link the various data systems involved in WPRS and to better address nonparticipation in WPRS, the state developed procedures to place a hold more quickly on the UI payments of claimants who do not show up for WPRS activities. The state also mails to claimants a letter that explains why their benefits are on hold and that they need to attend the activity. The state also worked with a consultant to investigate ways to link together all WPRS-related data systems and set up a relational database of all WPRS-related data to facilitate reporting.
NORTH CAROLINA	
Provide intensive services to workers in the textile, apparel, and tobacco industries	North Carolina established the Reemployment Services for Textiles, Apparel, and Tobacco (RSTAT) program, which is separate from the WPRS system and focuses intensive, staff-assisted services on workers laid off from these industries. To reemploy these workers as quickly as possible, funds were allocated to local offices that were experiencing plant closings to pay for staff for varying lengths of time, depending on the size and duration of the local layoffs. These claimants participated in an orientation session upon filing an initial claim, and a job search workshop at a later date. Throughout their UI claim periods, they saw a staff member every two weeks to discuss their job search activities, receive job referrals, and/or receive job development. They might also be referred to training or the resource room for further assistance.
SOUTH CAROLINA	
Improve the profiling model	This is accomplished by profiling and referring claimants at the time of the initial claim. State staff considered but decided against implementing substate statistical models because there is not enough variation across the state to make substate models worthwhile to run.
Provide more defined reemployment service objectives	The state developed a 26-week Profiled Claimant Service Model to strengthen follow-up services to claimants throughout their UI claim periods.
Strengthen follow-up services	The state added full-time caseworkers in some of the largest offices to provide intensive case management follow-up services to claimants with high profiling scores.
Increase front-line WPRS staff training	To increase uniformity of services across offices, the training covered WPRS program procedures and guidelines, reasons to exempt claimants, how to encourage participation, topics to cover in the orientation workshop, and handouts to be provided to participants.
Develop better tracking systems	New reports provide more timely frontline and management feedback by listing claimants who filed for benefits each day, key information claimants' involvement in the UI and ES systems, and claimants who continue to receive UI benefits.
Implement regular field monitoring and technical assistance	The full-time field coordinators positions were designed to improve coordination between the central office and local offices by helping local office and one-stop staff to manage their workloads, address program issues, and to monitor local office program procedures.
WASHINGTON	
Include additional initial claimants in the selection pool	Local offices want to have several opportunities to enroll claimants in reemployment services. SIG activities include investigations identifying claimants that file additional initial claims and whether and how to develop a WPRS scoring process to rank these claimants.
Develop a new assessment tool	By assessing job search readiness, a new tool is designed to assist staff in directing claimants to additional workshops. Although the state has the capacity to provide this tool on the Internet so that claimants may access it more easily and the data may be captured electronically, local office staff currently hand out the assessment tool form during workshops.
Integrate data systems	The SIG efforts are a continuation of Washington's long-term plans to develop a "data warehouse" to link together the UI data system, wage records, the ES data system, Labor Exchange, and (now also) the WIA data system. These data systems historically have resided on different computer platforms and therefore did not link well together. The data warehouse has the potential to help improve service delivery and monitoring and encourage staff to utilize cross-division data to develop more appropriate program policies.

TABLE I.2 (continued)

Develop an Internet-based scheduling system	This would automatically schedule claimants to one-on-one staff time slots and group workshops. Although this was expected to reduce staff time spent on scheduling and following up on claimants, the state decided to put this idea on hold because it plans to switch to a one-stop operating system that would perform similar activities.
WEST VIRGINIA	
Improve the profiling model	This was accomplished by adding new predictor variables and developing a mechanism to facilitate periodic updates to the model.
Increase the number of claimants receiving WPRS services	Part-time staff worked exclusively on WPRS activities in areas of high unemployment, scheduled and led the weekly workshops, conducted intake and assessment, made follow-up contact via letters or telephone calls with claimants, tried to place the claimants, conducted other case management activities, and handled reports.
Identify and correct problems in the WPRS reporting processes	The state identified and corrected problems in the recording and transmission of data used in reports for both central office staff and DOL.
WISCONSIN	
Improve reemployment services	Several local office staff reviewed the menu of reemployment services offered, modified existing services and added new services. Some of the newly designed workshops target specific populations, such as older workers.
Implement follow-up efforts	Local office staff in one area of the state reminded claimants after their 13th week of UI claims of available services in the hopes of decreasing the exhaustion rate and duration of claims by increasing participation in follow-up services.
Increase the number of claimants receiving WPRS services	These efforts intended to correct historical imbalances in the proportions of claimants across the state who receive services by increasing the number of profiling staff in areas with the largest proportion of unserved claimants.

SOURCE: Data collected for the Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

11 states, documents the changes made with the SIGs, and assesses the degree to which the SIG activities were successfully implemented. When appropriate, we also document why states chose to deviate from their implementation plans.

This final report describes findings from data collection activities conducted during late 2000, 2001, and early 2002. The data collection activities include in-person visits to the 11 SIG states and telephone interviews with their staff. One state, Minnesota, was visited twice, the other SIG states once. The staff we spoke with included SIG coordinators; UI, ES, WIA, and Management Information Systems (MIS) staff at the central office; and management and reemployment services staff who conduct WPRS activities in the local offices and one-stops. The data collection also includes a review of the grant proposals and relevant documents provided to DOL or for states' own internal uses, as well as an analysis of state-level data on UI program activities and reemployment services provided as part of the states' reporting requirements to DOL.

We supplement our discussion of activities funded by the SIGs with information on some of the other innovative approaches states took to WPRS service delivery, even when they have not been funded by the SIGs. States are continually making improvements in their UI and one-stop systems, and we also make note of these changes when they affect SIG activities or service delivery processes. By doing so, we aim to provide a more comprehensive view of the service delivery mechanisms of the 11 SIG states, as well as the associated strengths and potential pitfalls, so that DOL and other states may benefit from these experiences.

This final report is an update to, and expansion of, an interim report that described early implementation activities of the states, a description of the problems they encountered, and the lessons learned. Expansions to the interim report include additional site-specific and cross-site lessons based on the full two years of SIG states' activities and a discussion of how patterns

found across the SIG states illustrate how states may have difficulty achieving WPRS objectives. We also examine whether quantitative analysis of changes in service use and UI benefit receipt through pre-post grant comparisons provides further information on the effects of the SIG efforts. However, limitations in this data analysis caused by the effects of other factors on claimant outcomes (like changes in the economy or the broader UI and reemployment service system) and issues with the quality of the data affect our ability to identify changes caused by the SIG activities. In addition, many of the grant activities, such as improvements in interagency coordination, are important but are likely to affect client outcomes only in the long run. We therefore view the primary contributions of this evaluation final report to be qualitative in nature, with most of the lessons drawn from the process/implementation experiences of the states.

C. OUTLINE OF THIS REPORT

The next three chapters discuss the improvements to the profiling model, reemployment services, and agency coordination, respectively. Chapter II discusses states' efforts to improve the identification and selection of claimants most in need of reemployment services. Chapter III discusses states' efforts to improve reemployment services throughout the claimants' UI claims periods. Chapter IV discusses state activities to improve the coordination among programs and agencies. Finally, Chapter V provides an assessment of the implementation of states' SIG activities, as well as implications about the way WPRS systems nationwide are likely to operate and inferences about the implementation of the WIA.

II. CHANGES TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF CLAIMANTS MOST IN NEED OF REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

State-run Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) systems are designed to target reemployment services to unemployment insurance (UI) claimants who are expected to experience long periods of unemployment. Because reemployment services are costly and cannot be provided to every claimant, the WPRS system helps to identify claimants who most need them. States typically use a “profiling model” to rank claimants according to their statistical likelihood of exhausting benefits. The highest-ranking claimants—those most likely to exhaust their UI benefits—are given a higher priority than lower-ranking ones. Indeed, claimants with the highest rankings are called in for services and required to participate in them as a condition of continued UI claim eligibility.

Although these systems may allocate scarce resources more efficiently than other approaches, Wandner and Messenger (1999) identified several weaknesses in the mechanisms by which they select claimants to receive reemployment services. These weaknesses stemmed primarily from operational issues rather than from the profiling model per se, and included delays in claimants’ participation in reemployment services and low levels of participation. Suggestions to improve these mechanisms included that states (1) periodically update their models to reflect changes in the factors that lead to exhausting benefits, and (2) increase the number of claimants who are referred to WPRS services.

A number of states have used grant funds to address these types of weaknesses in their WPRS systems. The main strategies to improve the mechanisms by which claimants are selected for services have been:

- ***Developing Systems to Identify and Select Claimants for Services at the Time of Their Initial Claims.*** This has the potential to reduce the length of time to service receipt, thereby speeding claimants' return to work. However, these new systems may create additional work for State Employment Security Agency (SESA) staff, because claimants who are subsequently determined ineligible for benefits might be called in. Minnesota gives local offices discretion about whether to call in claimants with separation issues or denials. In contrast, Alaska had planned to change to profiling at initial claim but decided against it because of concerns that staff burden would be increased from serving and investigating the situations of claimants who quit or were fired from their jobs. South Carolina opted for initial claim profiling but reported encountering some of these problems.
- ***Expanding the Group of Claimants Who Are in the WPRS Selection Pools.*** When some states originally designed their profiling systems, they excluded some claimants from the profiling selection pool because of the statistical complexity involved in calculating scores for them or because of limitations in the ability to access the necessary data. Several SIG states have reexamined the appropriateness of these decisions and developed mechanisms to include groups that previously had been excluded, such as claimants with short potential durations or incomplete data. Doing so means that more claimants may be required to participate in services when offices have the capacity to serve them. When a one-stop is unable to serve all the claimants in its selection pool, increasing the number of claimants in the pool may alter who is called in for services but will not increase the number served.
- ***Improving the Statistical Precision of Profiling Models.*** Several states have improved their profiling models, or are in the process of doing so, through the inclusion of additional variables, reconfiguration of variables already included in the model, or respecification of the model. Many model changes may result in a better identification of high-risk claimants and a greater likelihood that they will be served. Respecifying the model or changing the list of claimant-based characteristics used in it has the potential to alter how claimants in a local office are ranked, and therefore who is served. However, characteristics that vary only across offices will not affect how claimants in each office are ranked. These variables will affect only which claimants are called in for services if service delivery resources can be shifted from geographic areas of low service need to those of high service need.

We begin this chapter with a stylized overview of how WPRS systems often are designed; the description does not represent the system in any specific state. We then discuss each of these three types of WPRS system improvements.

A. A STYLIZED MODEL OF WPRS SYSTEMS

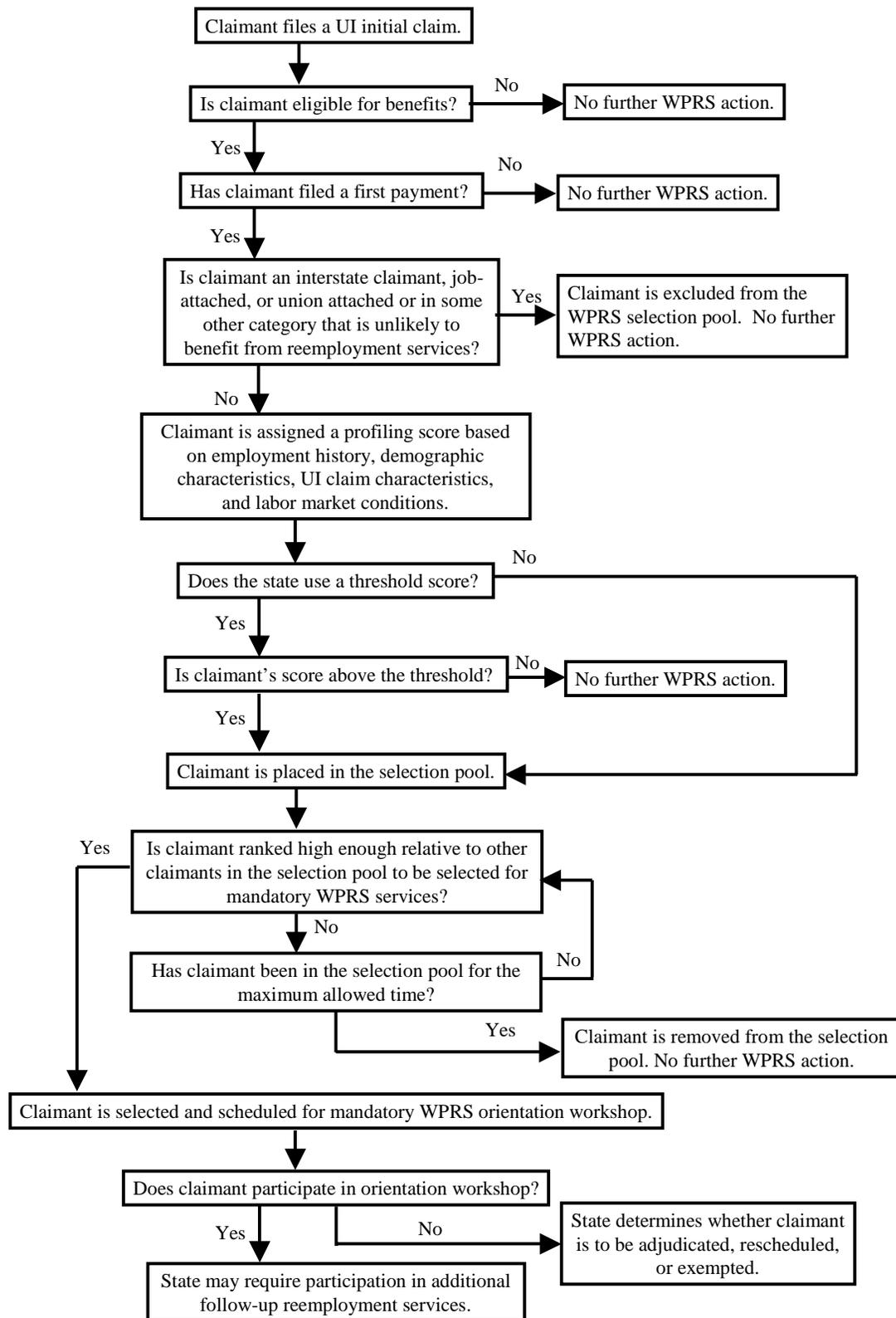
The intention of WPRS is to use statistical techniques and data based on the historical experiences of the state's claimants in order to standardize how new claimants are selected for mandatory reemployment services. Through targeting of services to claimants most in need, limited resources for services are allocated more efficiently, UI duration is reduced, and claimants secure better jobs. Reliance on empirical estimation techniques also reduces the subjectivity of the selection process. Within broad rules and guidelines, states have considerable flexibility in how to run their WPRS systems, so the discussion in this section is inherently general (Figure II.1).

In most states that operate WPRS systems, data on claimants who have filed for UI benefits and been found eligible for a first payment are run through a screening process to determine whether the claimants are likely to be good candidates for the receipt of reemployment services. Claimants who are not are screened out of the selection pool. Although the criteria for screening vary across states, job-attached claimants, claimants who are hired through a union hiring hall, and interstate claimants are often removed.

Typically, claimants who remain in the selection pool are given, on the basis of some of their characteristics, a “profiling score” that captures their probability of exhausting UI benefits.¹ Thus, claimants with higher scores are statistically more likely to exhaust their benefits and therefore are expected to benefit more from reemployment services than would

¹DOL legislation gave states the option to use a “characteristics screen” to identify claimants most likely in need of services and to select claimants for services randomly from among the group of claimants with certain characteristics. However, for the SIG, DOL required state applicants that used characteristics screens to provide an assurance that they would implement a statistical model for profiling within 90 days of the grant award. No SIG recipients used a characteristics screen prior to the SIG.

FIGURE II.1
STYLIZED WPRS SYSTEM



Source: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

Note: This stylized WPRS system flowchart is intended to provide an overview of how many states have designed their WPRS systems and does not represent the system in any specific state.

claimants with lower scores.² States often use the claimant's education, job tenure, occupation, industry, potential claim duration, weekly benefit amount (WBA) and/or UI wage replacement rate, and county unemployment rate for predicting the likelihood of a claimant's exhausting UI benefits. However, states are free to exclude some of these characteristics or include others to improve the predictive ability of their statistical model. States are not allowed to use certain personal data (such as age, race/ethnicity, sex, and citizenship status) when calculating the profiling score, because it is not legal to mandate participation in services on the basis of these characteristics.

A high-scoring subgroup of claimants in the selection pool must not only meet the regular UI program rules on work search efforts, but also participate in reemployment services, such as an orientation workshop that introduces them to services available at the local office. Because the WPRS system is designed to allocate limited resources to claimants that need them most, many states instruct local offices to serve as many claimants as they can handle; claimants with the highest scores are given the highest priority for WPRS-mandated participation. Other states use a predetermined threshold score, interpreted as the cutoff below which claimants are less in need of mandated state assistance. Claimants with the highest scores are still required to attend services, but claimants with scores below the threshold are not. By using a threshold score, a state allows reemployment services staff to work more intensively with the highest-risk group.

States have taken a variety of approaches in the selection of claimants once scores are assigned. Many states allow each local office or one-stop to decide how many reemployment

²Needels et al. 2001 found that claimants who were required to go to Job Service were more likely than claimants who were not required to go to have high-risk characteristics, such as being a dislocated worker or lacking a recall date. However, even under best-case research scenarios, the parametric specifications used for WPRS models do not explain a large proportion of the difference in exhaustion rates between groups of claimants.

service workshops it will conduct per week or month, as well as how many claimants it will call in for an orientation workshop. In some states, each local office selects participants from a list of claimants in its geographic area who were recently given scores. In other states, claimants may be selected at a central location, or a local office may be allowed to choose whether it or the state will do the selection. Although part of the intent of WPRS systems is to use empirical estimation techniques to identify and select claimants most likely to exhaust benefits, the state agency may give local offices some flexibility to skip claimants with high scores and select claimants with lower ones. Common reasons for deciding to skip some high-scoring claimants reflect additional information about the particulars of reemployment services for a specific claimant, such as whether the claimant has been or will be participating in similar services and whether the claimant lives closer to a workshop to be held in a different location at a later date.

Regardless of the mechanism by which claimants are selected, states usually limit the length of time that claimants are on the profiling list and eligible for selection to participate in mandatory services. These time limits, usually one and a half to six weeks, help ensure that only claimants who are in the early part of their claims are selected. This is important, as states can then target their reemployment services to claimants for whom they have the best chance of reducing the time on UI benefits and saving expenditures from the UI trust fund. A claimant on the profiling list who is not selected for mandatory participation during this time is removed from the list and effectively exempted from these participation requirements.

Letters notifying the claimants of their selection for mandatory services are sent from either the local office or a central location. Although the style and content of these letters vary considerably, they typically inform the claimants that (1) they have been selected to participate in an orientation workshop that will provide them with information on the services available to

them, (2) their participation is mandatory, and (3) failure to participate or provide just cause for nonparticipation may affect their eligibility for UI benefits.

Most states require, at a minimum, that WPRS-mandated claimants participate in an orientation workshop on the reemployment services available at the one-stop center.³ Topics usually covered in the orientation workshop include the reasons claimants are required to participate in reemployment services, the services available at the one-stop center or in the community, and basic job search skills (such as networking for job leads, resume writing, and interviewing).

For a variety of reasons, claimants who have been mandated to attend an orientation workshop do not always show up, and how states handle these no-shows varies according to the reason for nonparticipation. States often exempt a claimant who has recently participated in similar services, or reschedule a claimant who has a job interview at the same time as the workshop. Claimants who fail to comply for a reason, such as a child care or transportation problem, that suggests they are not able to or available for work are often referred to adjudication. Some eligible claimants return to work before their scheduled workshop. Because these claimants stop collecting benefits, they may be subject to the participation requirement only if they return to collect additional benefits during the same benefit year.

Often, however, SESA staff may not know why a claimant has failed to show up for a required workshop. In such cases, some states immediately transmit information to UI program staff so that adjudication can begin to determine the claimant's eligibility for benefits. Other states automatically reschedule a claimant for a second workshop and possibly even a third if a

³States vary considerably in the depth of services provided to managed claimants. Providing minimal services only is a departure from service strategies that have been found to be effective in reducing unemployment (U.S. Department of Labor 1999a).

claimant fails to show up for the second. These states are therefore giving claimants second and third chances to participate before the adjudication process is initiated.

Finally, WPRS-mandated claimants may be encouraged or required to participate in additional services designed to assist them in their search for employment, including other workshops or meetings with reemployment services staff. States that require follow-up services often have procedures, similar to those for the orientation workshop, designed to ensure that claimants meet the requirements in a timely way.

B. SPEEDING THE IDENTIFICATION OF CLAIMANTS AT A HIGH RISK OF EXHAUSTING UI BENEFITS

Because a main goal of WPRS is to facilitate receipt of reemployment services by claimants who were identified early in the unemployment process as likely to exhaust their benefits, a key component of service provision is its timeliness. Original DOL guidelines instructed states to conduct profiling at the time claimants are certified for their first payments. By profiling at this time, the group of profiled claimants is restricted to claimants who are eligible for benefits and who are early in their UI claim period, which allows receipt of reemployment services to yield a reduction in the length of benefit receipt.

DOL and some states that received SIGs were concerned that waiting until a claimant files for a first payment unnecessarily delays the receipt of reemployment services. In states with waiting weeks, for example, a claimant who is required to participate in profiling services may not receive the first service until about five weeks after filing the initial claim. Claimants certify for the first payment during the third week of the claim. If a payment is made then, they may become part of the profiling pool and can be selected during the third week of the claim. An additional two weeks may elapse between the mailing of the invitation letter and the time of the

workshop. Thus, some states have considered changing the timing of profiling from “at first payment” to “at initial claim,” which could expedite claimant services.

In this section, we discuss the experiences to date of states that used the SIG to change the timing of when claimants are identified as needing reemployment services (Table II.1). We first discuss potential advantages and disadvantages to increasing the speed at which claimants are profiled, and how three states—Alaska, South Carolina, and Minnesota—have weighed them. We also briefly discuss the current status of other states that have changed or are in the process of changing the timing of profiling. Finally, we present how one state—North Carolina—has developed an alternative way to identify and serve claimants at high risk of exhausting their benefits.

1. Potential Advantages and Disadvantages to Profiling at Initial Claim

The goal of profiling at initial claim rather than at first payment is to serve claimants earlier in the unemployment process. A state that calculates a profiling score shortly after claimants are determined monetarily eligible for their claim, rather than at the time of first payment, may be able to reduce the time until the receipt of services by about two weeks. By mandating participation in services earlier, states may shorten UI benefit receipt, diminish the hardship claimants face while unemployed, and reduce UI trust fund expenditures.

However, some state staff reported potential drawbacks to profiling at initial claim. By profiling after monetary eligibility is determined, claimants who are subsequently determined ineligible for benefits because of nonmonetary issues (such as their having been fired from their jobs because of misconduct) are now included in the selection pool. These claimants may be confused about their eligibility for UI benefits, which could increase the workload for local office staff who may have to respond to additional telephone calls and other inquiries. In addition, for a given number of claimants called in for the orientation workshops, some

TABLE II.1

TIMING OF SIG RECIPIENT STATES' PROFILING

	Pre-SIG Timing of Profiling	Original Plans Included Changing Timing?	Current Status
Alaska	First payment	Yes	Decided against profiling at initial claim
California	First payment	No	n.a.
Louisiana	First payment	No	n.a.
Maryland	First payment	No ^b	n.a.
Minnesota	First payment	Yes	Implemented in April 2001
North Carolina	First payment	Yes ^c	Implemented in February 2000
New York	First payment ^a	No	n.a.
South Carolina	First payment	Yes	Implemented in November 1999 ^d
Washington	Initial claim	No	n.a.
Wisconsin	First payment	No	n.a.
West Virginia	First payment	No	n.a.

SOURCE: Data collected as part of the Evaluation of Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services and the Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

n.a. = not applicable.

^aNew York calculates a preliminary profiling score after the initial claim filing and a revised score after the first payment. This two-step process is to accommodate changes in the profiling score so that claimants may participate in the state's Self-Employment Assistance Program, which requires scores of 0.7 or higher.

^bMaryland has developed a process to call in claimants after their initial claim for a one- to two-hour voluntary orientation workshop. This workshop is different from the WPRS-mandated 10-hour job search workshop.

^cNorth Carolina's SIG plans included the development of a mechanism, independent of the WPRS system, to speed the delivery of reemployment services to claimants at high risk of exhaustion. Claimants are selected for participation in this program on the basis of employment in the tobacco, apparel, or textile industries.

^dSouth Carolina made modifications in 2000 and 2001 to the way it sorted claimants on the lists that local offices receive to select WPRS-mandated participants.

workshop attendees will be eligible for benefits and some will not.⁴ Profiling at initial claim therefore may decrease the number of eligible claimants who are required to participate in reemployment services, because ineligible claimants are also invited to a workshop.

Finally, some state staff thought that profiling at initial claim would complicate compliance with federal reporting requirements. DOL requires states to report the numbers of claimants who are profiled, who are required to participate in WPRS services, and who actually participate. When a state has switched profiling from at first payment to at initial claim, state staff have thought that they need to maintain a dual reporting system—one for internal purposes and one for DOL. However, DOL does not require profiling activities at first payment or the reporting of this information as if it were conducted then. State-level staff typically are unaware that DOL recently increased flexibility in its recommended procedures so that states can report information on profiling at either initial claim or first payment. DOL staff are currently considering updating their manual on profiling procedures to reflect this and other changes in policy.

a. Concerns About Claimants in Denial Periods—Alaska’s Experience

As part of Alaska’s SIG plans, the state proposed to change the timing of profiling from first payment to initial claim. During the grant period, however, staff reconsidered and decided against it. Their main reasons were their desire to avoid calling in claimants who might receive a six-week denial period, and a lack of resources to serve the additional demand for assistance.

⁴DOL encourages states to profile claimants in a timely way so that they may receive reemployment services as quickly as possible. Indeed, the WPRS Policy Workgroup recommended that states profile all claimants who file a new initial claim so that the widest possible group of dislocated workers can be served (U.S. Department of Labor 1999a). The Workgroup also recommended that the change be coupled with an increase in funding for reemployment services. If funding were not increased, the proposed change would lead to a decrease in the number of UI recipients who could be served, because non-UI recipients would be more likely to be served.

About half of Alaska’s claimants quit or are fired from their jobs; these claimants can collect UI benefits, but only after a six-week denial period. If the call-in is after the initial claim, it would be during the denial periods of these claimants, and they are unlikely to participate in services without the threat of having their benefits halted. The state also lacks the resources to cover the additional staff time required to serve more claimants in its larger offices and, more important, to follow up with claimants who do not participate, especially since these numbers would be expected to rise greatly if profiling occurred earlier. Thus, although Alaska staff recognized the value in trying to serve claimants earlier in the unemployment process, they deemed it infeasible to do so at this time. They may revisit the issue in the future.

b. Ordering Claimants by Their Job Separation Reason—South Carolina’s Experience

Early in the grant period (in November 1999), South Carolina started providing services to claimants earlier in their unemployment by profiling them after their initial claim. When the state changed the timing of the model from profiling at first payment to profiling at initial claim, claimants were able to participate in the orientation workshops around the third week after the initial claims, rather than the fifth or sixth week.⁵ Local offices received lists of up to 50 initial claims filers who were monetarily eligible and had scores of at least 40 percent. Originally, these lists were sorted so that claimants with the highest profiling scores were at the top.

Shortly after this change, however, South Carolina’s local offices developed the types of problems Alaska’s SIG staff had envisioned. Because local offices selected claimants from the list in descending order and could not “skip over” claimants with potential eligibility issues, an

⁵The state also developed a mechanism to maintain reports on profiling both at first payment (for DOL) and at initial claim (for internal purposes) by identifying claimants who were profiling at initial claim and who subsequently received a first payment. As discussed earlier, however, current DOL policy is that states may report data either at first payment or at initial claim.

office might select a large number of claimants whose job separation was due to a voluntary quit or a discharge. Although about one-third of claimants who quit or were discharged from their jobs receive first payments, these claimants were less likely than those who were laid off to be eligible for UI benefits and to show up for the orientation session. Because of the change in who was being selected for the workshop, staff started spending more time responding to telephone calls from discontented or confused claimants.

As a result, South Carolina modified its profiling system in February 2000 to sort claimants first by their reason for job separation, and then by profiling score, in descending order. Claimants were assigned to one of four categories: (1) lack of work, (2) quit, (3) discharge, and (4) other, and listed in that order. Local offices were able to select from any of these categories as long as they proceeded down the list in each. As a practical matter, sorting the lack-of-work claimants to be called in before other claimants allowed the staff to manage their workloads better by calling in fewer claimants per workshop, reducing variation in the number of claimants who would come in when instructed to do so, and diminishing claimants' confusion about their UI eligibility.

Around this time, South Carolina also revised the invitation letter sent to claimants selected to participate in an orientation workshop to give it a more positive tone and to clarify the purpose of the early selection and call-in for services. Because some claimants who are selected will not become eligible for UI benefits, the letter now explains that (1) the claimant may participate in services even if ineligible for UI benefits; and (2) the claimant will be required to participate if eligible for benefits, unless specifically exempted. This change, like the one to give priority to lack-of-work claimants, also reduced claimants' confusion about their eligibility for UI benefits.

Despite staff's having liked the strategy of sorting claimants by job separation reasons prior to selecting them for WPRS services, however, the state re-sorted its lists in early 2001 so that all

claimants were ranked exclusively by their profiling score. This reversal in procedures was after guidance from DOL that ranking claimants by their job separation reasons may lead to the appearance of unfair discrimination in the way that claimants are treated. Since then, South Carolina staff have noticed an increase in the time required for tasks such as following up on claimants who did not show up for the orientation workshop and handling telephone calls by claimants confused about their eligibility.

c. Giving Local Offices Flexibility in Handling Claimants with Separation Issues or Denials—Minnesota’s Experience

In April 2001, Minnesota updated its model so that profiling occurs after monetary eligibility is determined.⁶ Before making this change, central office staff needed to consider how to handle claimants who have more complicated claims or who may be denied benefits. The state decided that claimants with pending monetary determinations should be excluded from the lists.⁷ Two to 3 percent of claimants are put in a “wrap file” for up to 21 days. If they become monetarily eligible during this time, they are added to the profiling list. Investigation showed that about three-quarters of claims that have pending wage information become monetarily eligible within this 21-day period. Claimants whose monetary eligibility issues are not resolved during that time are dropped from the wrap file and are not put on the profiling list.

⁶Two other changes to the model were made at the same time: (1) claimants with potential durations of less than 26 weeks were included, and (2) the variables and coefficients in the model were updated. We discuss these changes in subsequent sections.

⁷It is possible that a claimant could be quickly determined to be monetarily eligible and hence be put on the profiling list. However, changes over time in the calculation of the claimant’s base period earnings may affect his or her WBA, which could in turn affect the profiling score. To keep the profiling process simpler, Minnesota decided against recalculating the profiling score in these instances.

In contrast, the state includes on the lists the claimants with holds on their claims because of nonmonetary separation issues or denials. A profiling score is calculated for these claimants, but the screen displays that the claimant has a pending eligibility issue or has been denied benefits. The central office gives discretion to the local offices in how to handle such claimants. Offices with the capacity to serve them tend to invite them to orientation workshops. However, the larger offices, whose lists usually contain more claimants than they can serve, do not call them in but instead skip past them to select others. Thus, each local office can decide whether to call in claimants whose eligibility status is in question. In doing so, local office staff can tailor their procedures based on the need for services and their evaluation of the potential advantages and disadvantages of providing services to these types of claimants.

By changing profiling from at first payment to at initial claim, Minnesota appears to have been able to reduce claimants' time to service receipt. Comparisons between the first quarter of 2001 and the June-through-August-2001 period show a reduction in the average time from the initial claim to service referral from about 24 days to about 7 days.⁸ However, this advantage may not materialize for all of Minnesota's offices. When profiling occurred at the first payment, some of the smaller offices in rural areas invited claimants to workshops before their first payment. Thus, the pre-SIG time between when initial claims were filed and when claimants were invited to a workshop may have been shorter for these offices than for the larger ones.

⁸Other factors, such as seasonal and economy-wide influences, may influence the comparability of these time periods. The interval between when a profiling referral to services is made and when services are received also may have changed over time. Nevertheless, this 17-day reduction in the average time from initial claim to service referral seems large enough that it is unlikely to have been caused exclusively by these factors or by statistical noise.

2. The Current Status of Changing the Timing of Call-Ins for Services—The Experiences of Other States

Three other SIG states have implemented or are developing procedures to call in claimants after initial claim. Washington implemented initial claim profiling prior to the SIG.⁹ Despite initial problems in the transition caused by incomplete or inaccurate claims data, Washington smoothed out its processes and is able to serve claimants about two weeks earlier in their claim spells than it could with profiling at first payment. Nevertheless, central office staff, noting the trade-offs that some other states face, are reconsidering whether to profile at first payment or initial claim.¹⁰ When the economy is weaker, profiling is an especially important mechanism for targeting scarce reemployment service resources to claimants who need assistance most. By profiling at initial claim, however, the state increases the number of claimants who may be identified as in need of services or on local offices' workloads, and these offices may serve some claimants for whom there is little possibility of reducing UI benefit collections.¹¹ According to state staff, this occurs especially when a large employer gives Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notices to more workers than it actually lays off, and these workers meanwhile file for benefits in anticipation of the layoff.

⁹Washington's change in the timing of profiling occurred in 1999, about when the state started using call centers for claimants to file initial claims by telephone. Although profiling at initial claim leads to an increased number of claimants on profiling lists, state staff attributed most of their difficulties managing their workloads during this transitional period to the inadequate staffing in the call centers and the effects of an unusually weak economy.

¹⁰In contrast to South Carolina's experience, the state did not find that claimants were confused about whether or not they were eligible for benefits, even though some staff had been concerned about this prior to the switch.

¹¹By examining two monthly cohorts of claimants, Washington staff concluded that about 10 to 15 percent of claimants who show up for a workshop do not get a benefit check.

Both Maryland and New York also developed the capacity to call in claimants right after the initial claim, although they do this for almost all claimants, not just those selected by profiling score. In Maryland, all claimants are called in for a voluntary, one-to two-hour orientation about the available services and resources. The new orientation workshop is more general and less intensive than the 10-hour job search workshop for Maryland's WPRS-mandated claimants. As with other states that call in claimants for WPRS services after the initial claim, the goal is to get claimants into the Employment Service (ES) or one-stop offices as early as possible rather than waiting for the first payment. (Because notices of WPRS requirements must be sent out at least 10 days before participation can be required, claimants typically do not show up for WPRS workshops until about the fifth or sixth week of the claim.) Maryland's lists of initial claims filers do not currently identify claimants, such as job-attached or interstate claimants, who would be screened out in profiling. Instead, the offices invite everyone in, but because the invitation is voluntary, it is likely that few of these claimants attend. Maryland eventually may restrict the list of initial claims call-ins to those likely to be in the profiling selection pool, but the state is awaiting further development of a broader ES/WIA tracking system.

New York has also developed the capacity to profile at initial claim, although this work was not funded by the SIG. This is to encourage claimants to participate in reemployment services after the state started using call centers to take UI initial claims. Like Maryland, New York calls in to a UI-mandated orientation workshop that explains UI requirements and describes ES resources all claimants who are monetarily eligible, are not union-attached or interstate filers, and do not have return-to-work dates. In addition, New York calculates a preliminary profiling score after the initial claim and a revised score after the first payment. This two-step process was designed to accommodate demands for New York's Self-Employment Assistance Program (SEAP), which allows claimants to receive UI benefits while starting their own businesses. To

qualify for SEAP, claimants must be identified as likely to exhaust benefits and have a profiling score of at least 0.7. Claimants who are interested in starting their own businesses often request changes in their profiling scores, because factors used to calculate the score (such as occupation, the indicator for whether or not a claimant was part of a mass layoff, or the industry of the last employer) may be incorrectly entered.¹² Although local office staff are instructed not to schedule claimants for WPRS workshops until after their scores are finalized, staff have the opportunity to direct claimants to profiling services when they are in the local offices for the initial UI-mandated orientation workshop.

3. Identifying and Serving Claimants from Targeted Industries—North Carolina’s Experience

The SIG in North Carolina was used to set up a special temporary program that was separate from WPRS and that provided reemployment services to workers laid off from the textile, apparel, and tobacco industries—Reemployment Services for Textiles, Apparel, and Tobacco (RSTAT). These industries were identified as having the largest number of mass layoffs and plant closings in the past five years in the state. The goal of the program was to focus intensive, staff-assisted services on this target group shortly after their initial claims were filed. The state continued to run the WPRS model and send out letters instructing claimants to report to a local office, but claimants who already were in the RSTAT program and who were selected for WPRS were counted as meeting WPRS requirements.

Although RSTAT services were similar to what has been provided as part of the WPRS program, RSTAT had several distinct elements. First, funds were allocated to local offices experiencing plant closings in one or more of these industries in their communities. The funds

¹²Local staff must receive permission from a state official to make changes in profiling data and, ultimately, the profiling scores.

paid for staff for varying lengths of time depending on the size and duration of the local layoffs. Either local offices asked the central office for assistance or central office staff identified those needing assistance through reviews of the WARN notices. Second, claimants from the targeted firms were identified and enrolled in the program at the time of the initial claim.

To learn about the program, RSTAT claimants were sent to a brief orientation session, often as part of the group UI claims application and benefit rights interview.¹³ Such sessions were run weekly or more frequently, as needed. Because RSTAT claimants were identified at the time of initial claim and in some instances attended an orientation at the same time, they were introduced to reemployment services earlier than they would have been otherwise.

While North Carolina used its SIG funds to set up and run RSTAT as a temporary program targeting specific industries, they adapted the RSTAT service model to develop a new, ongoing program called Reemployment Initiative (REI), aimed at a broader set of laid-off workers. This statewide program targets new claimants who are permanently separated, who have no nonmonetary issues, and whose benefits are paid fully by North Carolina employer taxes. Eligible claimants—about 20 percent of all of North Carolina’s claimants—also are identified and start receiving services after their initial claims.

C. EXPANDING THE POOL OF WPRS ELIGIBLES

States often exclude certain claimants from the profiling selection pools because of policy considerations or insufficient data to assign claimants a profiling score. Excluding some claimants—such as those with recall dates to their former employment or those who are hired through union halls—is appropriate, because these claimants are unlikely to benefit much from

¹³After orientation but at another time, RSTAT claimants attended a job search workshop. These workshops, which could be voluntary or mandatory, lasted from two to four hours.

reemployment services. Claimants with low profiling scores are also expected to benefit less than those with higher scores. However, other types of claimants may be excluded for reasons less directly related to their perceived need for services. One state historically has excluded claimants with short potential durations, because of (1) the statistical complexity associated with estimating the likelihood that these claimants will exhaust their benefits, and (2) SESA priorities to serve claimants for whom there is the most potential to reduce UI durations. By excluding some claimants from the selection pools, state decision makers implicitly make trade-offs in serving some claimants rather than others. In other cases, claimants may be excluded from the selection pool because information to calculate a profiling score is unavailable. Because these claimants cannot be ranked relative to other claimants, they may not receive services. Although claimants may volunteer to receive services, the excluded groups are less likely than WPRS-mandated claimants to receive services, because their participation is not mandated.

Relaxing the criteria by which claimants are excluded from the selection pool and improving the quality of data used to calculate scores may have several effects. On the one hand, more claimants could be selected for mandatory WPRS services during times when a one-stop's ability to serve claimants is greater than the number of claimants on its restricted lists. On the other hand, the profiling model may become more computationally complex. The long-term consequences of this in the administration of the WPRS system depends on how transparent this added complexity is to the SESA staff who use the system on a daily basis.

Several of the SIG states—Alaska, Louisiana, Minnesota, Washington, and West Virginia—recently have reexamined ways to increase the number of claimants in the selection pool. In this section, we highlight the experiences of these states.

1. Including Short-Duration Claimants—Minnesota’s Experience

Minnesota originally restricted the WPRS selection pool to non-job-attached first payment recipients with 26 weeks of potential duration.¹⁴ Through Minnesota’s profiling model, claimants with potential durations shorter than 26 weeks would have received higher profiling scores (than claimants with 26 weeks of potential duration) because of their greater likelihood of exhausting benefits. Although these claimants may need reemployment services just as much as claimants with longer potential durations, the state is less able to reduce UI durations, and save trust fund dollars, by serving them. Because only about two-thirds of Minnesota’s non-job-attached claims are eligible for 26 weeks of benefits, however, a substantial portion of non-job-attached claimants were excluded from the selection pool and effectively exempted from profiling requirements.

In an effort parallel to (but not officially part of) Minnesota’s grant activities, the state has created separate models for claimants with potential duration equal to 26 weeks, 23 to 25 weeks, 19 to 22 weeks, and 11 to 18 weeks. (The recent proportions of unattached claimants in these four groups are 66, 10, 10, and 14 percent, respectively.) The models have different weights for the claimant characteristics. Within each category, claimants are ranked from highest profiling score to lowest. Those with full potential durations are highest on the list, followed by those with long, medium, and short potential durations. Each group has a different threshold, above which claimants are mandatory for profiling and below which they are voluntary.¹⁵

¹⁴Minnesota counts waiting weeks and fraud/overpayment reductions as first payments for profiling purposes.

¹⁵The state is re-sorting the lists so that all claimants who are above their model-specific threshold will be higher on the list than claimants who are below it. This re-sorting of the list will make it easier for local office and one-stop staff to identify and select claimants who are

Whether and how the inclusion of claimants with fewer than 26 weeks of potential duration influences who receives services depends on state policy and the number of claimants on the lists. Minnesota’s policy is for local offices and one-stops to call in all claimants on their profiling lists. Especially in offices that have the capacity to serve more claimants or that can develop this capacity, this policy means that claimants who would not have received profiling services prior to the SIG—the claimants with fewer than 26 weeks of potential benefits—now may receive services.

However, despite the policy, some local offices may be unable to serve all claimants. Because orientation leaders generally work down the list when selecting claimants to invite, claimants with 26 weeks of potential benefits are more likely to be served than shorter-duration claimants when capacity is constrained. Even though local offices may not be able to invite all claimants, many offices are able to invite to orientation workshops at least some of the claimants whose participation is voluntary.¹⁶ These workshops often are tailored slightly to these claimants, who may be at less risk of benefit exhaustion.

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mandated for profiling services, because all claimants whose participation is voluntary will be below those whose participation is required.

¹⁶Some local office staff have been concerned about workload demands because the profiling lists are much longer than they used to be. The lengthening of the lists stems from the inclusion of claimants with fewer than 26 weeks of potential duration, the switch of profiling from at first payment to at initial claim, and the weakening of the economy around the time of the model changes. In response, the central office is considering increasing the thresholds that determine whether or not claimants are required to participate in services. Although doing so will not shorten the lists (because all claimants will still be on them), raising the thresholds may reduce some pressure caused by local office staff trying to serve all the mandated claimants.

2. Including Additional Claimants in the Selection Pool—Washington’s Approach

Washington used a portion of its SIG funding to explore the usefulness of including in the WPRS system those claimants who are filing an additional claim.¹⁷ As part of a move toward performance-based accountability, Washington has begun holding regional and local office managers accountable for the percentage of benefits claimants use. Claimants who are not selected for mandatory services after five weeks in the selection pool are exempted from WPRS participation and are not called in for services at a later date. Thus, local offices typically have only one opportunity to enroll claimants in mandatory reemployment services. If the local offices are to be held responsible for reducing benefit receipt, however, they would like several opportunities to enroll claimants in these services or the ability to enroll claimants who were screened out prior to selection.

Early in the grant period, the state contracted with a researcher at Western Washington University to analyze the characteristics of claimants who have multiple spells of benefit receipt within a benefit year and the nature of their claims (Teachman 2000). Focusing on claimants from the 1998 benefit year, the researcher found that additional claimants are disproportionately from the agricultural, forestry, fishing, and construction industries. In addition, the likelihood of exhausting benefits during a spell decreases as the number of spells increases.

Several complicated issues would have to be addressed before additional claimants are included in the WPRS or a similar system. Mechanisms to screen additional claims out of the process and to calculate scores so that the claimants can be ranked in need of services would have to be developed. The central or local offices also might want to modify existing services or

¹⁷Additional claimants are those who file claims during an existing benefit year to reestablish benefit receipt after an interruption in weekly benefit collection due to employment. During some periods, additional claimants are more than 50 percent of the initial claimants.

design new ones to meet the unique needs of this group of claimants, and staff would need to determine priorities for serving new initial and additional claimants. In addition, mechanisms to report and monitor profiling activities conducted by additional claimants might need to be tracked separately from those activities conducted by initial claimants.¹⁸

Several factors in the latter part of the grant period led Washington to direct its efforts away from including additional claimants into the WPRS system. First, staff were concerned about the capacity of offices to serve these claimants, because initial and continued claims increased dramatically as the economy weakened. Second, the capacity of some offices to serve more claimants may become constrained by the move to one-stops. Because different programs compete for space in one-stops, there is less pressure on the central office staff to include more groups on the profiling lists. Third, offices are now given lists of all claimants, so offices that have many additional claimants can solicit claimants to participate voluntarily in reemployment services. This last factor may help local office staff to decrease the amount of benefits that these claimants receive, without the state's having to develop or modify a system to serve them.

3. Including TAA/NAFTA-TAA Eligible Claimants in the Selection Pool—Alaska's Change

Alaska also used the SIG to include in the WPRS selection pool TAA/NAFTA-TAA-eligible claimants, who had previously been excluded. Through an agreement between the WPRS and TAA programs, in conjunction with the UI program, these claimants are now in the pool. This change was easy to implement by changing how the system screens claimants out of WPRS prior to their receiving a score and by apprising staff of the new procedures. If selected, they are directed to the benefits available to them through TAA/NAFTA-TAA. If they already

¹⁸This barrier might not be difficult to overcome, however, because Washington developed a process to report and monitor initial claimants separately from first payment recipients when it

are receiving TAA/NAFTA-TAA services, they are excused from WPRS requirements. By including these claimants in the WPRS system, the state hopes that more eligible participants will receive TAA/NAFTA-TAA services.

4. Using Other Methods to Increase the Number of Claimants in the Selection Pool—Experiences of Alaska, Louisiana, and West Virginia

In addition to expanding the groups of claimants who are initially included in the selection pool, states may use several approaches to enlarge their pools so that more claimants can be served. One approach for states that use thresholds for the scores is to vary the thresholds over time or across offices. If a local office has the capacity to serve more claimants, lowering a threshold will increase the number of claimants served. If the office does not have additional capacity, lowering the threshold will not change anything. (States that do not use thresholds are implicitly setting a threshold to zero, so lowering this implicit threshold is not an option.) As part of its SIG efforts to improve its profiling model, Louisiana changed its threshold from 0.5 to 0.35, so that offices that have the capacity to serve more claimants can do so. West Virginia completely eliminated its threshold, previously 0.5, when it implemented its SIG-funded model changes in August 2001.

Another way to increase the number of claimants in the selection pool is to correct erroneous or missing scores. Prior to the SIG, Alaska's claimants with incomplete information for calculating scores received information about services in case they wanted to volunteer (as is the case with other claimants), but they could not be required to participate, because a profiling score could not be calculated. As part of this state's SIG-funded changes to its profiling system, it modified its computer system so that scores are updated every week during the six weeks after

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switched the timing of its profiling model.

the first payments, while claimants are in the selection pool. This allows claimants with miscoded or missing information (and thereby incorrect or missing scores) to reenter the selection pool. Rather than calculating the score only once, the state now recalculates scores on a weekly basis, so a claimant's score potentially can change several times. If claimants either were missing scores or had low scores in previous weeks, they can now be selected in subsequent weeks.

A third approach to increasing the number of claimants in the selection pool is to allow claimants to remain in it longer, so that claimants who have not yet been selected and who otherwise would be removed from the pool now have the opportunity to be chosen. None of the SIG states, as part of their grant activities, changed the length of time claimants are in the selection pool, but doing so might increase the number of claimants served if a local office has significant weekly variation in the number of claimants on their profiling lists.

D. IMPROVING THE CLAIMANT SELECTION PROCESS

When states use a statistical model for the WPRS system, a claimant's profiling score is simply a weighted sum of prespecified factors times numerical representations of the claimant's characteristics. The profiling score often reflects information on the claimant's human capital (such as education level), work history (such as work experience, and industry and occupation at the previous job), UI claim characteristics (such as the WBA or ratio of WBA to earnings at the prior job, and the potential duration), and local labor market (such as the local unemployment rate and urbanicity of the area). States may choose to exclude some of these characteristics or include others. The factors are coefficients estimated from one or more statistical models of the likelihood that a claimant will exhaust UI benefits, regressed on claimant characteristics from historical data (such as the set of claimants who filed for or received benefits during a recent

several-year period in the state). Ideally, claimants' scores vary widely, so that clear distinctions can be made between claimants who are likely and those who are unlikely to exhaust benefits.

Changes over time in a state's economic conditions or in the demographic composition and labor market experiences of its claimants may create outdated coefficients. Because the relative importance of claimants' characteristics in predicting benefit exhaustion may vary over time, DOL encourages states to update their profiling models regularly.¹⁹ By using recent data to reestimate the model, a state can update the coefficients for weighting claimant characteristics in the calculation of the profiling score and thereby improve the ranking of claimants.

Even when states update their profiling models to reflect recent data, they often do not explore the value of making structural modifications to the models. The appropriateness of adding new variables, eliminating variables currently in use, changing the geographic coverage of the model, and making other changes may not be explored on a regular basis. However, these types of changes can improve the identification of claimants most likely to exhaust benefits.

In this section, we discuss steps that several SIG states have taken to improve the specifications of their profiling models and to upgrade their mechanisms to make future model improvements. We also discuss approaches that states have taken to compare different model specifications to choose the one most appropriate. Finally, we discuss circumstances in which the effects of some types of model improvements on the selection of claimants who are statistically most likely to exhaust their UI benefits may be limited.

¹⁹As a condition for eligibility for a SIG, DOL required that state applicants either (1) had updated their model in the past two years, or (2) had promised to provide written assurance that they would do so within 90 days of the grant award.

1. Updates to the Profiling Model's Specification

Several SIG states have explored the appropriateness of making changes to their profiling model's specifications (Table II.2).²⁰ Some of these potential changes have been to specify currently used variables in different ways. Examples include (1) increasing the number of possible categories for a claimant's educational status, tenure, or occupation; (2) changing the way that seasonal effects on unemployment are specified, such as using variables for the month in which the claim was filed; (3) changing the specification of variables to represent the influences of UI benefits and labor market attachment on benefit exhaustion, through different combinations of the WBA, base period earnings, and UI replacement rate; or (4) respecifying variables to indicate different geographic regions of the state, such as using more variables for different regions or including variables for large cities or other urban areas.

Other changes are to include variables that have not previously been used. For example, Alaska and Louisiana added variables to indicate whether a claimant had a claim in a previous year and whether benefits had been exhausted for this prior claim. Alaska also added variables on the number of base period employers and complex indices of minimum expected unemployment and hiring rates. West Virginia added a variable to identify "delayed filers."²¹ This variable—calculated as the time between when the claimant lost the job and when he or she filed for benefits—is characteristic of people who had inadequate information about the job market and erroneously thought they could get a job quickly. Maryland is updating its model by

²⁰The SIG-funded changes to the model differ from periodic updates to the model by incorporating new data. Periodic updates will reflect the effects of changes in the economy and claimant characteristics on who is likely to exhaust benefits.

²¹South Carolina added this variable to its model several years ago, after finding that it is a very strong predictor of benefit exhaustion.

TABLE II.2

MAJOR CHANGES TO STATES' MODEL SPECIFICATIONS

State	Major Changes to the Model Specification
Alaska	<p>Excluded industry, occupation, and delayed filer status</p> <p>Increased categories for local office exhaustion rates and tenure</p> <p>Excluded the WBA and base period earnings but included the dependent benefit ratio (dependent's benefits times potential duration divided by the WBA) and the wage replacement</p> <p>Included the number of base period employers and reason for job separation</p> <p>Included an indicator for the minimum expected unemployment (based on the date of first payment, potential duration, and local area unemployment rates)</p> <p>Included a hiring index (based on the geographical area and industry)</p> <p>Included indicators for a prior claim and a prior exhaustee</p>
Louisiana	<p>Increased categories for education, occupation, and industry</p> <p>Eliminated the replacement rate and added the WBA and earnings</p> <p>Included an indicator for other income</p> <p>Included indicators for a prior claim and a prior exhaustee</p>
Minnesota ^a	<p>Increased categories for education, occupation, and industry</p> <p>Included the WBA and an indicator for a high wage replacement ratio</p> <p>Included indicators for a prior claim and a prior exhaustee</p> <p>Included perceived reason for job separation</p> <p>Included more detailed specification of geographic region and office location within Minneapolis-Saint Paul area</p> <p>Included an indicator for a delayed filer</p> <p>Included indicators for the month in which the claim was filed</p> <p>Included the county monthly unemployment rate</p> <p>Included many interaction terms with these variables</p>
New York ^b	<p>Excluding occupation and a large layoff indicator</p> <p>Including categories for geography, and categories for the length of the prior UI claim</p>
South Carolina	<p>Considered but rejected using substate models based on geographic region</p>
Washington	<p>Converting from SIC codes to NAICS codes</p>
West Virginia	<p>Increased the number of categories for education and seasonal filing status</p> <p>Eliminated categories for WBA and included continuous measures of the WBA and wage base</p> <p>Included delayed filer status</p> <p>Included an indicator for other income</p> <p>Included the number of reopened claims during a previous benefit year</p> <p>Converted from SIC codes to NAICS codes, and from DOT codes to SOC codes</p> <p>Combined 14 industry-specific models into 1 model</p>
Wisconsin ^c	<p>Considered switching from Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) codes to SOC codes and from SIC codes to NAICS codes</p> <p>Updating the data on growing and declining occupations and industries</p>

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

TABLE II.2 (*continued*)

NOTE: Maryland is in the process of updating its model and has not determined which variables will be included or excluded.

^aMinnesota has four separate models for claimants with different potential durations. The coefficients and variables used vary across these models.

^bNew York has not yet implemented its new model, but it has selected these specifications to be implemented once programming resources become available.

^cWisconsin identified these as important changes to their model but could not access the programming resources to implement any of them except the change in the occupation classification used.

reestimating the old model specification and has explored the possibility of adding other variables; however, the state has not changed the program to include new variables.

New York worked with a statistics professor and graduate students at a local university to explore variables with the best predictive power for its profiling model. Some of the variables they examined were seasonal indicators, the duration of the most recent previous UI claim (if a claimant had previously collected benefits), the wage replacement ratio, a mass layoff indicator, industry, occupation, tenure, education level, and geography.²² They also explored different definitions of the outcome variable using (1) a binary indicator of exhaustion, and (2) the duration of the UI claim. In the end, the researchers' preferred model included the following variables: (1) industry, as defined by first two digits of the SIC code; (2) a set of geographic indicators; (3) tenure, in four categories; (4) measures of education; (5) categorical variables for the length of the most recent prior UI claim; and (6) exhaustion as the dependent variable. The state hopes to implement a revised model when programming resources become available.

Updating the model also can include an exploration of the type of model to use and over what time period to use the data. For example, New York's researchers considered (1) whether logistic regression or nonparametric scoring using contingency tables was a better method of model estimation, and (2) whether model predictions were stable over time.²³ On the one hand,

²²To aid in developing its model, New York conducted an Internet-based survey of profiling models in other states. Over half of all states responded to the survey, which asked about the type of model used, which variables were in the model, and how they were defined. These data helped inform the state about potential variables and definitions to test in its analysis and are available to other states (see Appendix A).

²³A logistic regression imposes a restrictive mathematical function upon the data and estimates parameters for the function. Contingency tables divide data into groups on the basis of the values for the explanatory variables and do not impose a functional relationship between the explanatory and dependent variables.

use of a logistic regression requires assumptions about the relationships between variables—assumptions that may not be accurate. On the other hand, the number of variables that can be used with the contingency table approach is limited, because cells with few claimants are often statistically unstable. Comparing the accuracy of these methods showed that, for New York, the contingency tables were generally preferable. They also concluded that their preferred model should be estimated on a relatively short period of data (about two years), because the results were not very stable over time.²⁴

Another change is to switch from using separate models for different subgroups within the state to one model for the entire state, or vice versa. West Virginia switched from using 14 models—one for each major industry—to one model for all industries.²⁵ The state previously separated claimants by industry categories because of the computational difficulties involved in calculating scores. Combining all claimants into a single model, now feasible with modern computers, has greatly eased the challenge of model estimation.

Although states may have the capacity to make changes that are viewed as desirable to their models, they may decide that doing so would be inappropriate. For example, Louisiana decided against including a county unemployment rate variable in its model, because doing so would impose additional computational burden but would add little to the predictive ability of the

²⁴New York's researchers acknowledged that measures beyond those included in its model, such as the strength of the economy, may affect the accuracy and stability of predictions over time.

²⁵Some states, such as Washington and West Virginia, have explored structural modifications to their models in conjunction with converting industry variables from Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. For a short time, some states may need to run their profiling models without the use of industry variables while they develop and implement conversion maps between the SIC and NAICS codes.

model.²⁶ Likewise, South Carolina explored, but ultimately rejected, using substate models based on geographic region, because doing so would not greatly improve the likelihood of correctly identifying exhaustees within a locality.

2. Simplifications to the Process for Conducting Future Model Updates

Because of the importance of using model coefficients that reflect up-to-date information on the conditions influencing whether claimants exhaust their benefits, West Virginia, New York, and Alaska have sought to improve the method for updating their models. Maryland also is receiving technical assistance from DOL on how to simplify their updating process. These states previously have not had easy-to-access mechanisms for rerunning their model as new data become available, because of difficulty accessing either necessary data or the resources of programming staff to conduct the updates. Setting up procedures to update the model more easily in the future has involved developing the interdepartmental capacity to retrieve the necessary data and conduct the analyses.

In West Virginia’s case, the state greatly simplified its process for updating the model by eliminating the process of constructing a “key” for each claimant. This numeric key was a linear combination of the input variables in the model, and the digits in the key represented values for claimant characteristics, such as the level of education or the WBA. As with WPRS regression models, these keys mapped claimant characteristics to a profiling score. Although this process to translate claimant characteristics into a profiling score may seem straightforward, it made updating West Virginia’s model very complex because of the use of 14 industry-specific models—there were 40,000 different values for the key. As part of the SIG efforts in converting

²⁶Minnesota included county unemployment rates, even though using these data greatly increases the complexity of running the model.

the state's 14 models to 1 model, the state added an equation to the mainframe so that claimant characteristics could be multiplied by the appropriate coefficients and directly converted to a score. Room in the model was made for new variables and extra categories for existing variables, so that future changes to the model could be incorporated more easily.

New York is creating a server-based relational database to facilitate future updates of its profiling model. Once complete, this database will bring together various data sources (such as UI records and employee wage records) and transform them as necessary to be used in the profiling model. The SESA plans to use these data to update its model weekly. A staff member will run a set of programs that will (1) archive the prior model in case of appeals, (2) calculate new scores for each set of claimant characteristics, and (3) update the state's contingency table with these scores. The availability of these data in the relational database also may facilitate future explorations of the best specification for the profiling model.

In Alaska, the state changed the process of implementing profiling model updates to reduce staff time for data processing. They created within their database tables that contain information on each variable in the model, including the coefficients. These tables can easily be modified once an economist in the department updates the coefficients. Adding or removing a variable would require some assistance from data processing staff, but still would take less time than the previous process did.

3. Methods to Identify Better Model Fits

Although no model will predict perfectly which claimants will exhaust their benefits, states have used several ways to examine the appropriateness of changes to their models. Staff often examine plots of the data and the correlation between variables and the probability of exhaustion. A higher correlation suggests that the variable is more likely to predict exhaustion. They also

may compare the model's R-squared values; higher values indicate that a greater proportion of the variation in the model's dependent variable is explained by the regressor variables.

Staff may also examine how well different models predict which claimants are likely to exhaust benefits. However, they need to pick, for the predicted probability of exhaustion, a cutoff level above which claimants are assumed to exhaust and below which they are assumed not to exhaust. This approach may be useful, but it has limitations, because the cutoff value is arbitrarily determined. An appropriate strategy may be to pick a value such that the number of claimants above it equals the number of claimants who actually exhausted benefits in the historical data. Another way of comparing models is to determine how many of the highest-scoring claimants actually exhausted benefits. If a state can serve 100 of its 1,000 claimants, for example, then it may be most concerned about correctly identifying the 100 highest-ranking claimants as exhaustees and less concerned about identifying claimants with low scores as nonexhaustees, because they are not going to be served anyway. Thus, a model that correctly identifies the 900 lowest-scoring claimants as nonexhaustees may be less valuable to a state than a model that identifies the 100 highest-scoring claimants as exhaustees, even if the former model's predictive power is stronger when measured in other ways.

An alternative, but similar, approach is to compare models based on differences in predicted scores between two groups of claimants. Since New York had the capacity to serve 50,000 claimants, the state's researchers identified a threshold score that would identify about this number of claimants who were likely to exhaust benefits. Claimants with scores above this cutoff were classified as "high-risk," while those with lower scores were classified as "low-risk." When evaluating different models, these researchers placed a strong emphasis on the difference between the predicted scores of high- and low-risk claimants. The larger this difference, the better the researchers considered the model. They preferred this measure as a criterion for

ranking models over the absolute level of the high-risk claimants' scores, because the difference measure indicates how well the model distinguishes between the two groups and may be less sensitive to economic conditions that vary over time.

A final approach to examining the appropriateness and accuracy of a model specification is to restrict the sample of claimants upon which the model specification is developed and test its accuracy in predicting benefit exhaustion using another sample of claimants.²⁷ The subsets of claimants upon which model development and testing are conducted should be random samples of claimants. If they are not, the coefficients estimated from the model may be biased, and poor model predictions may result if the model is implemented for actual use.

Despite using various approaches to comparing models, states generally have not examined problems in their statistical analyses caused by using samples of claimants who have already participated in WPRS services. Assuming that receipt of these services lowers the likelihood that claimants exhaust their benefits, the relationship between the characteristics of claimants who have received profiling services and their probability of exhaustion is attenuated. For example, suppose that a state's pre-SIG model identified high school dropouts as more likely than high school graduates to exhaust benefits, and, as a result, dropouts are more likely to have participated in profiling services. A new model, using data from prior years, will find a weaker effect of dropout status on the probability of exhaustion than would have been the case if profiling services had not been delivered. The statistical techniques that could be used to address this problem are quite complex.

²⁷Alternatively, a researcher can use one or more years of data to estimate a model and examine its accuracy with another year of data.

More generally, identifying factors associated with benefit exhaustion and comparing differences across models requires a high level of statistical sophistication and may be quite challenging to state-level staff who do not have strong backgrounds in statistics and analysis. This finding is consistent with what was found in a survey of state administrators, who reported that, compared to many other WPRS tasks, developing a method to profile claimants was difficult (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b).²⁸ SIG states that worked on their model specifications usually either had one in-house person work on it or had the state hire someone else (usually a local professor) to do the work. Because of the complexity of the task, in-house staff may not have many other interdepartmental staff with whom they can share ideas and from whom they can request assistance. Including other staff in the analysis may be difficult, because the technical staff may have a hard time explaining the concepts to other staff. However, states that choose to contract out the work also may encounter problems. On the one hand, states may have difficulty understanding what realistically could be expected from the contractor, how much the proposed model changes would affect the accuracy of model predictions, and whether any proposed model improvements are large or important enough to warrant overcoming any necessary logistical or operational hurdles. Thus, states may not be well-informed consumers of the analysis provided. On the other hand, the contractor may not have enough institutional knowledge of the WPRS system and the relevant data systems to understand the theoretical and operational implications of model changes. Thus, states may have to spend time helping the contractor become familiar with the institutional details necessary for a sound analysis. In

²⁸Most states that received technical assistance from DOL for WPRS activities received this help with their profiling models. Relatively few administrators thought that they needed additional help, but that could be because they did not plan at the time to update their models or think they needed to.

addition, if the state is unable to secure the assistance of the same contractor when conducting future model updates, it would be inefficient to have to explain the institutional information again to a different contractor.

Given these types of challenges, DOL offers assistance to states that undertake these investigations. This assistance has included helping states with their specific model investigations and promoting the cross-state sharing of analysis strategies at conferences. Several states that have received this assistance reported that it was quite useful. The need for additional information sharing and technical assistance from DOL is ongoing, as state models become outdated and as the data and program environments change.²⁹

4. Limitations in How a Better Model Specification Affects Service Delivery

Although increasing the statistical fit of the profiling models may seem initially to lead to better service delivery, the extent to which these model improvements cause better identification of and service to claimants may be limited. Because of political factors or constraints on the mobility of resources, an improved identification of likely exhaustees does not guarantee that these claimants can be served. Indeed, Wandner and Messenger (1999) identified the lack of flexibility in shifting resources from areas of low need for reemployment services to areas of high need as a key problem in some states.

Suppose, for example, that all claimants in an economically depressed region of the state are more likely to exhaust benefits than are claimants in another region that has a stronger economy. Compared to a model that did not include an indicator variable for a region, use of an indicator variable to represent one of these two substate regions would improve the statistical fit of a

²⁹As part of its SIG efforts, New York compiled information on the features of and variables used in state models, a resource that other states may find valuable.

profiling model. Using the better-fitting model, a ranking of claimants in the state on the basis of their likelihood of exhausting benefits would suggest that all the state's resources to provide reemployment services should be directed to the more economically depressed region in the state. If reemployment service resources are not mobile across regions, however, some claimants in the economically stronger portion of the state will continue to receive services in lieu of claimants in the economically depressed area. Political considerations within a state also may prevent the reallocation of resources in the most appropriate way. Other improvements to the profiling model, such as the use of separate substate models, also can lead to better statistical fits and different rankings of claimants across offices, but they may not lead to different claimant rankings within local offices.

Despite these limitations, updating a state's profiling model still may be useful, because many model improvements may result in a better identification of high-risk claimants and a greater likelihood that these claimants will be served. Nevertheless, states may need to rely on other mechanisms to increase the mobility of resources or address political concerns about the reallocation of resources when those activities are desirable for ensuring that the highest-risk claimants receive reemployment services.

III. IMPROVING REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Delivering reemployment services is at the crux of achieving the goal of the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Service (WPRS): promoting reemployment and reducing the duration of Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims. Although Significant Improvement Grant (SIG) states have organized the delivery of WPRS reemployment services in different ways, their service delivery structures all contain a combination of an orientation workshop, an assessment, and basic reemployment services (Table III.1). States' orientation workshops vary in length and intensity. Some are extensive and thoroughly cover many reemployment topics, such as resume writing, interviewing skills, and local labor market information. Others are brief sessions that explain the availability of services but do not provide them. These are sometimes intended to be followed by in-depth reemployment activities. Often, states use an assessment process after the orientation workshop to determine what services claimants need to facilitate their job search. While claimants are collecting UI benefits, states offer various follow-up activities, both mandatory and voluntary, to help claimants enhance their job skills or job search skills. At the same time, states offer computer-based self-access resources to claimants (such as job listings or career assessment tools) to improve their job search, typically in resource rooms mandated by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Many states used their SIG funds to improve various aspects of WPRS reemployment service delivery or to increase their capacity to offer services. The main ways they used were:

- ***Improving Orientation and Reemployment Workshops.*** Several states used the SIG to improve and standardize the content and style of workshops that one-stops offer. A common goal of these changes was to increase claimant participation and engagement in the workshops. The central office staff of some states revamped their

TABLE III.1

REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN SIG STATES

State	Required Orientation Workshop				Assessment Process			Follow-up Activities	
	Intensive (More than 4 hours)	Moderate (Between 1 and 3 hours)	Brief (Less than 1 hour)	One-on-One Meeting with Staff	Self	Required, One-on- One Meeting/Other Activity	Voluntary		
Alaska		X		X		X			
California		X			X		X		
Louisiana	X				X		X		
Maryland	X				X	X			
Minnesota		X		X				X	
North Carolina			X	X		X			
New York			X		X	X			
South Carolina		X			X	X			
Washington		X			X	X			
Wisconsin		X			X	X			
West Virginia			X	X				X	

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

NOTE: These characterizations are inherently general, because the types of services that are required or available vary across local offices within a state and as WPRS workloads fluctuate over time.

workshops and trained local office staff on the changes. In contrast, Wisconsin asked several local office staff to assess and improve their workshops. Alaska facilitated sharing of workshop strategies among local office staff through regularly scheduled teleconferences and workshops.

- ***Strengthening the Assessment Process.*** Four states used the SIG to strengthen the ability of staff to tailor individual services plans to the unique experiences and needs of each claimant. To do so, Minnesota and Washington developed assessment forms that are or will be used to identify claimants' needs for reemployment services. Minnesota also examined how to use the form to facilitate the identification of sensitive personal barriers to work, such as substance abuse or weak family support structures. Alaska trained staff to better identify these types of problems that may interfere with reemployment. New York used SIG funds to provide commercially available career assessment software to local offices. As part of these efforts, the states established policies pertaining to the confidential nature of this information.
- ***Enhancing Follow-Up Activities.*** Several states used the SIG to strengthen claimants' involvement in reemployment services throughout their UI claim periods. Wisconsin did so by developing procedures to contact claimants at specific intervals to encourage voluntary participation in services. Other states developed and implemented mandatory requirements for claimants who continue to collect UI benefits, often tying these activities to eligibility reviews. These and other follow-up activities facilitate states' learning about the employment statuses of claimants, which can improve statistics on claimant outcomes.
- ***Facilitating Receipt of Self-Access Services.*** WIA's emphasis on self-service activities, along with changes in technology, has influenced state approaches to self-access services. Several states encouraged the use of new technology by increasing the availability of computers, the Internet, and computer-based resources. All states provide either one-on-one staff assistance or special workshops on the use of new technology as part of their regular operations, but California explored making such assistance a formal part of WPRS. As part of its mandatory WPRS orientation workshop, California developed and pilot-tested a new component that teaches claimants how to use the Internet for job searches.
- ***Increasing Service Capacity.*** Because WPRS is designed to allocate resources to claimants most likely to exhaust UI benefits, North Carolina, West Virginia, and Wisconsin used the SIG as a mechanism to adjust overall service levels. They did so by allocating new SIG-funded staff to deliver WPRS services in areas with either historically low service capacity or anticipated high needs. North Carolina specifically targeted workers from declining industries to receive intensive reemployment services.

A. IMPROVING ORIENTATION AND REEMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS

Orientation and reemployment workshops are key services among the wide range of reemployment services states offer to WPRS participants. Group workshops make it possible for

states to help a large number of claimants cost-effectively. Most states require WPRS-mandated claimants who are not exempted for good cause to attend an orientation workshop, which typically covers (1) WPRS requirements, (2) WIA resources, and (3) basic job search advice. Some states run extensive “orientation” workshops that provide advice on topics such as job search techniques, resumes, cover letters, and interviewing. Other states run very brief orientations and then offer in-depth workshops on specific job search topics. Participation in additional workshops may be voluntary or mandatory. Both orientation and in-depth reemployment workshops are vital ways to provide information and motivation to help WPRS participants return to work quickly.

Either approach to providing orientation workshops entails trade-offs. The extensive workshops ensure that claimants will receive substantive information on several topics. However, individualizing services is difficult with this approach, and some claimants may have to spend time receiving unnecessary information. These workshops may not be followed up with individualized services, because most topics have been covered or a lot of the staff resources have been used.

On the other hand, brief orientation workshops provide a basic introduction to services available in the one-stop or community, but they do not provide claimants with many specific job search skills or guidance. Though claimants can return for additional services that best serve their needs, these services may be voluntary, so some claimants may not receive adequate help if they do not actively pursue it. Even when these services are mandatory, the followup typically requires a lot of staff time and good data systems to track and enforce participation. In addition, staff may be reluctant to single out claimants to participate in certain services.

When designing workshops, states vary in how much control they give to local offices. Their practices usually represent the trade-offs between statewide standardization and

responsiveness to local needs. Some states use a centralized approach where the state office develops the workshop format and staff training. In contrast, others use a localized approach where each local office or one-stop develops its own format and trains staff to deliver the workshops. On the one hand, a centralized approach may increase uniformity in the quality of workshops offered and minimize the duplication of local staff efforts. On the other hand, a localized approach may cultivate creativity and innovation and allow for specialization to local labor market conditions, needs of individual claimants, and the styles of individual facilitators.¹ In either case, the workshops were often re-designed to include updated job search information (such as finding job leads on the Internet and utilizing labor market trends) and to encourage greater participation by the claimants during the workshops.

In this section, we discuss how six SIG states have used different approaches to improve their WPRS orientation and reemployment workshops. The most common approach that SIG states took to improve and standardize workshops was to conduct staff training sessions and/or develop workshop materials centrally, particularly for orientation workshops.² Other states used less centralized approaches, such as requesting that some local offices individually revamp their workshops or cultivating dialogue between local offices to encourage the sharing of workshop materials. Whether the approach was centralized or localized, states expected these

¹Some factors for states to consider when developing a workshop are whether there is a common body of information that they believe is important to provide to all profiled claimants, how much they value providing individualized services, and whether they have the resources to offer both extensive orientation workshops services and individualized follow-up services.

²Prior to the SIG, Washington revised its workshops using a centralized approach. Key features of the series of six workshops are (1) staff from one-stop partners can lead the workshops as long as they meet certain standards; (2) they are designed to appeal to a wide audience and are not program specific; and (3) the sharing of information relies more on activities that engage the attendees to participate than on a lecture-based style of presentation. All workforce development areas have adopted this workshop series to use in the one-stops.

improvements to bring about shorter unemployment and UI claims durations, as well as better matches between claimants' skills and job requirements. States also hoped that offering high-quality workshops that satisfied attendees would increase participation in later ones.

1. Improving Workshops Through Centralized Training and Standardized Materials—Louisiana, South Carolina, New York, and Maryland

By training local staff and developing new workshop materials centrally, states hoped to provide workshops of consistently higher quality in terms of delivery and content. For example, Louisiana's central office provided guidance to facilitators in three ways: (1) developing a new video to be used in its six-hour orientation workshops, (2) updating the manual for workshop facilitators and the workbook for participants, and (3) conducting statewide staff-training workshops. The 15-minute video, which lays out the format for the orientation workshop, contains five parts: (1) self-assessment of claimants' work history, education, interests, and goals; (2) resume preparation; (3) job search techniques; (4) interviewing tips; and (5) post-interview tips. Facilitators can show a portion of the video, stop it, conduct exercises, and then move on to the next segment. A version of the video is available on CD-ROM to provide a self-guided summary of the workshop to all claimants who come to the local office.³ The workshop's facilitator manual is more user-friendly, concise, and adaptable than the old manual, and allows facilitators to tailor the workshop to claimants' needs. The participant workbook provides exercises and readings that support the topics covered in the orientation workshop. Finally, to standardize the style of workshop delivery, training specialists from the State Employment Security Agency (SESA) trained workshop facilitators throughout the state. These specialists stressed that the delivery should be upbeat and interactive, rather than lecture-style, so

³Louisiana does not allow claimants to substitute using the self-guided CD-ROM for attendance at the mandatory workshop.

that claimants are better engaged. Workshop facilitators were encouraged above all to emphasize the importance of a positive attitude in the job search to help claimants overcome any negative feelings arising from their recent job loss.

When developing workshop materials and providing training, states had to balance the advantages of greater structure with those of less. For example, the typical tenure of Louisiana's facilitators is less than two years; a highly structured training session on what to include in workshops and how to lead them could be particularly helpful to the many newer facilitators who may find it challenging to improvise on an abstract concept in order to lead an effective workshop. However, a more conceptual training session could encourage experienced workshop leaders to be creative in applying the concepts to the needs of their workshop attendees. Louisiana emphasized this advantage when it developed its manual and training materials.

South Carolina and New York focused on training sessions for their workshop facilitators. South Carolina conducted a one-day training session called "How to Conduct an Effective Orientation" to increase uniformity across offices. Full-time workshop facilitators from around the state attended the session, which covered WPRS program procedures and guidelines, reasons to exempt claimants, how to encourage participation, topics to cover in the workshop, and handouts. Additional training and staff development meetings were held throughout the grant period to communicate changes that were occurring to WPRS processes as a result of the SIG and the transition from JTPA/EDWAA to WIA.⁴ New York conducted statewide, full-day training sessions that included presentations on career assessment tools (primarily the Choices software), labor market information, and other on-line information resources for job seekers.

⁴South Carolina's transition from JTPA/EDWAA to WIA resulted in a large reduction in the number of staff who provided reemployment services and training. Thus, the state was forced to reduce its delivery of follow-up services and focus on initial profiling and reemployment activities.

The sessions also included a presentation on WPRS issues, such as the revised profiling model, profile scoring and rescoring, and case management and tracking.

Maryland developed a new two-day job search workshop by combining elements of two existing workshops.⁵ One, called Jump Start, was originally designed for professionals. The other, based on research at George Washington University (GWU) on the impacts of unemployment on the family, was designed to help people cope with the initial trauma of unemployment.⁶ The new workshop contains information similar to that in the GWU workshop but differs in approach, emphasizing more experiential learning. That is, it uses group exercises where the facilitators help participants discover concepts themselves. The new workshop has four parts: (1) learning about yourself, (2) learning about the labor market, (3) learning how to look for a job, and (4) learning what is available to help you look for a job. The first day deals with job loss issues and individual skills, as participants interview each other to develop lists of their skills. The second day uses material from Jump Start to cover aspects of job search instruction that are tailored to an audience wider than just professionals. The material in the workshop manual is presented in modules to facilitate revisions or additions as needed.⁷ Based on recommendations from GWU to improve the mix of issues and diversity of the groups, the state encouraged local offices to present the workshops to a larger number of participants (20 to

⁵The Maryland WPRS system requires that all profiled claimants attend a two-day job search workshop.

⁶GWU staff collaborated with state staff in the development of this new workshop.

⁷For example, although the manual does not have a section on Internet job search, several offices in the state are including a discussion of Internet job search in their workshops. The state expects that ultimately staff from these offices will be brought together to develop a common module on the Internet and that module will be added to the manual.

30) than did the former workshops (12 to 15).⁸ Customer survey data the state collected indicate that most claimants like the new workshop.

2. Promoting Local Office Innovation in Workshop Style and Content—Wisconsin

In contrast to the previous four states, Wisconsin stressed improving WPRS workshops by developing them in the local office. The state directed its “SIG sites” (local offices that received SIG funds to expand service levels) to review their orientation workshop and their menu of reemployment workshops. To determine which workshops to modify or add, local staff used direct comments from participants, responses to customer satisfaction surveys, and their own interactions with participants. They updated standard reemployment workshops, such as resume preparation and interviewing; and added new specialized workshops, such as job search for older workers, use of resume-writing software, and career exploration/goal setting. As in Louisiana and Maryland, Wisconsin local staff revamped the workshops to make them more interactive. Staff used many sources of information, including the Internet, materials created by other facilitators, and their own experience to improve preexisting workshops or develop new ones. In some instances, local staff also established job clubs. Because Wisconsin’s SIG sites developed workshops based on their own needs, each may have somewhat different materials and structure. A customer satisfaction survey the state conducted in the spring of 2000 showed that claimants were satisfied with the reemployment services they received at these local offices. More than 95 percent of participants answered that the workshop was useful and the presenter knowledgeable.

⁸GWU recommended even larger groups (40 participants), but space constraints preclude that.

3. Developing an Ongoing Dialogue Among WPRS Staff—Alaska

Instead of developing new workshop materials, Alaska facilitated the sharing of existing workshop materials or approaches. Because local office conditions and caseloads vary greatly between urban and rural areas, the state allows local offices to conduct orientations in group or one-on-one sessions. Hence, Alaska's local offices use a diverse range of approaches to conducting workshops. Drawing on the knowledge and experience of local offices, Alaska has conducted yearly conferences and monthly teleconferences to improve and standardize its workshops; foster relationship building among, and the exchange of ideas between, local staff; and increase future information sharing. Sometimes the state asked local staff to share with other facilitators their approaches to conducting workshops on resumes, job applications, interviews, and job search strategies. For instance, at the yearly conference, one local office presented the PowerPoint presentation it used for orientation. State staff had reviewed the presentation to make sure it matched state guidelines and disseminated it at the conference to interested staff from other local offices. In addition, these forums were designed to address statewide program variation by conveying a consistent message from the central office and providing an opportunity for group discussion of questions and concerns.

Some local staff reported that the teleconferences increased their awareness of the issues staff faced in other offices, and they liked the opportunity to exchange experiences, which in some cases led them to share information and resources. Many staff also appreciated the professional development opportunities offered by the monthly teleconferences and annual conferences. The state will continue to hold the monthly teleconferences but will hold yearly conferences only as resources allow.⁹

⁹The state currently does not have plans for another conference.

Through the dialogue developed during the conferences and teleconferences, the state identified resources needed to improve orientation workshops that it was able to purchase when SIG funds became available through a grant modification. Some local offices identified needs for equipment that would better enable them to conduct workshops and coordinate with other programs in their local office. The state purchased equipment to be used in workshops, such as laptops and projectors, for some local offices. In addition, Alaska purchased handbooks for all local offices to give to claimants at their orientation workshops. Claimants are asked to review these materials before their next scheduled meeting with their reemployment counselor. The handbooks—“Surviving a Layoff: Coping with the Emotional, Financial, and Job Hunting Stress of Unemployment” and “The Job Hunting Handbook, With Wages and Demand for 200 Jobs”—are intended to provide a user-friendly summary of job-seeking tips that claimants can review after their first visit to the local office, thereby becoming more knowledgeable and efficient in their future visits.

B. STRENGTHENING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The WPRS evaluation (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b) and WPRS workgroup (Wandner and Messenger 1999) found that the reemployment services many states provided were not always well matched to client needs or intensive enough to reduce the length of unemployment spells. Although WPRS-selected claimants are all identified as at risk of poor reemployment outcomes, their backgrounds and needs for reemployment assistance can vary considerably. The use of a one-size-fits-all approach to service delivery may fail both to capitalize on claimants’ strengths and to address their unique barriers to employment and needs for assistance. In the end, such an approach to service delivery might be less effective than those that allow tailoring to claimants’ special circumstances.

Assessments can vary in method, including both staff assessments and self-assessments. The issues that each method is likely to identify and address are different. Claimants may be likely to identify their job search needs, whereas staff may be more able to identify and address claimants' personal barriers to work. Claimants' self-assessments may use either complicated or somewhat simple assessment tools to identify claimants' needs. These activities may be either voluntary or mandatory and are not limited by the amount of staff time available. The guidance of a counselor may be involved to a small extent and possibly at the request of the claimant. However, claimants may be less able to identify and address difficult issues and may simply look for the easiest way to fulfill any participation requirements.

On the other hand, counselors may be more adept at identifying and addressing subtle barriers to work, such as motivation issues, drug problems, or learning disabilities. WPRS may be a good opportunity, early enough in the UI claim, to identify and address these difficult matters. Counselors may be able to make referrals to the services and agencies that can help claimants while they still have UI benefits. They may also use assessment tools in this process. However, this type of assessment generally requires that staff have a particular background or specific training. In addition, neither state nor local staff may want to mandate participation in specific follow-up services identified through assessment. Finally, the staff resources that are available to conduct the assessments, provide individualized activities, and conduct follow-up and enforcement of participation tend to vary across local offices.

Regardless of which assessment approach is typically used, states need to consider whether the assessment is sufficient to identify claimants who need training or other intensive services and how coordination with the assessments of other one-stop programs could best be achieved. Intensive services cannot be provided to all claimants, so access to such services may be rationed. However, both the claimants who need these services and the states have the potential

to benefit if these claimants are identified and provided these services early in their unemployment spells.

To tailor WPRS services to claimants' circumstances, four states chose to use their SIG funds to improve their assessment processes. Some states sought to improve how they assessed claimants' job search needs to match them better with reemployment services. Other states sought to improve how they assessed claimants' personal barriers to work so their staff could better address the needs of claimants or refer them for assistance. Regardless of the approach, these states expected that better assessment would lead to better matching of claimants with available services and, therefore, better matching of claimants with jobs and shorter UI claims durations. In this section, we discuss these two distinct approaches to identifying claimants' needs and matching claimants with services.

1. Linking Claimants to Appropriate Reemployment Services—Washington and New York

Washington state staff wanted to identify and assess weaknesses better in claimants' job search skills and to direct claimants more effectively to reemployment services. To this end, the state strengthened its Job Search Readiness Inventory.¹⁰ This inventory fills a gap in service delivery, as it focuses on job *search* readiness rather than job readiness. Prior to the SIG,

¹⁰With funding provided by its state legislature in the summer of 2001, Washington is developing the Results-Based Sorting system, designed to target services better to claimants who are identified as at high risk of benefit exhaustion by sorting the claimants into groups that need self-serve, core, or intensive services. The goal is to provide a high level of statistical sorting, so that claimants are more likely to receive voluntary services tailored to their individual needs. Like an electronic reemployment plan that would identify claimants for intensive services, the Results-Based Sorting system would provide more than one dimension of a summary statistic rather than using a single dimension to rank claimants (as is the case with the WPRS score). Because services will be better targeted to claimants who are likely to benefit from them, the state hopes to serve more claimants. The state plans to pilot-test the system in 2002 and have results in the following year.

Washington staff had already developed five modules for the Job Search Readiness Inventory: (1) skills identification, (2) job search techniques, (3) resumes and applications, (4) labor market knowledge, and (5) interviewing skills. State staff developed an intranet pilot version of the inventory that would aid in the creation of reemployment plans and ultimately allow the state to track service receipt and client outcomes. Pilot tests, however, revealed that local office staff preferred to use a paper version of the inventory during orientation workshops. For them, the paper version was an easier and more practical tool for identifying the job search skill deficiencies of claimants and referring them to voluntary workshops that could help them.

As part of its SIG efforts, New York focused, by increasing the availability and use of proven career exploration tools, on helping claimants assess their career direction and develop a reemployment plan. Although most states have some such tools available for claimants to use, New York made their widespread use a priority and views these tools as an important component of developing state-of-the-art job placement strategies. The state ensured that all local offices have certain career exploration tools, such as Choices, Career Aptitude Survey, and Career Zone (discussed in more depth in Section D), on all resource room computers. In statewide training sessions, the state conveyed the importance and utility of using these tools consistently. The sessions provided general training on the Choices software to all local staff and specific technical training to one staff representative from each office. These tools are intended to be used by claimants to identify a career path, ensure that this career is in demand in the labor market, and determine how to update their skills, if necessary. The state's goal is to encourage claimants and other one-stop customers to use these tools and for one-stop staff to be able to provide some guidance on their use.

2. Better Identifying Personal Barriers to Reemployment—Minnesota and Alaska

Most assessment tools focus on basic aspects of job readiness or career planning. Some focus on identifying broader personal barriers to reemployment, and Minnesota used its SIG to develop such a tool. This tool covers social and psychological issues, such as the claimant's social support structure, attitudes toward being unemployed, and self-image, in addition to job search activities and labor market experiences. By covering a broader range of client needs, Minnesota hoped that local staff would be better able to guide clients toward one-stop resources to address issues (other than employment needs) that might hinder a quick return to work and long-term employment.

Minnesota worked with a university-based psychologist to develop this assessment tool. In March 2000, they had 2,681 claimants fill out extensive questionnaires when they visited the local offices.¹¹ Respondents were also asked to complete a second survey.¹² The psychologist analyzed these data, along with administrative data, to develop a better profile of the characteristics of claimants who are associated with benefit exhaustion, the time unemployed, and the quality of the post-UI job. This research formed the basis for a tool that is tailored to identify the needs of claimants at risk of benefit exhaustion. Minnesota is pilot-testing a version of the assessment tool and training reemployment services staff to use it to direct claimants to appropriate services.

Because the final version of the tool will be several pages long and will cover sensitive topics, it will not be distributed at orientation but will instead be mailed to claimants along with the orientation letter, to be filled out at home and brought to orientation. Once reemployment

¹¹Claimants who expected to be recalled were excluded from the analysis.

¹²The follow-up survey was mailed to claimants around the time they may have exhausted benefits and included a small payment as an incentive for participation.

services staff are trained on how to use the tool, they will meet individually with claimants to review their needs and guide them to appropriate services. Although the sharing of both non-sensitive information (such as the claimant's job search strategies, work history, and work goals) and sensitive information (such as motivational, emotional, or social issues that may affect the speed of returning to work) could be used to help staff work with a claimant to identify appropriate services, the state will not require claimants to show their Needs Assessment to staff.¹³ Even if this information is not shared with staff, an important potential advantage of the new tool is to encourage the claimant to think early in the unemployment spell about potential barriers to and goals for job search. As claimants do so, they may identify needs for services, both those that the state agency can help them with directly and those for which the agency may refer them outside the state system.

Alaska also sought to improve the identification of sensitive personal barriers to reemployment. Its approach was to train staff to better identify these barriers and enhance program linkages to better direct claimants to appropriate services. During a statewide conference, workshop facilitators attended presentations on (1) substance abuse and how it affects a claimant's ability to get and keep a job; (2) how to recognize learning disabilities, particularly hidden ones, and when to address them; and (3) self-worth and self-esteem issues associated with job loss. These staff also received case management training on how to approach and provide referrals to clients with sensitive issues. In addition, state-level staff from WPRS and the Veterans Program and local office staff attended an intensive three-day seminar on learning disabilities conducted jointly by the state Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and

¹³The state had not required claimants to share the pre-SIG version of the Needs Assessment with staff.

Public Assistance. This workshop was the first step in a multi-departmental planning process to develop ways to identify, refer, and follow up with people who have learning disabilities.

C. ENHANCING FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

States vary considerably in whether and how much they require claimants to participate in follow-up activities after the WPRS-mandated orientation workshop and assessment process. Follow-up activities may include group workshops that specialize in different types of job search strategies (discussed in Section A), one-on-one meetings with reemployment services staff, receipt of referrals to job openings, job clubs with other unemployed workers, training, and other activities. In some states, participation in these activities is encouraged but voluntary. In others, WPRS-mandated claimants must participate in one or more follow-up activities throughout their claim period. In these states, claimants who do not participate may lose some or all of their UI benefits or have their benefits delayed. Although mandating activities is recommended to increase claimant participation in services, states vary in their emphasis on enforcement (Wandner and Messenger 1999).¹⁴

Because of the importance of working with claimants throughout their unemployment spells, several states used their SIGs to develop and enhance follow-up activities. These states had three approaches, which often built on established state WPRS and UI structures and priorities. First, some states implemented procedures to contact claimants at strategic times after they completed their required WPRS activities to remind them of available reemployment services. Second, several states began requiring claimants to maintain regular contact with reemployment representatives until they got jobs or otherwise stopped collecting UI benefits. Regardless of whether follow-up contacts were voluntary or mandated, staff often used them to obtain

¹⁴The presence of staff procedures and data systems to notify UI of nonparticipation affects the degree of enforcement and is discussed in Chapter IV.

information on whether claimants had found jobs. Finally, some states sought to improve information on claimants' employment status after their participation in WPRS activities.

1. Reminding Claimants of the Availability of Services—Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Washington

Three states recently developed new ways to contact claimants to remind them of available reemployment services. Using the SIG, Wisconsin funded staff in two Green Bay area offices to develop and test new procedures to follow up with claimants and increase participation in reemployment services. Before the SIG, the state did not have an official follow-up policy, except to make sure that claimants attended their required reemployment services. For the most part, local office staff did not follow up with claimants to check on their reemployment status or offer additional assistance. The SIG plan for followup was to send claimants letters after 12 weeks of their filing for UI benefits to remind them of available reemployment services, but not to require additional participation. Because average UI duration was about 15 weeks, conducting followup at 12 weeks focused the follow-up effort on claimants who were experiencing longer UI spells, while still allowing sufficient time to help these claimants refine their job search before exhausting benefits. Local staff found that claimants who initially were reluctant to receive job search assistance sometimes were more receptive to it after failing to find a job on their own. However, many claimants still do not partake in additional services, either because they had found a job or because they were not interested.

Ultimately the state determined that the follow-up efforts did not engage enough participants in additional services to warrant their continuation, and that the average UI duration did not decline significantly during the SIG period. The state continued to support these staff positions after the SIG ended but had staff focus on providing WPRS services to more claimants in this area of the state.

As in Wisconsin, local office staff in Minnesota did either no followup or sporadic followup prior to the SIG. Since spring 2001, however, these staff are supposed to follow up with WPRS claimants at 6 weeks and 15 weeks after their orientation workshops for a “Plan Review.” Each of these two followups usually consists of sending a letter with check-boxes inquiring about the claimant’s job search outcomes and any additional service needs they may have. Claimants who have not dealt with barriers after having been given enough time to address them can be referred for adjudication. Claimants also can be scheduled for additional services. Although local office staff are instructed to conduct these followups at both times, staff are more likely to do the 6-week followup than the 15-week one. Staff report anecdotally that claimants are less receptive to contact with the state agency later in their unemployment spells. In addition, because of other demands on their time, staff may not follow up on claimants who fail to return a letter, or they may not send out the second letter at 15 weeks.

Although not a part of its SIG efforts, Washington developed a widely advertised automated system, called Job Hunter, that links claimants with job listings. When claimants place their weekly claims calls, Job Hunter matches, by computer, their Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) code with Employment Service (ES) job listings. About 10 percent of claimants are matched.¹⁵ The claimants are automatically notified of any matches to job listings and the location of the closest office to which they should report to obtain more information. Because claimants must contact a local office, Washington staff have the opportunity to provide other referrals and additional services.

¹⁵The state is hoping to improve the quality of occupation coding done by staff at the UI call centers, so that more high-quality matches are made.

2. Requiring Follow-Up Services—South Carolina, North Carolina, New York, and Washington

After completing their basic WPRS requirements, some states require claimants to report regularly to the local office and/or participate in additional reemployment services. Claimants may lose UI benefits if they ignore these requirements, which are often monitored through eligibility reviews or similar meetings. These efforts are intended to engage UI claimants in the services available at the one-stops and to encourage more effective work search. Four SIG states were establishing or had begun requiring follow-up services.

Through the SIG, South Carolina developed a new schedule of “detailed service requirements” that identifies a menu of core reemployment service contacts that should occur during certain periods throughout a 26-week UI claim. Previously, staff conducting eligibility reviews, particularly in larger offices, were often unaware of claimants’ Work Search Plan information. Completed in the WPRS-mandated orientation, the Work Search Plans outline reemployment activities needed by the claimants. Because there was no formal followup on Work Search Plans, staff might have been unaware when claimants did not complete these activities. The new schedule of service requirements, which incorporates the Work Search Plan, provides a consistent framework for ES and UI staff to direct claimants to services. In addition, profiled claimants were to be scheduled for eligibility reviews more frequently than other claimants, every four weeks instead of six to eight, so that their job search efforts could be closely monitored.

The benefits to automatic and frequent scheduling of eligibility reviews for profiled claimants became even more apparent over the course of the grant period. Before the SIG, eligibility reviews were often scheduled to coincide with follow-up reemployment services activities. During the grant period, however, funding changes caused a large reduction in the

provision of follow-up services. The automatic scheduling of eligibility reviews allowed the state to ensure that these activities were still being conducted. Nevertheless, because of these funding changes, the state had difficulty implementing all stages of the service requirements schedule, particularly those for claimants in the latter parts of their UI claims.

South Carolina also used SIG money to provide intensive follow-up services in some of the offices with the largest claims loads.¹⁶ Claimants with profiling scores of 0.50 or higher, about half of claimants on the profiling lists, were targeted for these additional services. The eight SIG caseworkers who provided these services tried to schedule a first meeting with targeted claimants within a week of their WPRS orientation. Using the Work Search Plans as a basis, the caseworkers then provided one-on-one services, including resume assistance, instruction on specific features of the resource room, or searches every few days for job orders matches. Some caseworkers also conducted “cold calls” to potential employers on behalf of their assigned claimants. The state thought that caseworkers’ ability to know in depth the specific strengths and goals of the claimants they worked with was especially helpful in ensuring that job leads were identified and pursued. Although SIG caseworkers generally emphasized the beneficial aspects of participation rather than its mandatory nature, a claimant who refused to work with the caseworker could have had his or her UI eligibility investigated.

As was mentioned in Chapter II, North Carolina established, with support from SIG, a new temporary program, Reemployment Services for Textiles, Apparel, and Tobacco (RSTAT), which required that claimants from these industries maintain regular contact with the local offices during their UI claim. After participating in a brief orientation workshop and an

¹⁶Starting in the summer of 2001, South Carolina has used new reemployment services funds available to fund staff time to help identify claimants in need of intensive WIA services. A difference between the use of the SIG funds and the new funds is that the new funds pay for 15 full-time equivalent positions that are fractionalized across 36 offices.

extensive job search workshop, RSTAT claimants had to return to the local office every two weeks to meet with staff and discuss their job search progress. Staff sometimes made job referrals or job development calls to employers, encouraged claimants to use the Career Resource Centers in the office, and made referrals to training funded by WIA and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), as appropriate. Because UI eligibility reviews take place every fourth week, enforcement of the rules during these meetings was more stringent. These meetings also included more thorough reviews of job search activities.

North Carolina's other new, ongoing program, called Reemployment Initiative (REI), has follow-up requirements similar to those of RSTAT. These claimants are called in every week for 12 weeks to discuss their job search activities with local office staff. Local offices strive to serve all REI claimants, even when a large number are called in.

In 1999, New York implemented a new policy for followup, developed in conjunction with the state's shift from local office claims filing to telephone filing. Funded by the state (and not the SIG), this policy requires all claimants who have collected benefits for 13 weeks to attend a brief workshop and report their job search efforts to local offices. They are required to consider job offers below their prior wage rates, and they may be instructed to receive case management services. Through another non-SIG-funded effort, profiled claimants may be selected for intensive case management services, including a requirement that they come into the local offices every two weeks until they find a job. Although these claimants are exempt from UI eligibility reviews, their benefits may be withheld if they miss two WPRS appointments. Adherence to and enforcement of both these case management policies are contingent on the availability of resources.

Although not through SIG activities, Washington also created a program, called Job Search Monitoring, to follow up better with claimants. UI staff have follow-up meetings with some

claimants every six weeks to check on their progress in getting work and to refer them to appropriate reemployment services. Staff recommend additional activities to all claimants in the program, and they have discretion to prescribe activities to claimants or increase the number of required weekly employer contacts. Claimants are scheduled for follow-up meetings to show that they have met these additional requirements. Failure to appear for either a first Job Search Monitoring appointment or a follow-up appointment, after two call-in attempts, may cause benefits to be withheld.

3. Improving Information on Claimants' Employment Status—Louisiana, South Carolina, and Wisconsin

A key goal of follow-up activities is to obtain reliable information on claimants' reemployment progress. This information is useful, as discussed earlier, for referring claimants who are having difficulties to further reemployment services. Also, statistics on obtained employment are often used to gauge the effectiveness of reemployment activities and can help states adjust the intensity and composition of these services to better meet the needs of job seekers. However, procuring such information can be difficult for states. For instance, claimants who become reemployed often do not report the fact to the ES or one-stop office. As a result, states have an interest in improving the quality of their information on claimants' outcomes.

Several SIG states have followed up with claimants to improve their data on employment outcomes. For example, Louisiana used SIG funds to create in its data system a new screen that lists profiled claimants who attended a WPRS workshop so that ES staff can follow up at 1 week and 13 weeks after the workshop. Often local offices send follow-up letters to these participants to inquire about their employment status, employers, and wages so that the state can better track obtained employment. South Carolina and Wisconsin also implemented mechanisms to improve "entered-employment" statistics. The South Carolina SIG caseworkers called claimants with

whom they had been working.¹⁷ In Wisconsin, SIG-funded staff followed up with claimants who had received UI benefits for 12 weeks. In both cases, staff tried to identify claimants who had returned to work.

D. FACILITATING USE OF SELF-ACCESS RESOURCES

In recent years, states have increased the menu of self-access resources available to job seekers. Various factors have motivated this increase, most notably the enactment of WIA, limited ES funding, and new technology. Under WIA, self-access resource rooms in one-stop centers are to be made available to all customers. While WIA was designed to increase access to basic, self-access reemployment resources, ES funding levels have not expanded at the same pace as the demand for services.¹⁸ Therefore, providers have had to develop ways to serve more customers with the current level of staff resources. Finally, advances in technology, such as the widespread use of personal computers and the Internet, have made it easier to offer self-access services. For example, job seekers can use computerized career exploration and information packages, as well as numerous Internet databases of job listings. In addition, in some states, claimants may review general information on the UI program or file claims through the Internet.

As states rely more on self-access services for job seekers, claimants' ability to use computers becomes an increasingly important consideration. Many claimants may not have the computer skills to take advantage of self-access services. For example, one-stop staff in an urban area estimated that only half the claimants who attend orientation workshops have any computer skills. Research has also found that older and low-income adults are less likely than

¹⁷South Carolina also reported developing the capacity to identify, through linking UI records with their New Hires Database and wage records, claimants who have obtained employment. State staff were pleased with the ability of these automated processes to increase greatly the detection of obtained employments.

¹⁸ES funding for the past several years has remained about the same in nominal dollars.

younger and high-income adults to use computers on a regular basis (Needels et al. 2000). Claimants in rural areas also may be less likely than claimants in urban ones to be computer literate. Because claimants may not be comfortable using computer-based self-access services, many one-stops offer workshops on basic computer skills and Internet job searches.

Several SIG states sought to increase the use of self-access services by providing group or one-on-one hands-on instruction or by simplifying self-access computer applications so they are more useful to a wider population. SIG states pursued varied strategies that include (1) developing a workshop format to teach job seekers how to use computers and the Internet for their job search, (2) providing software and staff instruction on new computer-based career assessment tools, and (3) enhancing the accessibility of computers and Internet resources in local office resource rooms. In the sections that follow, we discuss each of the strategies to increase the use of self-access resources.

1. Teaching Claimants How to Use Computers for Their Job Searches—California

Although many of California's one-stops offer various types of computer-related workshops, California devoted most of its SIG money to developing and testing a new workshop module to teach claimants how to use the Internet for their job searches. California included the SIG-funded Internet module in its WPRS-required Initial Assistance Workshop (IAW) so that claimants who were identified as at high risk of exhaustion could benefit early in their unemployment spells.¹⁹ The goal of this module was to decrease claimants' unemployment spells by teaching them computer skills to access Internet-based job search resources, while also

¹⁹The IAW typically occurs five to six weeks after the initial claim filing. IAW leaders explain how and why claimants were selected for the workshop; provide information on one-stop services, the local labor market, and training options; give referrals to selected services; and offer job search tips on topics such as how to write a better resume and how to interview well. The IAW also may include a tour of the resource room.

developing their general job search skills. Use (or better use) of the Internet could help claimants find jobs within their occupations, learn which of their skills can be used in different occupations, consider these other occupations to pursue, and make use of information on the labor market. In addition, California hoped that the Internet module would help claimants discover potential employers and make contact with them directly.

The objectives of the Internet module were to teach claimants (1) basic computer skills and terminology, such as starting the computer and using basic keyboard, mouse, and Internet techniques; (2) registration procedures for CalJobs, the state's job-listing system; (3) use of the Internet for job searching; (4) use of several job-related web sites; (5) use of keywords to define skills sets for job search and resume preparation; and (6) organizational skills, such as being focused, keeping records, and setting goals. Claimants were expected to progress in at least three of these areas, rather than to meet absolute levels of mastery. Many of the points in the lesson plan were also useful for a non-computer-based job search strategy.

The state began to develop and pilot-test this Internet module by conducting research and soliciting local input. Staff conducted a literature search on computer training, assessed claimants' computer and Internet use through open-ended questions in a field survey, and talked with other service providers about how to conduct Internet job search training.²⁰ The state also reviewed U.S. and Canadian job service web sites to identify designs and features of the sites to cover in the module. In-house staff then drafted the 45- to 60-minute lesson plan, which was reviewed and tested by staff in three local offices. In response to feedback from these front-line staff, the SIG coordinator made the lesson plan shorter, less conceptual, and less technical.

²⁰Data from this survey of IAW participants suggested that these job seekers reported a willingness to use the Internet for their job searches, regardless of their experience with or knowledge of the Internet.

To test the Internet module more broadly in the field, the state selected 12 pilot sites from among local offices that conducted at least one IAW per week. These 12 came from different regions of the state and represented a variety of different communities. As an incentive, the SIG coordinator funded the staff time of IAW leaders for six hours a week for six to nine months, to cover the time spent preparing for, conducting, and following up on the workshop module, including investigating leads on Internet job search sites.²¹ The state also had to purchase computer equipment for some pilot sites, as their access to appropriate equipment was more limited than the state expected.²² After assessing the office's equipment and the network connections, the SIG coordinator provided some pilot sites with laptop computers (with laptop-to-TV adapters), TVs to be used as computer monitors, and/or external PC-to-TV converters.²³ Using portable equipment was preferred because the IAW leaders typically do not have control over the conference rooms in which IAWs are held and, occasionally, the rooms are unavailable for the regularly scheduled IAWs.

Finally, the state trained IAW leaders in the pilot sites. Before the training, the leaders varied considerably in how much they discussed the Internet during the IAWs. The leaders' computer skills also varied. The training allowed leaders to improve their own skills, become familiar with the module, and provide additional suggestions to improve it. Nevertheless, some

²¹IAW leaders were instructed to assemble and frequently update a list of locally useful web sites in addition to CalJobs, the state's job-listing system, because these lists quickly become outdated.

²²As a result, the state obtained permission from DOL to modify their grant expenditures to purchase equipment for the sites.

²³Around the end of the grant period, the state replaced these TVs with InFocus projectors, which are more expensive but, according to field staff, can project a much clearer display image that can be adjusted to the size of the room in which the workshop is held.

staff remained uncomfortable presenting this material and emphasized it less during their IAWs than was required in the lesson plan. In addition, a high level of turnover among IAW leaders made it difficult for the state to ensure that leaders were trained well enough to give comprehensive presentations and to handle unanticipated deviations from the plan caused by problems with the equipment or the Internet.²⁴

As with other types of job search assistance, the Internet module worked best when it was tailored to the skills and interests of local claimants. Officially, the module was pitched toward claimants who had some computer experience. The IAW leaders “launched the Internet and started speaking” so claimants were not bored, although they asked experienced computer users to be patient. Leaders reported that even technically savvy claimants could obtain leads about useful job-related web sites. In addition, the leaders drew on the skills and experiences of such claimants to make the Internet module more dynamic and valuable to all attendees.

California staff considered, but eventually rejected, several ideas when developing the Internet module. They had originally planned for the Internet training to be given to claimants who chose “self-directed work search” as their follow-up service from among the six types of post-IAW follow-up services. The training would have been an extensive workshop, separate from the IAW. However, staff decided to include the Internet training in the IAW, because only about 17 percent of WPRS-mandated claimants choose the self-directed work search. In

²⁴In addition to traditional training methods, the state considered two possibilities for facilitating training of new IAW leaders and refreshing the skills of more senior IAW leaders on an ongoing basis: (1) creating a CD-ROM for training, and (2) designing a web-based training system, through which the leaders could review the training material and get tips on Internet links. However, California SIG staff rejected the idea of the CD-ROM because they thought it would become obsolete quickly. The state was unable to develop the web-based training system within the time and resources available.

addition, staff speculated that adding the module to the self-directed work search option might deter claimants from choosing it.

Staff also considered giving IAW attendees a CD-ROM that listed various Internet sites, but they concluded that it would quickly be outdated. They also decided against developing a self-guided module for use in the resource rooms, because they expected to spend a lot of time answering claimants' questions. In addition, California tried, but rejected, two other presentation styles. Demonstrations at computers in the resource rooms (with the claimants observing) were difficult because of limited availability of the rooms. PowerPoint presentations in conference rooms were boring to many claimants, but in contrast, most claimants were very attentive when the computers are turned on during the IAWs.²⁵ However, staff needed to have a backup plan to convey as much of the information as possible during the IAW if the computers were not working.

California recognized that improving claimants' computer skills is only one part of ensuring their easy access to computer-based job listings and other services in the one-stop resource rooms. Independently of SIG efforts, California removed, on the computer browsers, restrictive features that had limited claimants' Internet access to a few preselected job-related sites. Now, staff visually monitor the resource rooms to ensure that the computers are being properly used. Although not funded by the SIG, this effort greatly improved the potential usefulness of the SIG Internet module. (Many of the other SIG states allow claimants to access the Internet through some or all of the computers in their resource rooms.) In addition, California is purging outdated

²⁵Some one-stops in certain states have computer laboratories so that claimants can get hands-on experience using computers during workshops. Although this type of arrangement could further improve claimants' computer skills, this is not the norm, because of financial and space constraints.

or inappropriate job listings from the state-run job bank and may purchase additional computer hardware to speed claimants' access to relevant state or national job listings.

To examine the effectiveness of the Internet module, California conducted surveys of claimants who attended IAWs with the SIG Internet module in the pilot offices. The state also compared their UI outcomes to those of claimants who attended IAWs in non-pilot offices in the same region. Further, they made statewide comparisons and examined the outcomes of each of the 12 pilot sites. IAWs that followed the Internet curriculum were rated more positively by participants than IAWs that did not. Nevertheless, most claimants that had no or below-average Internet skills prior to the IAW reported being unlikely to use the Internet for their job search even after participating in the Internet module. Finally, the state did not find any systematic differences in the exhaustion rates or entered employment rates between SIG pilot sites and non-pilot sites. However, it concluded that the SIG Internet module was associated with an increase in the number of claimants who received Wagner-Peyser Act reemployment services.

State staff speculated that problems implementing the module, difficulty targeting services to claimants most in need of them, and the IAW's emphasis on training may have led to these null effects. In addition, non-SIG offices probably expanded their discussion of the Internet, and offices statewide increased access to it in their resource rooms, around the same time. This meant that the comparison group members may have had a very similar exposure to the Internet, which reduced the ability of the state to gauge the effectiveness of the Internet module.²⁶

²⁶Given this, comparisons between pilot and non-pilot sites may reflect only the additional benefits to the pilot sites' claimants of a well-designed curriculum and staff training, rather than the broader benefits of a discussion of the Internet during the IAW.

2. Encouraging Widespread Use of Career Exploration Tools or Computer Skills Training Software—New York and Alaska

Computer-based software packages have the potential to help many claimants in their job searches after they receive some basic instruction from staff. As part of its SIG, New York focused on increasing claimants' access to, and use of, career exploration tools. The state's goal was to help claimants make better career choices by deciding on a career direction, understanding whether that career is in demand in the labor market, and determining how to update their skills. The state purchased desktop and Internet site licenses for Choices, a career exploration software package previously available on only some computers in local offices. All resource room computers in all local offices now contain this software. Staff typically provide clients with some initial assistance so they understand how to use Choices and then can use it independently in the resource rooms. The state also purchased an Internet version of Choices that claimants can access using a unique user-ID issued by the local office. In addition, the state provided local offices a career exploration tool called the Career Aptitude Survey. This tool can be adjusted to the claimant's reading level and can be used with little staff assistance; however, staff assistance is required to interpret the results.

At its statewide training sessions, New York trained reemployment counselors on these career exploration packages so they would be comfortable using them and more likely to direct customers to do so. In addition, the state modified another career exploration package, called Career Zone, which was originally developed for high school students. This package is available through the state's web site and provides occupational information, job postings, and job search guidance. The availability of several different career assessment tools may encourage claimants with different skill levels and experiences to find a tool that they are comfortable using to investigate the appropriateness of their career choices.

Alaska also purchased computer-skills-training software for one of its local urban offices, where computer skills are viewed as particularly important to clients' jobs search and entry into job-training programs. The software allows clients to work individually and with the assistance of a reemployment representative to develop basic computer skills, which can help not only with job search but also as a means of informal training for future participation in a training program or on a job.

3. Enhancing the Accessibility of Internet Resources—Louisiana

Because of the recent surge in Internet resources related to the job search, Louisiana implemented two ways to help claimants use them: (1) developing a tutorial on using America's Job Bank (AJB), and (2) increasing the number of computers available in local offices. Although the state originally planned to develop a workshop on how to use AJB, it concluded that such workshops would not be well attended, because of variation in needs over time and across locales. Instead, the state decided to develop a CD-ROM to be used on a walk-in basis. The 9- to 10-minute CD-ROM guides the user through the different ways of searching for jobs in AJB, either by job title, job order number, military code, or keyword. However, as with most Internet-based resources, this CD-ROM may need to be updated to reflect any changes in the AJB.

Using the SIG, Louisiana also provided at least two Internet-connected computer workstations, including PCs and printers, to each local office. Some offices that served larger populations received more than two workstations. Particularly in smaller offices, the additional PC workstations greatly increased the computer capacity of the resource rooms.

E. INCREASING SERVICE CAPACITY

Each of the previous sections discusses ways in which SIG states tried to improve various components of reemployment services. States focused attention on workshop improvement, assessment procedures, follow-up activities, and self-access services. While these improvements may increase the overall effectiveness of WPRS services by increasing the quality of services claimants receive, they do not address the effect these services could have if extended to a larger number of claimants. Thus, some states also used their SIGs to increase their capacity to provide WPRS services to more claimants.

According to the 1999 evaluation of WPRS systems, 30 percent of states refer less than 5 percent of UI claimants to WPRS (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b). Even in states that refer a higher percentage, some local areas may have more claimants than they can serve, while others may underutilize staff. For states that serve low numbers of claimants identified as likely to exhaust their UI benefits, increasing service capacity is key to meeting the WPRS goals of decreasing UI duration and saving trust fund dollars. Referral to reemployment services through WPRS may be one of the only ways that claimants in many states are connected to these services as ES registration requirements are eliminated (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b) and the establishment of UI call centers removes the physical link between ES and UI brought about through collocation of some or all offices.

The prevailing distribution of WPRS service delivery capacity may reflect three factors: (1) historical staffing levels, (2) established staff distribution methods, and (3) space constraints. Local staff levels are sometimes remnants of historical staffing patterns that cannot be changed without the risk of political ramifications or loss of staff members who are unwilling or unable to

relocate.²⁷ In other cases, staff may be distributed by methods that do not relate to the current demand for profiling services. For example, staffing resource levels may be allocated based on claims load, not profiling load. This made sense when local office staff conducted the full range of UI activities, but it is less important now in states in which UI claims are processed through call centers. Finally, service capacity may be constrained by the physical size of the facility where WPRS services are offered. Currently, the availability of physical space for WPRS services is changing in many local offices. In response to WIA, some local offices plan to move to larger facilities where they can colocate with partner agencies and thus offer more services. On the other hand, other local ES offices have reduced service levels based on the size of the facility in order to accommodate increases in colocation with partner agencies. In addition, UI staff are moving out of local offices in some states. Thus, the amount of space available in local offices to deliver profiling services may be increasing or decreasing.

Some states used SIG funds to increase service capacity for specific clients or in specific areas, thereby actively addressing inequalities in the distribution of service capacity.²⁸ North Carolina, Wisconsin, and West Virginia targeted resources at claimants from specific industries and geographic areas determined either to have a high need for services or to have service capacity historically lower than other areas of the state. We describe these strategies in more detail next.

North Carolina's SIG-funded RSTAT program allowed the state to shift intensive, staff-assisted services to local areas where significant layoffs in the textile, apparel, and tobacco

²⁷States often use attrition to correct the problems in staffing distribution. Relying on attrition may be politically safe, but is usually a very slow process.

²⁸Alaska has used reemployment services money that became available in the summer of 2001 to increase the number of staff who deliver services in areas with high demand for these services.

industries had occurred. Many of these claimants tend to have a difficult time finding a job; new industry is often scarce in their areas, they may have low education, and their skills are very specific to their former occupations. Because RSTAT funds could easily be shifted between local offices to respond to area needs based on large layoffs, the state was able to serve more than 1,600 claimants in 19 local offices by the end of December 2000 (see Section C). After the SIG, North Carolina is continuing to serve RSTAT claimants through the state's new REI program (see Section C).

One of Wisconsin's primary SIG objectives was to increase overall service capacity by 20 percent by adding staff members in areas that were serving a very low proportion of the claimants eligible for profiling services. The state added full-time staff members dedicated to increasing the service capacity of local offices in the Madison and Milwaukee areas, including offices that had offered profiling services, as well as offices that had not but were well suited to do so.²⁹ The new profiling offices already provided training, job search assistance, and case management services, so the SIG-funded staff added capacity primarily to run orientation workshops. In the Madison area, the frequency of orientation workshops doubled. Over the two years of the SIG, the number of claimants selected for profiling services increased substantially, from 1,325 before the SIG in 1998-1999 to 2,262 in the last year of the SIG (2000-2001). In the Milwaukee area, the two additional SIG-funded sites increased the total selected in the last year of the SIG to 2,861, compared with 1,527 selected in the year before it. Ultimately, Wisconsin surpassed its original goals, in part because the state was able to stretch its funds to hire more staff, who in turn were able to serve more claimants than originally projected. The number of claimants selected for profiling services statewide increased by about 40 percent, from almost

²⁹In addition to the SIG-funded staff, the state added WPRS staff at two other locations in Milwaukee.

11,000 in the year before the SIG to more than 15,500 in its last year.³⁰ Much of this increase in service capacity—about 2,300—is due to the increase in the Milwaukee and Madison areas where SIG staff were added.

West Virginia hired 10 part-time staff members to work in offices where there are large pockets of unemployment. Their time was completely funded by the SIG and spent on WPRS activities. As in Wisconsin, these staff were supplements to the other staff who were providing WPRS services as one of their many activities. SIG-funded staff scheduled and led the weekly workshops, conducted intake and assessment, made follow-up contact via letter or telephone calls with claimants, tried to place the claimants, conducted other case management activities, and handled reports. These staff were able to increase their work to full-time because the state had funds remaining in the last few months of the grant period. After the end of the grant, the WPRS responsibilities returned to JS staff who had been freed up to provide additional reemployment services.

³⁰Of this total, about 600 claimants were selected for the new non-SIG funded offices in Milwaukee.

IV. IMPROVING COORDINATION AMONG PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES

State Worker Profiling and Reemployment Service (WPRS) systems use information and staff resources from three programs—Unemployment Insurance (UI), the Employment Service (ES), and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). If WPRS is to be successful, good linkages are needed among these three data systems and also among agency staff. However, developing good data linkages is challenging, since in most states the three programs have separate data systems. Developing linkages and cooperation among staff is also difficult, as the programs have differing goals and are managed by various agencies and levels of government.

A number of states used a portion of their Significant Improvement Grant (SIG) to address coordination, particularly linkages among data systems. The main improvements made were:

- ***Improving the Link Between Identification of WPRS-Eligible Claimants and the Call-In for Local Office Services.*** Maryland addressed this by developing a new local-office-based WPRS data system that made implementation of local office operations easier, thereby reducing the time between the initial claim and delivery of reemployment services. Washington made similar improvements to its system prior to the SIG and considered further changes but put those plans on hold pending development of a new one-stop operating system.
- ***Improving the Link from Service Delivery to UI Adjudication.*** Recent implementation of remote initial claims taking has provided an impetus for improving this link in the WPRS system, since adjudicators no longer work in local offices. Several states improved this link in the WPRS system by developing electronic forms of communication to replace manual systems.
- ***Enhancing Reemployment Service Delivery and Performance Monitoring.*** The SIG states used several approaches to achieve this objective.
 - ***Improving Links Among Data Systems and Providing Wider Access to Multiple Data Systems.*** Linking data systems also reduces the need to enter data in more than one system. Several states worked on these improvements to enable staff in different programs to cross-reference services and benefits their clients receive from other programs.
 - ***Creating Local Office Claimant-Level Reports.*** Alaska, Louisiana, and South Carolina created additional claimant-level reports to enable local offices to better monitor and manage their workloads, identify claimants who need

follow-up calls to offer additional services, or to record information on obtained employment.

- ***Creating Local Office Summary Reports.*** Alaska, South Carolina, and Washington created summary reports to measure and monitor performance. Washington developed links among separate data systems so that cross-program measures could be used.

Several SIG states also took steps to improve coordination among programs and cooperation between central and local office staff. Several of the data system changes mentioned were designed to improve coordination. States used cross-office training sessions to standardize the delivery of services, and Alaska took advantage of these sessions to build relationships among staff from different agencies. That state used annual statewide conferences and monthly teleconferences as forums for various agencies to describe their programs to WPRS staff, with the goal of promoting referrals for profiled claimants. Finally, South Carolina used its SIG to fund field coordinators to improve communication between the central office and the local offices throughout the state.

A. STRENGTHENING DATA SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT WPRS OPERATIONS

Successful operation of WPRS systems requires that data from UI, ES, and sometimes WIA programs be linked and used at various stages to track claimants' progress through the system. Initially, data collected during the UI claims process and, in some cases, ES registration, are used to create lists of WPRS-eligible claimants and calculate a score that shows the probability of exhausting benefits. Then either central or local office staff use this information to call claimants in for WPRS services. In most SIG states, local offices used the lists to select the people they wanted to call in and the central office mailed the letters. Whether or not they call in claimants themselves, local office staff, who are typically ES staff, need to know who these people are. When claimants report for services, the fact that they reported, and the data about what

reemployment services they received, are recorded. Information on service plans is also usually recorded, particularly when these services become mandatory as part of WPRS. Information on which claimants did not report is then used to reschedule no-shows or inform UI adjudicators. Most of the SIG states had clear rules about the number of times a claimant could be rescheduled (usually once) before a no-show was reported to UI. ES, WIA, and UI may also share information on service receipt to facilitate service delivery across programs.

In their initial implementation of WPRS systems, states addressed in several ways the need to develop tracking systems for WPRS (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b). About one-third of the states developed new Management Information Systems specifically for WPRS, although these typically required some modification of existing systems. Most of the other states modified existing systems, most often the ES system. Two states incorporated WPRS into new systems they were developing. Regardless of the approach adopted, a new system or a modification of an existing one, the degree to which the WPRS system was linked to existing UI, ES, or WIA data systems varied substantially.¹ The systems of some states were linked; others were not. When they were not, data were entered into multiple systems or transferred among programs manually, on paper forms or lists. Sometimes data were not transferred completely, which left programs without information that could help the claimants in their job search.

Some SIG states used their grant funds to improve their WPRS data systems. The impetus for doing so came partly from a desire, based on experience, to improve the initial system and partly from two external changes that have affected WPRS operations.

¹During implementation of the SIG, states were implementing the WIA, which replaced the Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance (EDWAA) that had previously provided help to dislocated workers.

First, a number of SIG states had recently converted or were converting their UI systems from local office, in-person contact with claimants for initial claims-filing and adjudications to contact by telephone, mail, or Internet.² Because of this conversion, adjudicators were no longer stationed in local offices. Systems that relied on the manual transmission of information from the ES service delivery staff to UI staff about claimants who did not report for services were no longer usable, and another means of transmitting data had to be found. By the end of the SIG period, most states were using a computer-based system to report to UI.

Second, states have been implementing the WIA, which has entailed setting up one-stop career centers that generally include both ES and WIA staff, as well as UI staff in cases where a local office presence is maintained. In some states, new data systems are being developed for the one-stops. In the states we visited, these new systems were typically still in initial development. The likely development of new systems affected whether states decided to improve existing systems that would eventually be part of the new ones.

1. Strengthening the Profiling/Call-In Link—The Experiences of Maryland and Washington

As mentioned earlier, the WPRS system process initially involves three steps: (1) computation of a profiling score for claimants receiving a first payment or, in some states, filing an initial claim; (2) ranking claimants by profiling score for each local office; and (3) selecting claimants to call in and send a letter or notice. The first two steps are done in the central office, while the third is done in the central office in some states and in local offices in

²Most states have used mail or telephone for continued claims for some time.

others.³ Regardless of how the third step is done, information on who has been called in or information to do the call-ins must be transferred from the central office to local offices.⁴

In most SIG states, this process appeared to run smoothly, but two used their grant to improve the system. Before receiving the SIG, Maryland was using a process developed when they initially implemented their WPRS system in 1994. In it, the state mainframe computed the profiling score, selected claimants who had scores above a certain threshold and were deemed eligible for WPRS, and ranked these claimants by score for each local office. Local offices then produced weekly printouts of their lists and called in as many claimants as site capacity would allow.⁵ The mainframe could have generated call-in letters, but the process was difficult, so staff sent the letters out manually, using labels printed by the mainframe. Monitoring compliance, rescheduling, and reporting to UI was also done manually (see further details below).

Maryland used part of its SIG grant to make local office operations more automated and to speed service delivery. The new system continues to use the mainframe for the initial steps in the process; but, once the local office lists are obtained, the files are transferred to a server for a PC-based system in the local offices. The local offices use this system and its Microsoft Access and Word software to look at the weekly list, decide whom to call in, print out customized letters, reschedule claimants who called to report schedule conflicts, record attendance at the

³When this step is done centrally, the local offices usually determine the number of claimants to call in.

⁴As discussed in Chapter II, some states also have developed non-WPRS workshops designed to bring UI claimants into the one-stops at the beginning of their claims or throughout their claims. Particularly in states that have switched to the remote filing of UI initial claims, these brief workshops are intended to introduce UI claimants to the services available at the one-stops and to encourage their use of ES and other program services.

⁵Claimants are called in to attend a two-day job-search workshop, which is the cornerstone of the Maryland WPRS system.

workshop, reschedule no-shows, and send a notice to UI for each claimant who does not attend. The system can also be used to send letters, tailored as needed, to claimants for a follow-up appointment. The state improved this system further to provide local offices with lists of new initial claims so that they can call new claimants in for an orientation session. All claimants, not just those selected for WPRS, are invited to these sessions. Their participation is voluntary.

The other SIG state that considered strengthening the profiling/call-in link is Washington. Like the Maryland system, the Washington system initially generated lists of claimants through the state mainframe; but having the system send out letters was difficult. That system was upgraded prior to the SIG so that it sent the local office lists through the intranet, better enabling local offices to generate customized mail-merged call-in letters. A further refinement was planned as part of the SIG, namely, to use the intranet to schedule claimants automatically for one-on-one staff time slots and group workshops (an idea popular with local office staff, since it would save them considerable time). The team working on the automated scheduler identified several key features for the system to meet staff and client needs. Staff users would be able to schedule individuals for appointments, schedule groups for a single appointment, view the names of people scheduled, change or cancel appointments, schedule appointments that would occur at other locations, and compose additional activities. The automatic scheduler would notify users electronically that appointments were scheduled; notify individuals of a scheduled appointment; interface with other systems; sort data so that groups of people could be scheduled for appointments; provide reports on who was scheduled for appointments, and when and where those appointments would be; and notify users of potential scheduling conflicts. Last, staff wanted the system to be flexible enough to allow easy modification and easy for staff to learn.

Ultimately, however, the state decided to put further work on the automated scheduler on hold, because a new operating system for one-stops is being developed, and it is expected to have

a scheduling feature. The requirements for the scheduling system, developed as part of the SIG activities, were passed along to the team designing the new one-stop operating system.

2. Strengthening the Link from the Service Delivery System to the UI System— Maryland, Minnesota, and Alaska

Under WPRS systems, information on whether claimants respond to call-in notices and participate in mandatory WPRS services is to be reported to the UI system. UI adjudicators are then expected to contact claimants who did not respond and determine whether they should be denied benefits for failing to report or potentially for another “continuing eligibility” reason.⁶

In some states, reporting no-shows to the UI system occurs after only one call-in notice, but in many states, service delivery staff attempt to reschedule no-shows at least once before contacting UI staff. Claimants who call in saying they cannot attend an orientation session are rescheduled. Staff may contact claimants who neither call nor show up for the orientation session and reschedule them without reporting their nonattendance to UI staff. If claimants continue to fail to attend, or the reasons they give suggest there might be a nonmonetary eligibility issue, UI staff are notified.

In a number of SIG states, the system used to notify UI staff of potential issues was neither automatic nor electronic. Instead, staff would fill out a form and hand it to adjudication staff in their local office. This system continues to work fairly well in states that maintain UI staff in local offices, but states that are shifting or have shifted to having adjudicators in call centers have had to develop an alternative. Several SIG states addressed this issue.

As noted, Maryland improved its local office system for WPRS by developing a computer system that would send a notice electronically to UI staff when claimants did not attend a

⁶Generally, UI claimants must meet “continuing eligibility requirements”: they must be able and available to work to remain eligible to collect UI benefits.

scheduled WPRS workshop. Under the old system, a hard-copy form was used, but since Maryland implemented a UI call center system in which initial claims, continued claims, and adjudications are done by telephone, the old manual system of reporting no-shows to the UI system had to be replaced.

Minnesota also faced a similar problem since it changed its UI system from in-person filing to one in which about one-half of initial claims are filed by mail and the rest by telephone or through the Internet.⁷ Adjudication staff no longer work in local offices, so local office service delivery staff entered into the UI system the information on whether claimants attended an orientation session when called in. However, unless they were told explicitly, the adjudicators did not know which claims to investigate. The state addressed this by developing a system that allows staff to record information on no-shows and then e-mail it to an adjudicator.⁸ Local office staff use a screen in their data system to record a standard set of information on claimants who need adjudication, including what they have learned about the reasons for not reporting. This information is then e-mailed to one of the call centers, and tracked by social security number; then an adjudicator makes a nonmonetary eligibility determination.

⁷Claimants can pick up initial claims forms in local offices and fill them out. Local office staff then mail the forms to the call centers.

⁸To ensure equitable treatment of claimants throughout the state, Minnesota also standardized its policy on the number of times claimants are called in for an orientation session before adjudication is to occur. Minnesota's policy on referrals to profiling services is as follows: Claimants who are required to participate in services are called in twice. If they fail to show up for a workshop, they are referred to adjudication and may lose benefits. Regardless of the outcome of the adjudication, the claimant is scheduled a third time for a workshop once the record of the second no-show is entered into the computer. If they do not show for the third time, they again are referred to adjudication and may lose benefits. In contrast, claimants whose scores are below the threshold for required services are invited once to an orientation. Because their participation is voluntary, they are not referred to adjudication if they do not show up.

Finally, Alaska's switch to call centers also required a data system change to improve coordination. In that state, ES staff who provide services to profiling claimants record no-shows for mandatory WPRS activities in a joint UI/ES data system that automatically generates a request that the claimant call an ES representative to reschedule, and the claim is stopped until the claimant does so. If the missed activity is rescheduled within seven days, the claim is paid; otherwise, it is adjudicated. ES staff used to have the responsibility for following up in these cases, since they were the ones calling or being called to reschedule. However, there was confusion in cases where claimants called UI staff about the issue, or a new UI staff member unfamiliar with the procedures would initiate his or her own fact-finding activity, not realizing that the matter was related to profiling. This confusion became more apparent once Alaska changed to call centers and UI staff no longer worked in local offices. The state responded to this situation in March 2000 by assigning UI staff the responsibility for adjudication of these issues. This switch required changes in the data system to mark cases with WPRS issues more clearly for both UI and ES staff. Alaska created separate printouts of claimants with WPRS issues, by call center instead of by local office, to facilitate UI adjudication. They also added a flag that appears in several case management screens to alert ES staff of the claimant's status and need to be rescheduled for services.⁹ Lastly, they developed a communication system in which ES staff e-mail questions and information regarding WPRS to a general UI account. UI supervisors then review and distribute these e-mails to appropriate UI staff.

The switch in responsibility for adjudicating WPRS issues improved the efficiency of this process for both UI and ES. The roles of staff became more clearly defined and allowed them to

⁹The following have a new flag or message that identifies claimants with outstanding profiling issues: the daily calendar, the client services and appointment screen, the reschedule appointment screen, the client list, and the scheduled services screen.

focus on their area of expertise. ES staff now can concentrate solely on helping clients get back to work, without the potential conflict of having to enforce UI benefits eligibility requirements. Generally, ES staff found the e-mail system to be an efficient way to communicate information to UI about WPRS issues. The change also allowed UI staff to ensure consistency in adjudicating them. The state's training of UI staff on WPRS objectives and ES resources helped them understand their role in the overall UI and reemployment services delivery system.

To improve UI-ES coordination further, the state has added an ES staff member at call centers that serve large areas of the state.¹⁰ These staff will have two main goals. First, they are to keep UI staff informed about ES activities, layoffs, and plant closures in their call center area, where they also are to serve as liaisons to the ES local offices. Second, they are to reach out to all claimants who are interested in receiving information on ES. These efforts are likely to reach a broad spectrum of people who typically have not used ES resources. People who are not profiled or are not eligible for UI, particularly seasonal workers in the seafood and travel industries, would be targeted. In some cases, the ES staff might provide direct services and referrals to a local Job Center or to social service resources.

3. Improving Data Systems to Enhance Service Delivery and Performance Monitoring

In addition to addressing the two main links between agencies that are part of WPRS systems (that is, the initial link between UI and the local service delivery system [ES and WIA] and the link from the service delivery system to UI adjudication), several states planned to use the SIG to improve data systems to enhance service delivery or monitoring of service delivery.

¹⁰The state funded these positions with the reemployment service funds available after the end of the SIG period.

In several cases, states would either develop links among data systems or provide wider access to multiple data systems, including UI, ES, WIA, and, when they have access to them, separate WPRS data systems. A main motivation for developing links or providing wider access is to enable staff in different programs to cross-reference services or benefits their clients are receiving from other programs. Another motivation is to avoid duplicate efforts for entering data in more than one system.

For example, Minnesota incorporated WPRS functions into its UI data system, and, as a result, information on whether claimants attend orientation and on the services they receive can be entered into it. These data are transferred to the Workforce Information System (WINS), which ES uses to record registration information, service plans, and service receipt. Service data that are entered directly into the WINS, however, are not transferred to the UI system. One complication to this is that, because of concerns about confidentiality, ES does not require customers to provide social security numbers, since both staff and customers can access this system. Although the state would like to have these data in both data systems so that they are easily accessible to all staff, it has not made this change, since it is developing for its one-stops a new system that would replace WINS. This new system will probably not be able to overcome problems in the transfer of ES information when social security numbers are unavailable.

Two other SIG states (California and Maryland) would like to provide better data access among programs, but first they have to work out data-sharing and confidentiality agreements among agencies. There seems to be little problem sharing data between UI and ES, but sharing data from these systems with other one-stop partners, which are varied and include nongovernmental entities, can be problematic. In fact, Maryland law prohibits sharing UI data with such entities.

Other states appear to have few problems in sharing data. For example, North Carolina's ES data system is accessible on a read-only basis to WIA program staff and to staff in the state's human services agency. Louisiana also shares data among programs, and, in fact, its systems are highly integrated. The UI, ES, and WIA databases are linked to the WPRS master file. Entries in the program databases are transferred automatically to the WPRS file, and vice versa. For example, activities such as filing an initial claim, receiving a first payment, scheduling for an orientation session, enrolling in reemployment services, and completing service participation are entered into the agency-specific databases and transferred to the WPRS master file, which then sends that information to the databases of other agencies. The WPRS data system is accessible to staff in ES/UI and WIA local offices (these are currently being colocated and turned into one-stop centers). Separate from its SIG efforts, Alaska is developing, for use by all Job Center agencies, a common intake form that includes 13 common elements asked of clients in all programs: ES, UI, Job Training, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Public Assistance. Because this system would allow the sharing of this basic information, staff from other agencies could view some ES and UI data and save time during the intake process after a referral.

Three of the states (Alaska, Louisiana, and South Carolina) used part of their SIG or other funds to increase their ability to provide services by improving the reports available to local service deliverers. Alaska's WPRS staff worked with Job Training staff to develop, from the Job Training system, a report that identifies claimants in training programs. This report allows local staff to identify and record which WPRS participants enrolled in and completed training, thereby improving information on claimants' participation in services. Louisiana developed several

reports for local office staff to determine who needs a follow-up call to communicate information about additional services or to gather information on obtained employment.¹¹

These reports list:

- Claimants who received services recently without obtaining employment
- Claimants with job referrals and claimants who were no-shows for required WPRS activities
- Claimants who attended workshops

South Carolina developed several reports to help local office staff manage and monitor workloads and determine who needs follow-up calls. These reports contain:

- A list of claimants who filed for UI benefits each day
- A claimant status report showing the initial claim date, profiling score, WPRS activities, referrals, whether claimant was placed in employment, and the last UI claim date
- A list of claimants who are continuing to receive UI benefits

South Carolina also added a local-office-level report that shows the number of claimants selected for WPRS, attending orientation, completing an eligibility review, placed, and obtaining employment. Despite the flexibility that these reports offer for tracking claimants' activities, local office staff did not use them as much as had been envisioned, because of strains on staff resulting from heavy workloads, changes in staff, and other changes to the reemployment service delivery system. Some of the most experienced staff also may have been resistant to change in the procedures they had been using to manage and monitor their clients.

¹¹Some of these reports had been available but were lost when the state converted its system to address Y2K issues.

Both Alaska and West Virginia used some of their SIG funding to identify and correct problems in the processing of the 9048 and 9049 reports. West Virginia had been losing information recorded by some local office staff, which made levels of service delivery appear lower than they actually were. The state now believes the quality and consistency of the data to be much higher. Alaska clarified data definitions for these reports and carefully documented the specifications for future reference.

Alaska also improved the reports to provide more feedback to state and local staff. On the 9048 report, the state added tabulations by the number of transactions (in addition to the number of individuals, as federally required) for referrals to jobs, job placements, obtained employment, services provided, and clients excused because they found employment before they received their first service. On the 9049 report, the state created four new versions of the report, in addition to the federally required one. These reports are restricted to claimants who “first received reemployment services” rather than those who were “first referred to reemployment services.” By looking at the experiences of these claimants, state staff hope to gain insight into WPRS participation patterns and employment outcomes. This report is tabulated with two sets of data: (1) the seven quarters of data, and, (2) five quarters of data where only the first section of the report is tabulated. The reports on five quarters are intended to provide staff with more timely feedback. These two versions of the report are run separately for (1) claimants who were laid off, and (2) claimants who quit or were discharged.

In addition, all reports and their data specifications are accessible to Alaska’s staff through the department’s intranet. These reports are available through the local office and are intended to

guide managers in determining expectations for service levels.¹² The WPRS coordinator, by explaining how the reports capture data and how the data are used, conveyed to local WPRS staff the importance of entering data properly. In addition, the state is conducting computer systems training for all ES staff to reinforce these lessons.

Finally, Washington used some of its SIG funds to continue development of a data-warehousing project that would bring together data from the UI, ES, and WIA systems with the goal of using the data for monitoring performance at the local office and state levels. Part of the goal is to encourage staff in different programs to think outside their own programs and to use cross-program data for analysis and performance measurement.

The prototype online, interactive, Web-based system (the “Management Decision System”) builds on the 9048 and 9049 reports but is more sophisticated. For example, a monthly cohort can be tracked by key WPRS measures (numbers profiled, put in the selection pool, referred for services, exempted, and so on), as well as the services they received. Also available for the cohort are demographic information (such as sex, race/ethnicity, and education) and UI program characteristics (such as weeks of benefits collected), pre- and post-UI earnings, and pre- and post-UI industry and occupation, as well as changes in some of these measures. Detailed information on reasons claimants are screened out of profiling and a distribution of claimants by score are available. The data can be split into subgroups for a more detailed analysis (such as on subgroups based on profiling status).

The data also have been used for some special analyses that have helped show the usefulness of the concept. Washington has also instituted various performance measures that include a “percent of UI benefits” measure that is reported for workshop participants. Hence, this measure

¹²This effort is part of a statewide movement toward creating performance measures and

is constructed from both UI and ES data. Other important ways in which the Management Decision System has been used are to gauge the effectiveness of workshops, examine workshop show rates, and develop forecasts on dislocated workers for budgeting purposes.

Developing this project has involved the need to resolve both technical and political issues. Technical issues included the need to coordinate calendars of activities and standardize data definitions. Coordinating calendars is necessary, since UI operates and uses reports on a weekly basis, ES reports monthly, and WIA training is reported quarterly. Standardizing data definitions includes the development of a common data dictionary.

Two of the political issues are the need to procure agreement from each program to initiate participation and the need to show the usefulness of the concept. In the Washington case, one agency was at first uninterested and concerned about confidentiality, but the issues were resolved.

The long-term usefulness of this system will depend on the amount of interaction between program staff and analytic/information staff and these staff's understanding of important policy questions. Specifically, the greatly increased access to data through the data warehouse will allow management staff to ask questions more sophisticated than they could before. However, they may have to be trained to identify important measures for managing their programs. For example, management may want to focus on the number of claimants who are sent orientation notification letters and the show rate for workshops, rather than simply the number of claimants who get profiling scores. Similarly, management may want to examine the extent to which "capacity" in a local office to provide WPRS activities can or should be changed, such as by increasing the number of orientation workshops that the office holds. However, the ability to do

(continued)
program expectations.

so will depend on other constraints at the local office level, such as agreements that reemployment services staff have with other one-stop partners concerning room use. Generally, the greater capacity for monitoring suggests that management decisions may have to be more centralized.

These types of data-linking and activity reports help reduce the amount of time local office staff need to spend on data entry and tracking activities, and increase the time they can spend on service delivery. They also monitor program performance and, more generally, further the one-stop concept of seamless delivery of services.

B. IMPROVING COORDINATION AMONG AGENCIES AND OFFICES

To be successful, WPRS systems require cooperation among staff from the three programs—UI, ES, and WIA—and between staff from central and local offices. Complicating this is the fact that these programs generally are managed separately, sometimes in different units of a single agency, and in some cases, in units in more than one agency. In addition, the local offices that provide services to WPRS claimants report to one manager, and the central office units that provide overall guidance and operate the profiling model report to another manager.

In our visits to the SIG states, some staff mentioned that there was tension among these various actors. Some of that tension reflects differences in the missions of the various agencies and programs, some reflects the fact that there is no separate funding stream for WPRS operations, and some reflects the fact that one program may be the lead WPRS program, while the other programs treat WPRS as of secondary importance. Tension can undermine efforts to ensure that WPRS policies are implemented consistently and comprehensively.

Several SIG states tried to improve coordination across agencies and offices. The data system enhancements discussed earlier in this chapter are designed partly to improve coordination, as are the cross-office training sessions discussed in Chapter III; however, they

were often also intended primarily to standardize the delivery of WPRS services, particularly orientation and job search workshops.

Alaska was one of the states that conducted cross-office sessions to standardize the delivery of services and to facilitate sharing of materials; but the state also viewed the sessions as an opportunity to build relationships among local office staff from different agencies. Staff from several agencies participated in the two statewide conferences held by the state and in monthly teleconferences. For example, staff from Vocational Rehabilitation gave case management training at one of the conferences, and Veterans Administration staff were included in order to assume case management responsibility for veterans in WPRS. Staff from Trade Adjustment Assistance, WIA, and the state's own job training program (State Training and Employment Program) made presentations to increase staff awareness of these programs, thereby increasing referrals of profiled claimants. In addition to the conferences, Alaska's WPRS coordinator visited all local offices during the SIG grant period, to help with front-line program staff in developing relationships among staff and reinforcing the standardization goals of the conferences.

One SIG state, South Carolina, used part of its grant to improve communication and coordination between the central office and the local offices. They created two new field coordinator positions to act as liaisons between the central office and the local offices and to help local offices manage their workloads, address program issues, and monitor local office procedures. The coordinators made technical assistance visits to the local offices and provided guidance on procedures (such as for selecting and exempting profiled claimants), requirements for reemployment workshops, eligibility reviews, and ongoing reemployment services. Over the course of the grant period, they shifted from frequent in-person visits to local offices to contact

by telephone. Prior to the SIG, this type of technical assistance was not provided consistently or adequately to local offices.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The 11 Significant Improvement Grant (SIG) states used their grant money in a wide variety of ways to improve their Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) systems. The approaches states took reflected their assessments of the weaknesses in their profiling and service delivery system, available resources to accomplish the proposed improvements, and possibly even broader, systemwide objectives. Some activities were one-time investments to make structural improvements in how the WPRS system operated; others, such as adding staff to underserved areas, temporarily addressed problems that required changes broader than the SIG funds could accomplish. Because each state planned different activities and faced different implementation challenges, the SIG experience of each state is unique.

In this chapter, we draw conclusions about the experiences of the SIG states in revising their WPRS systems and suggest implications for policy. In Section A, we summarize whether states accomplished their original objectives and why they may have deviated from their plans.¹ When several states attempted similar activities, we examine cross-state experiences to assess how specific features of WPRS systems and the proposed SIG activities help to explain the differences and similarities found in implementation experiences and outcomes achieved across the 11 SIG states. We also identify areas in which additional effort may be needed to strengthen the WPRS system. In Section B, we discuss ways in which the information we obtained during our in-depth analysis of the SIG states can provide insights on the operations of WPRS systems nationally, the strengths and weaknesses of these systems, and potential trade-offs in achieving

¹Appendix B provides brief descriptions of SIG activities that were highly successful or innovative, as well as contact information for a state staff person who can provide more details on the implementation process.

WPRS goals. Finally in Section C, we identify patterns across states as they implemented WIA and integrated WPRS activities in their one-stop environments.

A. IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES

In this section, we review states' SIG goals and document whether states were successful in their efforts. Because of the breadth of activities that states undertook, we categorize the activities into three groups: (1) the profiling model and claimant selection, (2) service delivery, and (3) data systems and operational linkages. We also categorize the degree to which states implemented their plans as (1) full [I], (2) partial [P], and (3) no implementation [N]. Because of the complexity of states' activities, this single metric of implementation outcomes is inherently subjective. We therefore provide brief notes to accompany our assessment of the states' outcomes, and we refer the reader to the earlier chapters for more detail.²

Throughout this discussion, it is important to remember several points, particularly for states that did not achieve full implementation of their SIG activities. First, most SIG activities are not, in fact, directly comparable across states. Some states chose very ambitious activities, which may be inherently more complicated and difficult to implement than those of other states, even when they appear similar at first glance.

Second, states may have gathered additional information in the midst of their efforts and reassessed their proposed course of action. In some instances, changes required approval from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and a modification to the conditions of the grant; states that requested and received this approval may have been responding to information that was not

²Appendix A discusses an analysis of the effects of SIG activities on quantitative outcomes such as UI durations, exhaustion rates, and receipt of reemployment services. This analysis is limited because of the data that are available and the influence of other factors, such as changes in the economy over time, on outcomes.

realistically available at the time their SIG proposal was written. From a policy perspective, adapting to this new information is more appropriate than pursuing a strategy exclusively for the sake of completing a proposed task. Therefore, measures of whether or not a state achieved its originally proposed goals may not be as useful as a broad-based assessment of whether the SIG funds were used to improve the WPRS system.

Third, because of logistical or operational challenges, a state may have been unable to achieve an outcome during the SIG period, but it may still realistically expect to accomplish that goal in the future. Both new information about the appropriateness of a goal and barriers to achieving one or more parts of it may have led a state to modify its original plans.

Ultimately, we are confident that information about which SIG activities were most likely to be accomplished, why states revised some of their plans, and why they may have been unable to accomplish their goals can inform federal and state decision making. The lessons learned by SIG states that encountered operational or logistical barriers and adapted their objectives to respond to new information can provide insights for other states that are considering similar improvements to their WPRS systems.

1. The Profiling Model and Claimant Selection

As was documented in Chapter II, SIG activities to improve the model to identify and select claimants better can be grouped into three categories: (1) changing the timing of call-ins of claimants at high risk of benefit exhaustion for services, (2) expanding the pool of WPRS eligibles, and (3) improving the claimant selection process (Table V.1).

TABLE V.1

IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES OF SIG ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE PROFILING MODEL

State	Activity	Outcome ^a	Notes
South Carolina	Conduct profiling after the initial claim	I	Revised the way that claimants were sorted on the call-in lists to minimize confusion caused by the call-in of claimants not eligible for benefits
Minnesota	Conduct profiling after the initial claim	I	Implemented in spring 2001
Alaska	Conduct profiling after the initial claim	N	Decided not to implement switch to profiling at initial claim because of concerns about staff workloads and potential problems handling claimants in denial periods
North Carolina	Provide intensive services to workers in the textile, apparel, and tobacco industries	I	Designed a system that is independent of WPRS
Washington	Include additional initial claimants in the selection pool	N	Efforts were suspended because of increased workloads and space constraints in local offices, and the development of procedures to solicit claimants to participate voluntarily in reemployment services
Louisiana	Improve the accuracy of the profiling model	I	Implemented new model at the end of March 2000
West Virginia	Improve the accuracy of the profiling model	I	Implemented in August 2001, shortly after the SIG period ended
Alaska	Increase accuracy of selection and referrals of WPRS-eligible claimants	I	Implementation began early in the SIG—in fall 1999. Began with training for UI Call Center staff, and later with data system checks
Alaska	Improve the accuracy of the profiling model	I	Implemented updated model and improved system for updating model in spring 2001
Maryland	Improve the accuracy of the profiling model	P	Updated the model but did not change its specification
New York	Improve the accuracy of the profiling model	P	Identified a preferred model but did not implement it during the grant period
Wisconsin	Improve the accuracy of the profiling model	P	Identified important changes to the model but did not implement all of them
South Carolina	Improve the accuracy of the profiling model	N	Chose not to develop substate profiling models, because of a lack of statistical variation across the state

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

^a “I” indicates full implementation. “P” indicates partial implementation. “N” indicates no implementation.

a. Changing the Timing of Call-Ins of Claimants at High Risk of Benefit Exhaustion for Services

A goal of changing profiling from at first payment to at initial claim is to provide services to likely exhaustees earlier in their UI claim periods. From the experiences of the SIG states, we conclude that profiling at initial claim is usually technically feasible and can accomplish its goal of earlier intervention. Two of the three states that had proposed to make this switch (Minnesota and South Carolina) did so and were generally satisfied that they had become better able to meet the goal of earlier provision of services. In contrast, because of difficulties in determining how to deal with claimants in denial periods and the potential for greatly increased staff workloads, Alaska decided against switching to profiling at initial claim.³ However, if Alaska had implemented initial-claim profiling the way Minnesota did, it may have been able to address some of its concerns about how claimants in denial periods would be handled. Minnesota now places claimants with nonmonetary eligibility issues in a separate file from which they either join the selection pool when they achieve eligibility or become excluded after a certain period.

However, states have mixed views on whether profiling at initial claim or at first payment is the better policy overall. Alaska's concerns about staff workloads were not unique, because the switch to initial-claim profiling may affect operational procedures and the ability to achieve other WPRS goals. For example, South Carolina encountered severe logistical problems caused by increased workloads and claimants' confusion about their eligibility for benefits. In addition, Washington is considering reversing its pre-SIG implementation of initial-claim profiling because of the increased workloads and reduced targeting on likely UI exhaustees. (See Section

³Alaska claimants who quit or were discharged from their work can collect benefits after a six-week denial period.

B.3 for further discussion of how the timing of profiling affects the UI trust fund and the targeting of reemployment services on high-risk claimants.)

b. Expanding the Pool of WPRS Eligibles

Several states expanded the pool of claimants who could receive WPRS services. Minnesota included claimants with potential durations of under 26 weeks, but this effort was not officially part of its SIG activities. Though the change complicated the model and increased the number of claimants on the call-in lists, it is likely in some ways to make Minnesota's WPRS system more like those of other states that historically have not excluded claimants with short potential durations. Louisiana and West Virginia reduced the threshold for serving claimants, which would lead to an increase in the number of claimants who could receive services from offices with the capacity to serve more. These changes were fairly straightforward to implement.

Washington also attempted to include in the WPRS process claimants who previously had been excluded. In many ways, Washington's plan to include claimants who file additional initial claims was extremely ambitious. Mechanisms to distinguish between additional and new initial claims and to calculate scores accordingly would have to be developed. Existing services might have to be modified or new ones designed to meet the unique needs of this group of claimants. Staff would need to determine priorities for serving new initial and additional claimants. In addition to these operational challenges, the state also faced concerns about the capacity of offices to serve these claimants, especially when the economy is weak and as different programs compete for space in one-stops.

A goal of Washington's efforts was, in the hopes of reducing UI benefit durations, to allow local offices to have more than one opportunity to invite claimants to participate in reemployment services. In the end, Washington was able to develop a simple alternative

solution to address some of the concerns of local office staff. Now given lists of all claimants, including additional initial claimants, these offices may solicit claimants to participate voluntarily in reemployment services. Thus, local office staff may strive to decrease the amount of benefits that these claimants receive, without the state's having to develop or modify a system to serve them.

c. Improving the Claimant Selection Process

Most states were able to update their profiling models, in large part because a single organization (usually, the UI agency) had the capacity to download and analyze the data and to implement changes. The states were also generally able to use the SIG to make future updates easier. The efforts to make future updates easier are likely to have long-term impacts by saving staff time in reestimating the model or implementing changes, or facilitating more frequent updates, so that claimants with the highest risk of benefit exhaustion are directed to reemployment services. However, as discussed more fully in Chapter II, some states had difficulty implementing a new model even when they officially "completed" the task. States were challenged in understanding how best to specify their models and correctly implement diagnostics tests. States that strive to improve their models may benefit from DOL assistance for the task.

Maryland, New York, and Wisconsin were unable to implement model changes within the SIG period. New York and Wisconsin identified an appropriate way to update the model but, because of programming constraints, could not do so in the allotted time. Likewise, Maryland encountered programming challenges that hindered its ability to add new variables to its model. However, these states are still optimistic about implementing model updates in the future.

South Carolina's plans to implement substate profiling models serves as a good example of responding to additional information gained through investigation early in the two-year SIG period. According to its SIG proposal, this state planned to develop substate models because staff had heard how a nearby state had improved the accuracy of its model. Upon further investigation, however, South Carolina decided that using substate models would not improve its ability to identify high-risk claimants. Although one type of model design may work well for one state, it may not be appropriate for another state, especially with the potential additional complexity in implementing and maintaining the changes.

2. Service Delivery

Every SIG state used at least some of its funds to improve reemployment services by, for example, (1) improving the workshop content or style and conducting related staff training, (2) strengthening the assessment process, (3) enhancing follow-up activities, (4) facilitating use of self-access resources by training claimants on how to use computers in the resource room or by increasing computer access, and (5) boosting service capacity. Many of these tasks are designed primarily to improve the quality or quantity of services delivered to claimants. States typically revised their workshops to describe new opportunities to access information (such as through the Internet) and services through the one-stop system and to emphasize experiential learning (such as through group exercises) so that claimants are more engaged in information sharing and skills development. Periodic updates to the workshops and assessments, as was done by many of the SIG states, are likely to provide ongoing beneficial effects on the quality of the services provided. Similarly, the investments in new software or equipment that some states made to expand one-stops' computerized resources are likely to benefit claimants and other one-stop customers beyond the two-year SIG period.

SIG states generally were able to achieve their proposed changes in service delivery (Table V.2). Once again, the ability of staff to control the resources needed to make these improvements probably played a key part. Central office staff who were directing the SIG efforts typically either had authority to implement changes and train local office staff about them or had well-established procedures to work with other staff who did have the authority. Although we could not ascertain the effects of these changes on claimant outcomes, most central and local staff expected the changes to help claimants with their job searches.

Although most states completed some or all of their proposed tasks, certain constraints may have prevented implementation to fullest potential. For example, though South Carolina was able to define its reemployment service objectives better throughout the UI claim spell, it encountered difficulties implementing this intensive service strategy without increased resources. Minnesota's implementation of its assessment took longer than the two-year grant period, because its design was based on analysis of data collected on a sample of claimants selected early in the SIG period and followed through their benefit years.

Both California and Washington encountered implementation challenges as central office staff learned more about the priorities and perspectives of local office staff. For example California successfully developed and pilot-tested an Internet module to be included in its orientation workshop. However, the state's evaluators found widespread variation in how local office staff taught it, concluding that the integrity with which the workshop leaders presented the material was determined by their expertise and comfort level with the Internet. Efforts to train staff on new technology and computer software may need to be more comprehensive to ensure that claimants receive the appropriate information. In the early part of the grant period, Washington developed an electronic assessment tool, but central office staff found that local office staff preferred to use a paper version as marketing for workshops. As a result, the planned

TABLE V.2
IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES OF SIG ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY

State	Activity	Outcome ^a	Notes
Louisiana	Improve training and materials for workshop facilitators	I	New materials developed and distributed at regional trainings in fall 2000
Maryland	Develop and implement a new job search workshop manual	I	A draft was developed by September 2000, tested in seven pilot offices, revised, and then implemented in all offices in May 2001
South Carolina	Increase frontline WPRS staff training	I	Conducted training sessions for WPRS staff early in the SIG period
Wisconsin	Improve the breadth and content of reemployment services	I	Staff in local offices receiving SIG funds updated existing workshops and developed new ones
New York	Conduct training sessions of WPRS providers in local offices	I	Conducted at the end of the grant period, in May and June 2001
Alaska	Increase materials and resources for claimants and facilitators	I	Distributed the material in spring 2001. This activity was a modification to SIG plans and was done in place of a data system linkage with job training
Minnesota	Develop a comprehensive assessment tool	P	The assessment tool was designed but not implemented by end of the grant period
Washington	Develop a new assessment tool	P	The assessment tool is handed out during orientation workshops but the data are not electronically entered
New York	Distribute career exploration tools	I	Distributed to local offices in spring 2001, by the end of the grant period
South Carolina	Provide more defined reemployment service objectives	I	Developed framework for services throughout claim spell but focused efforts on the period early in claim spells
South Carolina	Strengthen follow-up services	I	Provided SIG-funded caseworkers to work with a subgroup of claimants with high WPRS scores
North Carolina	Provide intensive services to workers in the textile, apparel, and tobacco industries	I	Provided claimants in these industries with an orientation session, a job search workshop, and meetings with staff members throughout the claim spell to discuss their job search activities and to receive job referrals and job development

TABLE V.2 (continued)

State	Activity	Outcome ^a	Notes
Wisconsin	Implement follow-up efforts	I	Implemented, in two local offices, follow-up calls to remind claimants of reemployment services. Decided to discontinue these efforts after the SIG period
California	Develop an Internet module for orientation workshop	I	Integrity to module varied across 12 pilot sites
Louisiana	Increase computer-based resources for profiled claimants	I	Around December 2000, many offices in the state received computers and printers for Internet access
Louisiana	Increase use of America's Job Bank (AJB)	I	Developed and distributed a CD on using AJB to local offices; unclear if this is being used
Wisconsin	Increase number of claimants receiving WPRS services	I	Provided SIG-funded staff in areas that have been historically underserved
West Virginia	Increase number of claimants receiving WPRS services	I	Provided SIG-funded staff in areas that have been historically underserved

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

^a-"I" indicates full implementation. "P" indicates partial implementation. "N" indicates no implementation.

automation and data-capturing capabilities were not implemented. Both states benefited from observing how local office staff used the SIG-funded changes during a pilot-testing period, before the states tried statewide implementation of the proposed changes.

3. Data Systems

Several states intended to use grant money to improve WPRS data linkages and tracking systems, as well as overall coordination between WPRS partners (Table V.3). The impetus for these improvements came from a desire both to improve their systems based on experience and to respond to changes in reemployment service delivery resulting from remote initial claims (RIC) filing and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) implementation. These types of activities often were designed to (1) save staff time by avoiding duplicate data entry; (2) encourage standardization and consistency in WPRS procedures, including linkages between offices and agencies; and (3) improve policy/management decision making through use of performance measures or other data analysis.

The states that were most likely to succeed in improving interagency coordination either controlled the resources to implement the changes or were able to offer benefits to the other agencies with whom a good working relationship was necessary. For example, Alaska and South Carolina were able to strengthen coordination between the central and local offices through the provision of information-sharing opportunities (in Alaska's case, teleconferences involving many staff; in South Carolina's case, staff whose jobs were to provide technical assistance and feedback to local office staff).

More common, however, was that difficulties in implementing data system changes arose because WPRS operates as part of a broader program environment. Four states (Maryland, Minnesota, New York, and Washington) made a list of ways to improve tracking systems but,

TABLE V.3
IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES OF SIG ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE DATA SYSTEMS AND OPERATIONAL LINKAGES

State	Activity	Outcome ^a	Notes
Alaska	Clarify responsibilities and procedures for claimants who do not show up for WPRS reemployment services	I	Implementation began early in the SIG—in fall 1999. Began with training for UI Call Center staff, and then later with data system changes
Alaska	Coordinate within and across programs	I	Conducted teleconferences and yearly workshops starting in fall 1999. The teleconferences will continue post-SIG
Alaska	Improve tracking and outcomes information	I	Completed in spring 2001, just before the end of the grant period
Louisiana	Redesign existing and create new data reports	I	Implemented by December 2000
Maryland	Improve tracking and scheduling system	P	Implemented part of new system; some features waiting until one-stop system developed
Minnesota	Improve communication between call centers and local offices	I	Developed and implemented a standard form that can be e-mailed to call centers when a claimant does not participate in WPRS services
South Carolina	Develop better tracking systems	I	Created several reports to be used to identify claimants who need follow-up services
South Carolina	Implement regular field monitoring and tech assistance	I	Provided two field coordinators during the SIG period
West Virginia	Identify and correct problems in the WPRS reporting process	I	Corrected data problems with the 9048 and 9049 reports
Minnesota	Develop data transfer capabilities between UI and ES databases	P	Some data are now moved from the UI system to the JS system, but JS data are not transferred back to UI, because of confidentiality concerns and because JS customers are not required to give their social security numbers
New York	Identify data system improvements	P	Identified needed improvements, but most of them were not implemented
Washington	Integrate data systems	P	SIG plans were part of an ongoing effort begun prior to the SIG and expected to continue afterwards
Washington	Develop an Internet-based scheduling system	P	System requirements developed under SIG will be implemented as part of broader changes to one-stop operating system

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

^a“I” indicates full implementation. “P” indicates partial implementation. “N” indicates no implementation.

because the WPRS computer systems are part of a larger system that is undergoing changes over several years, decided against implementing at least one piece of the improvements.

Both DOL (when funding initiatives) and states (when considering improvements) may want to decide whether it is worthwhile to make temporary “patches” to a system that is to be replaced in a few years. Whether or not a state should proceed with changes will depend on, among other things, the importance of the planned improvement, the cost of making the changes, the degree to which the effort will be transferable, and the schedule for implementation of the new system. Because of the magnitude and complexity of one-stop computer systems, it is unlikely that staff designing WPRS system improvements will be able to play a major role in setting the schedule or many of the parameters for the system overhaul. The SIG states that delayed or decided against making planned improvements expected to be able to use their SIG activities as part of larger modification efforts, but states should try to avoid duplicating efforts or expending resources on the planning of modifications that are unlikely to be implemented quickly.

B. INFERENCES ABOUT WPRS SYSTEMS NATIONWIDE

Because the 11 SIG states applied for and were granted funds to improve their reemployment service systems, they are not a random sample of states nationwide. In addition, these systems were in flux during our observation period, because of both the SIG efforts and other changes to the UI and reemployment service systems. However, many of the changes the 11 SIG states underwent during the two-year SIG period are similar to those that other states have encountered or will encounter as they update their WPRS systems to reflect the changing needs of claimants and the UI and reemployment service environments.

Collectively, therefore, these states represent a range of different strategies for operating WPRS systems, and their systems are probably typical of those of other states. To this extent, our in-depth analysis of the experiences of the SIG states can be used to identify several broad

patterns about WPRS systems nationwide. These states can serve as examples for policymakers to draw general lessons about the spectrum of WPRS activities, likely strengths and weaknesses, and promising practices.

In this section, we discuss key components of WPRS and how patterns found across the SIG states describe challenges that states face implementing WPRS objectives. We also discuss the trade-offs states must make as they strive to meet different WPRS objectives. Where appropriate, we provide insights about how recent changes in the UI and reemployment service delivery system may affect WPRS.

1. Components and Goals of WPRS Systems

A well-designed WPRS system is expected to have several characteristics:

- ***Intervention Early in the UI Claim Spell.*** Intuitively, if claimants need or can benefit from reemployment services, then providing these services as early as possible in their UI spells should help them use their time most effectively when searching for a job.
- ***Accurate Identification and Selection of Claimants Most at Risk of Benefit Exhaustion.*** WPRS targeting of services is based on the assumption that local offices and one-stops generally are not able to serve all claimants and other job seekers who could benefit from reemployment services.
- ***Appropriate Referrals to Individualized, Intensive Reemployment Assistance Services.*** All else equal, claimants who receive more services will have better UI and employment outcomes. The more intensive and individualized the services, the larger the expected benefit. Ideally, these services should be provided in a way that fosters a cooperative relationship between the claimants and the service providers.
- ***Comprehensive Tracking and Enforcement of Claimants' Involvement in These Services.*** To ensure maximum benefit from the service referrals, claimants are required to participate in services, and states are instructed to enforce this requirement.

A strong and effective WPRS system also must rely on coordination between the agencies that administer the UI, Job Service (JS), and WIA programs, because they serve a common set of customers. As discussed in Chapter IV, these linkages include the UI agencies' referral of claimants to services, service providers' notification of the UI agencies as to whether or not claimants have completed the services, and the sharing of data so that all agencies involved in WPRS can measure outcomes effectively and provide feedback on ways to improve the program.

Properly designed and implemented WPRS systems are expected to achieve several interrelated and complementary goals. Because claimants who are at the highest risk of benefit exhaustion are receiving appropriate reemployment services, they are expected to have lower UI exhaustion rates and UI durations and better reemployment outcomes than they would otherwise.⁴ As a result of this targeting of resources to claimants who can most benefit, UI trust fund expenditures also are expected to decrease.

2. Patterns of States in Providing Key WPRS Components

In this section, we discuss several ways in which our observations of the status of WPRS systems in the SIG states suggest that states nationwide may not be successful achieving all the key characteristics of a well-designed WPRS system. When possible, we also highlight promising practices that one or more states may have developed to address a weakness common to WPRS systems.

⁴The WPRS Evaluation found that the better services are targeted toward claimants at high risk of exhaustion, the larger their effect on UI durations and exhaustion rates (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b). As discussed in Chapter II, WPRS models do, to some extent, correctly target claimants, but the accuracy of predictions from these models is inherently limited. Thus, improved accuracy of WPRS models may benefit high-risk claimants and reduce trust fund expenditures.

a. States May Not Have Proper Allocations of Resources Across Geographic Regions to Serve the Highest-Risk Claimants

Distributional issues within a state may prevent some offices from targeting services to claimants with the highest profiling scores, even when the WPRS model identifies those claimants as most in need. Most SIG states expressed some difficulty reallocating resources to areas with high need so that the supply of services could be geographically distributed the same way as the demand, and non-SIG states probably face similar challenges in ensuring that reemployment service resources are best allocated to meet the needs of high-risk claimants.⁵ Because of historical patterns in funding allocations across regions within a state, or as a result of political considerations, these resource misallocations may occur whether the economy is strong or weak. The same factors may limit a state's ability to correct them. Ultimately, however, these misallocations may prevent some claimants from receiving services in one part of the state even when their needs are greater than those of claimants who receive services in other parts.

Temporary supplemental funds, such as the SIGs, can supplement other funding sources by adding flexibility to how the state directs reemployment services to clients who need them most. South Carolina, West Virginia, and Wisconsin hired staff to provide WPRS services in specific offices with historically low WPRS participation rates.⁶ Over time, these states can reevaluate whether these areas still have low WPRS participation rates and whether continuing to target additional resources to them is appropriate (when funds are available).

⁵About 60 percent of WPRS coordinators reported in the WPRS Evaluation that they have procedures to change the number of profiled and referred claimants served in local areas (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b). This is related to, but not the same as, the ability to reallocate resources across areas. Discussions with staff during the SIG site visits suggested that this flexibility was often limited.

⁶The South Carolina SIG-funded staff worked with a subset of the highest-scoring claimants who were required to participate in WPRS activities to ensure their receipt of intensive services.

When misallocations arise from unpredictable, temporary fluctuations in the demand for services over time and across areas (such as when local areas experience mass layoffs), use of a temporary funding stream can facilitate the mobility of resources. North Carolina used SIG funds to hire staff in offices that were experiencing layoffs in specific industries. Taking advantage of the flexibility of these funds and frequently reevaluating where they should go may facilitate even better resource allocation than targeting funds to specific areas.

A concern in relying on funding streams such as the SIGs to address misallocations in the availability of services is that they may provide only a short-term solution for a problem. A temporary funding stream provides an immediate correction, but the misallocation will probably remain when the funding stream no longer exists. States can use attrition or other means to help correct historical misallocations over time, but these processes are slow and cannot correct misallocations due to unpredictable fluctuations in the demand for services.

DOL has provided other funding to states to use in a flexible way. For example, WIA dislocated-worker funds allow states to direct services toward dislocated workers who are underserved, as do the reemployment services grants provided to all states in 2001-2002.⁷ States could benefit further from having a continuous, flexible funding stream dedicated to the WPRS program so they can direct resources toward areas temporarily or historically underserved.

b. States May Not Be Providing Intensive and Individualized Services, Coupled with Enforcement, as Envisioned for WPRS

The WPRS Evaluation found that in four of the six states studied, WPRS significantly reduced UI benefit receipt, and in three states, exhaustion rates declined (U.S. Department of

⁷Although a recent General Accounting Office report cited problems with the dislocated-worker funding formula, these problems do not affect the conclusion that states can benefit from this type of flexible funding stream to help close the gaps between the demand and supply of services across geographic regions in a state (U.S. General Accounting Office 2002).

Labor 1999b).^{8,9} The three with the largest impacts of WPRS on receipt of services also had the largest impacts on UI benefits receipt, and customers were happier when services were intensive.

Importantly, the services observed during the WPRS Evaluation were neither as intensive nor as individualized as those envisioned for WPRS. The evaluation found that only 14 percent of states required WPRS claimants to participate in both a large number of services (seven or more) and somewhat long ones (more than 10 hours). Thirty-one percent of states offered a large number of services and extensive resource centers but did not require participation. In contrast, 55 percent of states neither required nor offered extensive services for WPRS claimants. In light of this finding, the WPRS Policy Workgroup recommended in 1999 that service intensity be increased and that states provide services tailored to individual needs to yield further benefits to claimants and the UI trust funds (Wandner and Messenger 1999).

Despite this recommendation, the services we observed in most SIG states were generally similar in intensity to those observed in the WPRS Evaluation (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b). Although the types of services offered may vary across local offices within a state and in accordance with variations over time in WPRS workloads, most states used one of two strategies for providing services. The first included intensive services, which were minimally individualized. States that used this strategy, such as Louisiana and Maryland, required all WPRS claimants to participate in an in-depth workshop that provided advice on a wide range of

⁸Mixed results were found for a fifth state, which had small reductions in the weeks of UI receipt but a large impact on the probability of benefit exhaustion. A sixth state had no estimated impact of WPRS on outcomes.

⁹Other research, conducted in the 1980s, supports the view that intensive services to improve job search, coupled with enforcement of the requirements, reduce UI benefit receipt (Meyer 1995). However, the WPRS Evaluation (and most other studies that examined the effects of intensive job search workshops on earnings) have not detected increases in post-UI earnings resulting from receipt of services (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b and 1998).

job search strategies and lasted up to 10 hours. The second strategy included individualized services, but they were not as likely to be intensive. States that used this strategy required WPRS-mandated claimants to participate in a brief orientation that covered the availability of services and possibly contained an introduction to job search strategies. The orientations that focused almost exclusively on the availability of services typically lasted less than one hour. Orientations that contained tips on job search strategies often lasted two or three hours. Some states required a follow-up service, possibly selected by the claimants themselves and usually of short duration and low intensity. Other states required no follow-up services.

When states provided claimants with information about available services, we observed reluctance by both central office and local office staff to assign and enforce participation in follow-up services on the basis of potentially subjective assessments of a claimant's need, conducted during or shortly after the initial orientation.¹⁰ Staff felt comfortable requiring claimants with high profiling scores to participate in a WPRS orientation workshop, while not requiring claimants with lower scores to do so. This may be because WPRS profiling models are designed to distinguish between claimants who need services more and those who need them less; these models provide a summary statistic (the profiling score) to rank claimants according to their overall need for WPRS services.

However, the models cannot currently aid in identifying the types of follow-up activities that are most appropriate for a claimant. To determine a claimant's need for follow-up services, staff may have to rely on how good they personally perceive the quality of a claimant's resume to be, how realistic a claimant's job expectations are, and how knowledgeable a claimant is about the

¹⁰Yet, in a survey as part of the WPRS Evaluation (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b), three-quarters or more of UI, JS, and Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance (EDWAA) state administrators reported favoring requiring claimants to participate in services.

local labor market.¹¹ For example, staff may strongly encourage (or in rare cases require) a claimant who has no resume but is searching for a job that requires one to attend a resume-writing workshop. However, staff generally are less likely to mandate participation in a resume-writing workshop by a claimant who has a resume but could benefit from suggestions on how to improve it. Thus, the WPRS model of mandatory, intensive, and individualized services may be difficult to achieve unless central and local office staff feel more comfortable using assessments to impose individualized participation requirements in follow-up activities.¹²

c. States Varied in the Strength of Their Operational Linkages Between Agencies

The WPRS Evaluation found that operational linkages between the UI and JS programs were strong in many states, but linkages with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and other reemployment service agencies were less well developed (U.S. Department of Labor 1999b). In addition, some states had difficulties overcoming differences in missions among potential WPRS partners and understanding and accommodating differing program requirements and data systems, which could hinder the efficient delivery of services to high-risk claimants. As a result,

¹¹As noted above, some states require participation in a follow-up service that the claimant picks from a list of available services. It is unclear how much the claimants' selections are based on their self-assessment of their needs, their desire to fulfill the requirement as quickly or effortlessly as possible, or other factors.

¹²Washington's post-SIG efforts to develop a scoring system to distinguish between claimants who need WIA self-serve, core, or intensive services may be a step in the right direction, although these services would still be voluntary. The goal is to provide a high level of statistical sorting so that service receipt is more individualized. Likened to an electronic reemployment plan, which would identify claimants for intensive services, this system would provide more than one dimension of a summary statistic. Nevertheless, it is still too early to assess how useful and accurate this system may be in distinguishing relative levels of need between claimants, since this system is in the design phase and will not be evaluated until 2003. In addition, it is unclear whether it will aid in identifying the most appropriate services for claimants.

the WPRS Policy Workgroup recommended that operational linkages be strengthened to ensure effective and efficient coordination of WPRS activities (Wandner and Messenger 1999).

In the SIG Evaluation, we also observed states that varied widely in their coordination between these agencies. Louisiana serves as an example of strong linkages: staff from several different programs meet regularly to address WPRS policies and procedures. In several other instances, however, state-level staff involved in the SIG activities commented that the WPRS program is perceived to be run primarily by only one agency (usually either UI or ES).¹³ It may be that WPRS tasks and authority were divided among agencies when the system was designed (in the mid-1990s). However, in some instances, one or more agencies within a state may have failed to become involved in the continual efforts needed to update and improve the system to ensure that potential UI exhaustees are correctly identified, referred to services, and tracked to ensure that their service needs are being met. This challenge may be exacerbated by the lack of a separate WPRS funding stream.

For more effective WPRS programs, states may need to exert deliberate effort to strengthen their linkages between the UI, JS, WIA, and other programs that serve claimants identified through the WPRS system as likely exhaustees. Alaska's SIG-funded efforts to improve cross-agency coordination and information sharing at both the central and the local office levels may serve as a good example for other states. Alaska conducted statewide conferences and monthly teleconferences to help increase staff awareness of other programs and facilitated the development of cross-program linkages at the local level. Although the degree to which these

¹³Staff we spoke with usually reported that their agency took responsibility for the program, but that at least one other agency viewed WPRS as of secondary importance. However, two things should be kept in mind. First, these staff applied for and received the SIG specifically to improve the WPRS system. Second, our data collection efforts involved discussions primarily about SIG activities and not the parts of WPRS that were unaffected by the grant.

efforts have translated into improved claimant outcomes is currently unclear, this type of coordination and information sharing has the potential to enhance service receipt and customer satisfaction if claimant outcomes are kept as a priority.

d. Some States Were Developing Non-WPRS Orientation Workshops to Introduce Claimants to Services and Considering How to Integrate Them with WPRS

Some policymakers have been concerned that RIC filing may reduce the likelihood that claimants will go voluntarily to JS—because claimants are not already there and because call center workers are unlikely to be familiar with reemployment services and to refer people to them systematically (U.S. Department of Labor 2000). Some local office staff in the SIG states expressed similar views: that because of the move of UI staff from local offices to call centers, UI claimants were less likely to go to the offices and receive services.¹⁴

The WPRS system has been viewed as one mechanism to counteract reduced familiarity with and use of reemployment services, since WPRS requires some claimants to come into a local office early in their spells and learn about them. Requiring WPRS participation may be even more important in states that use RIC filing than states that continue using in-person filing. However, claimants who are not in the WPRS-mandated group still may not systematically be made aware of and offered services.

Some states have begun developing procedures to counteract the trend toward decreased awareness of and participation in JS. Maryland, New York, and North Carolina inform most or all non-job-attached claimants of services by requiring them to participate in orientation workshops independent of WPRS. These SIG states were investigating ways either to integrate

¹⁴However, the UI Exhaustees Study found similar declines between 1988 and 1998 in rates of going to JS in states that implemented RIC filing and those that did not, which suggests that other factors may have been responsible for the change in service usage rates (Needels et al. 2001).

this workshop with the WPRS-mandated orientation workshop for selected claimants or to ensure that the information presented was not redundant. Alaska took a different approach: it is placing JS staff in each UI call center to act as liaisons between the UI and JS programs and to aid in referrals for reemployment services. However, these states generally have not had enough experience with these new systems to have been able to refine them and offer lessons about the most efficient use of staff's and claimants' time.

3. Trade-Offs in Designing WPRS Systems

Even when a state's WPRS system contains all the key characteristics listed earlier, state policymakers have considerable flexibility in designing the system to achieve its program goals. In some instances, trade-offs require that one goal be achieved at the expense of another. A state implicitly, or even unintentionally, may place a higher priority on one goal than another in the way that it designs its WPRS system. Therefore, a strategy that is appropriate for one state may not be so for another that prioritizes its WPRS goals differently. In this section, we discuss two ways in which states may encounter trade-offs in designing or modifying their WPRS systems.

a. Changing Profiling from at First Payment to at Initial Claim May Influence the Ability of a State to Target Services and Decrease Trust Fund Expenditures

As discussed in Section A, changing profiling from at first payment to at initial claim is likely to improve a state's ability to provide services earlier in claimants' UI spells. States may perceive this as an effective way to decrease UI durations and trust fund expenditures.

However, changing to initial-claim profiling may not yield the results intended, because doing so affects the mix of claimants who are called in for and who receive services and thereby influences the state's ability to target services to likely UI exhaustees (Table V.4). When profiling occurs at initial claim, several groups of claimants are included in the selection pool: (1) claimants who are eligible for benefits but who do not receive a first payment, (2) claimants

TABLE V.4

CLAIMANT GROUPS INCLUDED IN WPRS PROFILING AND ORIENTATION

Claimants Who:	Profiling Conducted at Initial Claim		Profiling Conducted at First Payment	
	In Selection Pool	Likelihood of Attending Orientation Workshop Held Three Weeks After Call-In	In Selection Pool	Likelihood of Attending Orientation Workshop Held Three Weeks After Call-In
Are denied benefits	Yes	Low	No	None
Are eligible for benefits but do not receive a first payment	Yes	Low	No	None
Become reemployed within three weeks after initial claim	Yes	Low	Yes	Low
Become reemployed between three and five weeks after initial claim	Yes	High	Yes	Low
Are not reemployed within five weeks after initial claim	Yes	High	Yes	High

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

NOTE: For simplicity, we assume that all claimants are monetarily eligible for benefits, because the SIG states that profile “at initial claim” include only monetarily eligible claimants in the selection pool. We also assume that the orientation workshops are held at three weeks after the initial claim when profiling is conducted at initial claim, and at five weeks after the initial claim when profiling is conducted at first payment. Finally, we assume that eligible claimants discontinue receiving benefits because they become reemployed. Altering these assumptions in plausible ways will probably not affect the analysis.

who are denied benefits, and (3) first-payment recipients. When profiling occurs at first payment, the first two groups are not in the selection pool.

Claimants in the first two groups may choose to participate in services (such as the initial orientation or job search assistance workshop), but their likelihood of doing so is probably low.¹⁵ It is likely that most claimants in the first group, those who are eligible for benefits but who never receive a first payment, have quickly become reemployed and thus do not need or receive services. The claimants who are denied benefits (the second group) may need services as much or more than claimants who receive first payments. Nevertheless, the state is unable to reduce UI trust fund expenditures by serving them. In addition, because both groups of claimants are not collecting benefits, the UI program is unable to enforce its participation requirement. Thus claimants in these two groups who are called in and show up for the orientation workshop are, in one sense, participating voluntarily and through their own initiative.

First-payment recipients are included in the selection pool, regardless of whether profiling occurs at initial claim or at first payment. However, there is a usually a period of several weeks between the profiling call-in and when claimants' first service is scheduled. Because claimants who are collecting benefits at the time of the first service are still looking for work, they are likely to have higher participation rates than claimants who become reemployed before the date of the first service. Similarly, claimants who receive a first payment but who would find a job within a few weeks of their initial claims are probably more likely to participate when the

¹⁵South Carolina staff reported that claimants who do not receive benefits have lower participation rates than those who do: 27 percent compared to 71 percent. These staff also reported that the change in the timing of profiling caused a lot of inefficiencies because local office staff had to spend more time responding to telephone calls from discontented or confused claimants and following up on claimants who did not show up for the orientation workshop. Other states, such as Minnesota and Washington, did not encounter this problem as much.

scheduling of services is early in their UI spells. When the workshop occurs later in the UI claim period, only claimants who are still looking for work at that time are highly likely to participate.

Thus, profiling earlier in the UI claim process is likely to reduce a state's ability to target services to potential exhaustees. Profiling models are designed to identify claimants who are likely exhaustees, so that they may be called in for services. However, the profiling models can identify likely exhaustees only imprecisely, so some claimants who can find jobs early in their claim spells, without the benefit of WPRS services, may be called in. Naturally, the passage of time acts as a screening mechanism to help distinguish between these claimants and those who have a difficult time finding a job. The later service delivery is, the higher is the concentration of potential exhaustees who receive those services, and the better targeted those services are. When services are delivered early in the UI spell, some claimants who would naturally exit the UI system will "crowd out" likely exhaustees from the receipt of services. South Carolina and Washington found when profiling at initial claim that about 15 percent of claimants who showed up for an orientation workshop did not eventually receive a UI benefit check.

For a fixed level of resources, therefore, it is an empirical question whether profiling at first payment or at initial claim is more effective at meeting the WPRS goal of reducing weeks of UI benefits paid and trust fund expenditures. Which timing is better depends on the extra reduction in average duration for claimants who receive services when they are profiled at initial claim rather than at first payment and the percentage of claimants who do not receive benefits and who participate in services when WPRS is at initial claim. For example, suppose that a state can provide WPRS services to 100 people and that average duration would be 14 weeks without these services (Scenario 1 in Table V.5). In the absence of WPRS, these 100 people would collect benefits for 1,400 weeks. Suppose that providing reemployment services when profiling occurs at first payment reduces the average weeks of UI benefits from 14.00 to 13.25

TABLE V.5

EFFECTS OF WPRS ON WEEKS OF UI BENEFITS PAID

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5
Timing of Profiling	No Profiling	First Payment	Initial Claim	Initial Claim	Initial Claim
Number of Claimants Receiving WPRS	100	100	100	100	100
Average UI Duration of Claimants Who Do Not Receive WPRS Services (Weeks)	14.00	n.a.	14.00	14.00	14.00
Average UI Duration of Claimants Who Receive WPRS Services When Profiled at First Payment (Weeks)	n.a.	13.25	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Average UI Duration of Claimants Who Receive WPRS Services When Profiled at Initial Claim (Weeks)	n.a.	n.a.	13.15	13.00	13.15
Percentage of Claimants Who Get Served and Who Do Not Receive UI Benefits	n.a.	n.a.	15	15	10
Total Weeks of UI Benefits Collected ^a	1,400	1,325	1,328	1,315	1,324

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

NOTE: These examples are hypothetical, and estimates of the total weeks of UI benefits collected will vary based on the empirical estimates of the average UI durations of claimants and the percentage of claimants who receive WPRS services when profiling is conducted at initial claim and who do not receive UI benefits.

n.a. = not applicable.

^aTotal weeks of UI benefits collected under Scenario 1 equals (100 claimants × 14 weeks per claimant). Under Scenario 2, the number of weeks of UI benefits collected equals (100 first payment recipients × 13.25 weeks per claimant). Under Scenario 3, the number of weeks of UI benefits collected equals [(85 claimants × 13.15 weeks per claimant) + (15 claimants × 14 weeks per claimant)]. Under Scenario 4, the number of weeks of benefits collected equals [(85 claimants × 13.00 weeks per claimant) + (15 claimants × 14 weeks per claimant)]. Under Scenario 5, the weeks of benefits paid equals [(90 claimants × 13.15 weeks per claimant) + (10 claimants × 14 weeks per claimant)].

(Scenario 2). In this case, the number of weeks of benefits collected would be 1,325. Hence, profiling at first payment successfully reduces weeks paid by 75 (1,400 weeks – 1,325 weeks).

Now suppose that a state is considering profiling at initial claim because it believes that doing so will reduce the average weeks of UI benefits even more than profiling at first payment does. As an example (Scenario 3), we have assumed that (1) claimants who receive services when profiling occurs at initial claim collect benefits for an average of 13.15 weeks, and (2) switching from first-payment profiling to initial-claim profiling leads to receipt of services by 15 claimants who do not get a first payment. If WPRS occurs at initial claim, then 85 first-payment recipients will receive services, and 15 claimants who do not receive benefits also will receive services. The 15 claimants who do not receive benefits are “crowding out” 15 UI recipients who could have received services but do not. The total number of weeks of benefits collected would be 1,328. Although UI recipients who receive services have lower UI durations, UI recipients who do not receive them (but would have if profiling occurred at first payment) have higher UI durations. On net, a state would increase weeks of benefits paid to these 100 UI recipients by switching profiling from at first payment to at initial claim.

However, making other assumptions about (1) how much UI durations decrease when profiling occurs at initial claim, and (2) what the “crowding out effect” caused by nonrecipients is will affect this conclusion. If switching to profiling at initial claim reduces the average UI duration for claimants who receive WPRS services to 13.00 weeks (rather than 13.15 weeks; see Scenario 4), then the number of weeks of benefits collected would be 1,315. If the “crowding out effect” is only 10 claimants (rather than 15; see Scenario 5), then weeks of benefits paid would be 1,324. Under either of these scenarios, the state could have a lower trust fund expenditure by profiling at initial claim, at the same time providing services to some people who do not receive UI benefits.

In sum, profiling at initial claim generally allows states to provide services earlier, but it also dilutes the effectiveness of WPRS targeting on likely exhaustees. In addition, it may increase or decrease trust fund expenditures. Regardless of the influence of switching from first-payment profiling to initial-claim profiling on the UI trust fund, policymakers will need to decide how to value providing services to unemployed workers who are disqualified from UI but who are at a high risk of long unemployment durations.¹⁶ The more valuable this is to policymakers, the more compelling profiling at initial claim will be.

b. States Face Trade-Offs Between Ensuring Claimant Cooperation in Service Receipt and Enforcing Participation Requirements

During our data collection, many states cited the difficulty involved in both achieving a cooperative and constructive relationship with claimants with mandated participation in WPRS services and enforcing participation requirements. Different states may choose various strategies to balance these issues, but they should be aware of how their decision influences their ability to achieve other aspects of WPRS systems, such as early intervention and efficient use of staff time.

All states allow claimants who contact the local office prior to a required orientation session to reschedule if they report a good cause for being unable to attend, such as having a job interview scheduled at the same time. Because the claimant has initiated contact in response to the state's instructions to participate in a service and has provided a valid reason for wanting to reschedule, the state is able to maintain a cooperative relationship with the claimant.

¹⁶The WPRS Policy Workgroup notes that providing access to services for the widest possible group of workers through profiling at initial claim is consistent with WIA's focus on providing job seekers with universal access to a core set of resources to help with job search and decision making about careers (Wandner and Messenger 1999).

However, some claimants may ignore the WPRS requirement to participate in a service and fail to contact the local office in advance to provide a reason and reschedule. Without further information from the client, the state must then decide how to respond.

States vary in the number of opportunities to participate that they give to claimants whose noncompliance suggests that they are not able or available to work or not actively seeking employment. Some SIG states give claimants several chances to attend an orientation session before subjecting them to adjudication. As a result, some claimants who eventually receive WPRS services may do so quite late in their unemployment spells, which reduces the potential benefits of early intervention. However, allowing claimants more than one opportunity to participate before initiating adjudication may avoid unnecessary adjudications.

In contrast, other SIG states instruct local office staff to report no-shows for adjudication the first time a claimant fails to report to a WPRS activity. This speedy enforcement of requirements may help ensure that claimants who receive services do so early in their periods of unemployment. However, adjudication rates are likely to increase,¹⁷ and it is unclear whether this will result in a small or a large increase in denials. If the quick referral to adjudication identifies uncooperative claimants, denials will increase.¹⁸ However, if the adjudication identifies primarily claimants who failed to show for just cause, then staff workloads may

¹⁷Adjudication staff may have difficulty handling the increased workload if they already are experiencing heavy workloads and no additional staff are available to assist them. If so, then the speed at which adjudications are handled may be reduced as staff develop a backlog of work. In some circumstances, in contrast, the adjudication staff may be able to absorb the extra work without affecting the timeliness of their work.

¹⁸Needels et al. (2001) found that few claimants who were required to participate in WPRS services but did not do so were asked why not, and even fewer reported losing some benefits as a result. It is unclear at what rates determinations and denials would occur if enforcement of WPRS requirements was comprehensive, since many of these claimants were probably back at work by the time the orientation workshop was scheduled.

increase without yielding either UI trust fund savings or improved program integrity.¹⁹ Giving claimants only one opportunity to participate before adjudication also may stifle a cooperative relationship between claimants and staff when the claimants eventually do participate.

C. INFERENCES ABOUT THE WIA

DOL viewed supporting implementation of the WIA as a main goal of the SIGs (see Chapter D). During the two-year grant period, SIG states were making great strides to reform federal job training programs and create new, comprehensive workforce investment systems. The reformed systems are intended to be customer focused, to help customers access high-quality services and support workers in developing and furthering their careers, and to help U.S. companies find skilled workers (*Federal Register* 2000). States' SIG-funded efforts to improve their UI and reemployment services systems most directly pertained to the key WIA principles of:

- Streamlining services in the one-stop delivery system by having programs and providers co-locate, coordinate, and integrate activities and information
- Universal access so that any individual will have access to the one-stop system and to core employment-related services, such as information about job vacancies, career options, relevant employment trends, and instruction on how to conduct a job search, write a resume, or interview with an employer
- Empowering individuals through guidance and support available through the one-stop system and its partners
- Increased accountability using core indicators of performance that state and local entities managing the workforce investment system must meet—or suffer sanctions if they do not.²⁰

¹⁹Some states used the SIGs to automate the referral process of no-shows to UI. This is likely to improve the sharing of this information and reduce staff time for some activities (such as data entry), but, as discussed, it may increase staff time for other activities (such as adjudication).

²⁰The principle of empowering individuals also is to be done through Individual Training Accounts and reports on the performance outcomes of training and education providers. Other key principles for WIA include (1) a strong role for local workforce investment boards and the

The WIA legislation establishes three tiers of services: core, intensive, and training. Core services to be available include intake and orientation to the information and other services available through the one-stop system; initial assessment of skill levels, abilities, and supportive service needs; job search and placement assistance; career counseling; and statistics on the local labor market, occupational skills requirements, and training-related information. In general, intensive services and training are made available to adults and dislocated workers either who are unemployed and unable to obtain employment through core services only or who are employed but need additional services to achieve self-sufficiency. Intensive services may include diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools; in-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and goals; development of an individual employment plan, including services needed to achieve the employment goals; group or individual counseling and career planning; case management; and short-term prevocational services (such as the development of communication or interviewing skills) to prepare the individual for unsubsidized employment or training.

Throughout our data collection efforts, states and one-stops reported viewing the integration process as ongoing. Nevertheless, we identified several patterns across states as they implemented WIA and integrated WPRS activities in their one-stop environments, which we describe below.

(continued)

private sector, (2) state and local flexibility to meet the particular needs of local and regional labor markets, and (3) improved youth programs (*Federal Register* 2000).

1. At The Time of Our Visits, States Varied Significantly in Their Implementation of the One-Stop System

States faced a variety of hurdles as they worked toward setting up one-stops; in almost all instances, they recognized they still had a long way to go. Often, states renovated some local offices that traditionally housed the ES and UI programs into one-stops and allowed partner agencies to move in. We encountered positive instances of states or one-stops that had made considerable progress toward integration or that were actively working toward this goal. Partners were sharing responsibility for providing workshops, for example, or meeting regularly to address issues that came up in the one-stops. However, we also encountered instances in which one-stops needed to overcome barriers to better implement the one-stop system. A common barrier was that the partners' presence was minimal or their staff had little interaction with the other programs. Occasionally, ES and/or UI staff may have felt limited in their space in the one-stops because of overcrowding in the offices resulting from inclusion of the partner agencies. We also heard a few staff members report frustration about perceived imbalances in the cost-sharing arrangements between the UI, ES, and partner agencies, given that partners were less likely to contribute to the one-stops' cash outlays, such as for rent or utilities, and more likely to donate in-kind resources, such as computers or staffing for the front desk. These issues will need to be addressed to foster greater cross-program cooperation and integration at the local level.

Nevertheless, states seemed further along in their development of self-access resource rooms in one-stops. Many of these rooms were large and inviting, and they provided job seekers access to a wide range of resources to aid their job search. One-stop customers had self-service or staff-assisted access to computers with Internet access, word processing software, career exploration software, and software training packages and local labor market information; fax machines;

photocopy machines; laser printers; telephones; and a space with newspapers and other useful written materials. To this extent, it appears that many one-stops have increased access to important employment-related services and tools.

2. States Are Challenged When Integrating Data Systems to Provide Better Customer Service and Implement Performance Monitoring.

States reported facing several struggles when trying to integrate data systems (discussed more fully in Chapter IV). These included difficulty because the process was complex and inability to obtain enough staff time to overcome the programming hurdles. They also included issues surrounding the confidentiality of the data and concerns about improving existing systems when major upgrades were expected. Often, systems integration lagged behind other aspects of WIA implementation, such as co-location of services and increased customer access to job search and career planning information. Nevertheless, state staff recognized the potential benefit of data systems integration and other improvements to help achieve WIA goals, such as providing better service to customers and developing appropriate and consistent performance measures. Additional benefits included developing more effective tools for identifying appropriate policy directions and increased efficiency of data entry processes. State and local areas may have to continue their efforts to integrate data systems in ways that facilitate performance accountability and the management of local workforce development systems to meet customer needs in a timely way (U.S. Department of Labor 2001).

3. Strong State-Level Leadership Can Facilitate Implementation of WIA One-Stops.

A key aspect of the WIA is the decentralization of decision making and authority to local workforce investment boards, which are best equipped to meet the particular needs of local and regional labor markets. Some of the SIG staff, however, emphasized the importance of state-level agency coordination to provide guidelines and structure for local policies and to set the tone

for interagency collaboration. Alaska is a good example of how state-level officials from key agencies have been actively involved in joint planning meetings and have set the tone for collaboration at the local level.

Some staff members cited a lack of state-level leadership as the cause of inefficiencies in the transition process to WIA. Local-level staff in at least one state established informal linkages to build local policy (on issues such as staffing and data confidentiality) while they awaited state-level guidance, but they had to revise some of these new policies when the state finally provided its guidance. Many of these implementation problems are likely to be resolved over time. However, an ongoing need for state-level leadership is likely to exist because of the changes that will occur as states and local areas refine their systems as states undergo organizational changes, as well as in response to changes in the program environment and local labor market needs.

4. Mechanisms for the Appropriate Referral of WPRS Clients to WIA Services Are Important.

While the WIA legislation cites the WPRS system as one method of intake to core services, it also can be a mechanism to link UI claimants to intensive services and training (*Federal Register* 2000). Many, but not all, state and one-stop staff reported that the WPRS system is an important method to bring customers to the one-stop. This may be especially true in states that no longer require in-person filing of UI claims.

However, WPRS and many of the SIG-funded improvements have focused on the linkage between the UI and ES programs and data systems, rather than on linkages with partner agencies. This pattern is probably because ES staff historically have been the primary providers of orientation services and subsequent workshops for UI claimants. Washington is an example of more advanced integration. Staff from partner agencies can lead job search assistance workshops that are part of the SESA's workshop series, as long as these workshops meet the

standards for the series. A training conference conducted in June 2001 further improved coordination with and among the SESA and these other one-stop partners.

The WPRS system's emphasis may need to change over time as more comprehensive integration occurs with other service providers in the one-stops. States and one-stop agencies need to ensure that the WPRS system is fully integrated with other one-stop services and that staff who provide these services are familiar with the complete range of one-stop activities. The WPRS system will then be better able to provide comprehensive and appropriate referrals to WIA services so that claimants can better use the full range of services available to them.

5. A Few States Reported That Their Transition to WIA Had Some Negative Effects on Their Ability to Conduct WPRS Activities.

The implementation of WIA can increase the availability of services to WPRS claimants through the co-location of different agencies or service providers; the development and sharing of resources in self-access resource rooms; the provision of information on the labor market, careers, and training options; and other methods. It also can improve the appropriateness of referrals to services as claimants have more options and to enhance the quality of services received because service providers must be more accountable. Given these potential benefits, some state and one-stop staff expressed optimism about the effects of the WIA on their ability to administer the WPRS system and serve UI claimants.

However, some of these same staff members, and others, reported drawbacks that have occurred as part of the transition process. Staff in three states reported frustration or disappointment that funds to provide WPRS reemployment services were reduced because of WIA or that WIA funds were unavailable for WPRS services. Several WPRS staff members reported an inability to increase the number of WPRS workshops because one-stop agreements limited their use of conference rooms. In almost all instances, the WPRS orientation workshops

were restricted to UI claimants who were required to participate as a result of having been identified as likely to exhaust their benefits. Not all of these claimants may qualify for intensive services of the WIA, so states may be unable to combine WPRS participants and WIA participants into a single WIA workshop.²¹ These space and funding limitations may affect the ability to expand WPRS follow-up services or make adequate referrals to other services.²²

In addition, states may still be trying to decide how best to meet the needs of WPRS claimants upon implementation of the WIA regulations and the development of one-stops. For example, at least one state reported shortening its WPRS-mandated workshop by two hours (from three hours to one) as a result of the WIA regulations. The new workshop provides an orientation to WIA services rather than instruction about job search skills and resources. Claimants who are eligible to receive WIA services and interested in doing so can subsequently register in the WIA system and receive these services after the WPRS workshop.²³ However, other claimants may be less likely to receive the job search skills training previously offered and may benefit less from the new style of workshop if they fail to obtain additional services. Care should be taken to ensure that states and one-stops implement the WIA in a way that encourages

²¹In addition, some staff reported preferring to have a separate WPRS workshop because it allowed better group dynamics or the ability to tailor the workshop to the needs of participants.

²²For example, we attended one WPRS orientation that had to be held in a satellite one-stop about six blocks away from the main one-stop because of space constraints. Claimants who wanted to use a computer after attending the orientation were told to go to the main one-stop, because computers in the satellite one-stop were dedicated for the use of the partners' clients. It seems likely that this would deter WPRS claimants from using one-stop services.

²³At the same time, this state trained new workshop leaders to better ensure that they were familiar with other one-stop programs and could make better referrals. Thus, the state was optimistic that WPRS claimants could be better linked to an established system, rather than having only one opportunity for claimants to learn about other services and to obtain needed job search skills.

claimants to benefit from both the WPRS system and the WIA so that they receive better services and obtain better post-UI labor market outcomes than before.

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APPENDIX A

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CLAIMANT OUTCOMES

As discussed in Chapter I, the two-year SIGs were intended to “increase the effectiveness of reemployment services for UI claimants” by improving the WPRS systems in grantee states (U.S. Department of Labor 1999a). Within this framework, and as discussed in Chapters II through IV, states chose a wide variety of strategies for their SIG activities, such as altering their profiling models, updating or expanding service delivery, and modifying their data systems. States had varying degrees of success in these efforts (see Chapter V).

In this appendix, we examine whether quantitative analysis of the changes in service use, and UI program measures provides further information on the effects of the SIG efforts. Large, systematic improvements in these measures between the pre- and post-SIG periods would suggest that the SIG activities affected claimant outcomes beneficially.

However, several reasons suggest that this analysis may be limited. First, other influences on these outcome measures, such as changes in the economy or the broader service system over time, prevent us from concluding that changes in them are caused by the SIG activities rather than other factors. The efforts of SIG states to reform their UI and reemployment service systems in other targeted ways, using funds other than the SIGs, could be expected to change claimant outcomes. Second, many of the grant activities may have provided important benefits, such as increased staff efficiency or improved interagency coordination; but they are likely to affect claimant outcomes only in the long run. Finally, two states (Alaska and West Virginia) used their SIGs to modify the reporting systems that generate the data used for this analysis. These efforts are likely to affect pre-post comparisons, because the quality of the data has

improved over time.¹ Changes in the tracking of outcomes may make it appear that the number or concentration of claimants who receive services has changed, when it has not.

1. Analysis Strategy

We use state-level data reported to DOL to examine changes in claimant outcomes over time as a result of the SIG efforts.² To try to identify the influences of the SIG, we compare outcome measures from a period when most SIG activities were implemented with the corresponding measures before the two-year SIG period. Because some states did not implement their SIG activities until late in the grant period, we restrict the post-SIG period to the last six months of the grant period (January through June 2001).³ For the pre-SIG period, we use the average of the comparable six-month periods in the two years before the beginning of the grant period. Thus, outcomes for the pre-SIG period are based on the average of the outcomes for January to June 1998 and January to June 1999. Using a six-month time frame for the pre- and post-SIG periods seems a reasonable balance between the need for data as recent as possible and the need for a time period long enough to insulate the data against random fluctuations. Using January through June for both time periods avoids problems caused by seasonality. However, our results were not sensitive to the way we defined the time periods.

Because there are many different potential outcomes for the analysis, we focus on measures that provide the strongest assessments of potential impacts on claimants, as well as those most

¹More generally, we detected, in the data on WPRS activities and ES involvement, inconsistencies and other potential errors suggesting that the quality of the data may not be high.

²State-level data are the only ones consistently available for all states. However, several of the SIG states (such as California and Wisconsin) implemented changes only in specific local areas. SIG-induced changes at a substate level may be hard to detect using these data.

³Data to use as the post-implementation period were not yet available from the period after the grant was over.

likely to have been directly affected by the SIG efforts (Table A.1). UI exhaustion rates and weeks of benefits collected are important to consider, because providing reemployment services to claimants earlier in their UI spells, improving the quality of these services, and increasing the number of claimants who receive services may improve claimants' job search skills and speed their return to work, thereby reducing UI exhaustion rates and durations.⁴ In addition, better targeting of services to claimants who can benefit most from them, through improvements to the profiling model, is expected to lower exhaustion rates and shorten UI durations, even if no more claimants are served. Reductions in weeks of benefits collected also is an explicit goal of WPRS systems, because of the resulting reductions in expenditures from the UI trust fund.

SIG activities are hypothesized as affecting exhaustion rates and UI durations similarly. If SIG activities were to decrease exhaustion rates, we would expect a decline in UI durations as well. If they were to have no effect on exhaustion rates, we would expect to observe no SIG-induced change in durations.

Because increases in service receipt are intermediate goals of WPRS systems, we also examine the proportion of claimants who are referred to services and who receive them.⁵ Several states added staff to increase the number and proportion of claimants served. Other states strove to improve the timeliness of referrals. The earlier in the UI claim process that referrals are made

⁴See Chapter V for a detailed discussion of the relationship between service receipt and UI outcomes. An analysis of the post-UI employment and earnings of claimants cannot be conducted, because the data for the appropriate time period are not available. Data on post-UI employment and earnings for WPRS claimants lag other data by about 18 months.

⁵To control for changes in the number of initial claims, we normalized the measures of referrals to and receipt of services by the number of initial claims. Doing so, however, does not affect our results.

TABLE A.1

HYPOTHESIZED EFFECTS OF SIG ACTIVITIES ON CLAIMANT OUTCOMES

	UI Outcomes			Services			Determinations			Denials	
	Exhaustion Rate	Benefits Collected	WPRS Referrals to Service	WPRS Reporting for Services	Received ES-Provided Service	WPRS-Related	Non-WPRS-Related	WPRS-Related	Non-WPRS-Related		
Expediting the identification of claimants at a high risk of benefit exhaustion	-	-	+	+	+						
Expanding the pool of WPRS eligibles	-	-	+	+	+						
Improving the claimant selection process	-	-									
Improving orientation and reemployment workshops	-	-			+						
Strengthening the assessment process ^a	-	-			+	+		+	+		+
Enhancing WPRS follow-up activities ^a	-	-			+	+		+	+		+
Facilitating receipt of self-access services	-	-			+						
Increasing WPRS service capacity	-	-	+	+	+						
Strengthening the profiling/call-in link	-	-		+	+						

TABLE A.1 (continued)

	UI Outcomes		Services		Determinations			Denials	
	Exhaustion Rate	Benefits Collected	WPRS Referrals to Service	WPRS Reporting for Services	Received ES-Provided Service	WPRS-Related	Non-WPRS-Related	WPRS-Related	Non-WPRS-Related
Strengthening the link between service delivery and the UI system	-	-				+	+	+	+
Improving coordination among agencies and offices	-	-			+				

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

NOTE: Improving data systems to enhance service delivery and monitoring also may affect claimant outcomes. However, we have not included this activity, because these effects are likely to work only indirectly through increased staff efficiency or changes in procedures.

“+” denotes an increase in the outcome.

“-” denotes a decrease in the outcome.

^aStrengthening the assessment and enhancing follow-up activities may be expected to increase determinations and denials only when claimants are required to participate in more activities.

and participation is required, the more likely claimants are to receive services. Increases in service receipt are one mechanism for improving UI and post-UI labor market outcomes.

Finally, we examine rates of determinations and denials for nonseparation reasons, because some efforts to improve the WPRS data system linkages, such as standardizing the procedures for the report of WPRS no-shows to the UI program, may be expected to increase these UI activities.⁶ We look at nonseparation determinations and denials both for profiling referral refusals and for all causes, because changes in WPRS activities may affect determinations and denials for standard UI causes as well. For example, an adjudicator may determine that a claimant was unable to work or unavailable for work because he or she reported lacking child care or transportation necessary to attend a mandatory WPRS orientation.

Most states implemented changes that could be expected to improve many of these claimant outcomes during the SIG period (Table A.2). However, not all SIG activities can be expected to do so. In some instances, a state decided against implementing its proposed changes. In others, a state successfully implemented a SIG-funded change, but only after the end of the grant period, June 30, 2001. In addition, some states are still planning to implement certain SIG activities. These activities will not yield detectable outcome changes that are attributable to their SIG efforts, because the post-SIG analysis period is the last six months of the grant period (January to June 2001). These states may have detectable changes in claimant outcomes in the future.

2. Results

No clear pattern of changes in UI exhaustion rates and weeks of benefits collected can be detected (Table A.3). The changes are quite large for some states, and small for others. For

⁶We normalized the determination and denials by the number of continued weeks claimed. We also explored normalization of determinations and denials for profiling referral refusals by the number of profiling referrals. Neither normalization strategy affected our results.

TABLE A.2
HYPOTHESIZED CHANGES IN CLAIMANT OUTCOMES FOR SIG STATES

	UI Outcomes		Services			Determinations		Denials	
	Exhaustion Rate	Benefits Collected	WPRS Referrals to Service	WPRS Reporting for Services	Received ES-Provided Service	WPRS-Related	Non-WPRS-Related	WPRS-Related	Non-WPRS-Related
Alaska	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
California	-	-			+				
Louisiana	-	-	+	+	+				
Maryland	-	-		+	+	+	+	+	+
Minnesota	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
New York ^a	-	-			+	+	+	+	+
North Carolina ^b	-	-			+	+	+	+	+
South Carolina	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Washington	-	-			+				
West Virginia	-	-	+	+	+				
Wisconsin	-	-	+	+	+				

SOURCE: Mathematica Policy Research Evaluation of the Significant Improvement Demonstration Grants.

“+” denotes an increase in the outcome.

“-” denotes a decrease in the outcome.

^aSome of New York’s SIG changes were implemented after the grant period was over, and others are still being planned; so the hypothesized changes are not expected to be detected with the data used for the analysis.

^bNorth Carolina’s SIG activities were independent of the SIG system and are hypothesized to increase the receipt of Employment Service provided services and non-WPRS-related determinations and denials.

TABLE A.3
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE OUTCOMES OF SIG STATES

	Exhaustion Rate			UI Duration			Total Unemployment Rate		
	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change	Pre-SIG Level (Weeks)	SIG Level (Weeks)	Percent Change	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change
Alaska	56.7	52.4	-7.6	13.8	14.1	2.1	6.8	7.0	3.0
California	41.6	41.6	0.1	15.8	14.2	-9.6	5.8	5.1	-12.1
Louisiana	29.9	35.8	19.9	13.9	13.2	-5.2	5.5	5.9	7.3
Maryland	32.1	31.7	-1.2	13.9	12.6	-9.8	4.3	3.9	-9.3
Minnesota	36.1	38.4	6.3	13.7	13.3	-3.0	2.9	3.9	34.5
North Carolina	21.0	22.9	8.7	7.6	8.4	9.9	3.4	5.1	50.0
New York	48.1	51.5	6.9	16.6	14.5	-13.0	5.7	4.5	-21.1
South Carolina	23.2	29.2	26.0	9.2	9.6	5.2	4.0	5.0	25.0
Washington	38.0	31.3	-17.8	16.4	15.0	-8.4	5.0	6.2	24.0
Wisconsin	21.5	23.6	10.1	10.0	9.8	-2.6	3.6	4.9	36.1
West Virginia	24.1	22.3	-7.8	11.7	11.5	-1.6	7.1	5.5	-22.5

SOURCE: The UI exhaustion rate and UI duration are computed from state-level monthly data reported to the Unemployment Insurance Service on the ETA-5159. The unemployment rate, not seasonally adjusted, is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics [stats.bls.gov/lau].

NOTE: The pre-SIG level is the average for the first six months of 1998 and 1999. The SIG level is the average for the first six months of 2001, which are the last six months of the SIG grant period.

several states, these two outcomes move in opposite directions. Beneficial effects of SIG activities, if they exist, are probably swamped by other influences on these UI outcomes.

Taking into account the relationship between UI outcomes and the business cycle, as measured by the unemployment rate, does not provide any additional insights.⁷ Trends over time were mixed, with some states experiencing increases in the unemployment rates, and others experiencing decreases. In a few states, an increase in the unemployment rate is associated with an increase in exhaustion rates and UI durations, a result commonly found by researchers (see, for example, U.S. Department of Labor 1999c). This is not consistently so, however. Given these patterns across states, we cannot reasonably conclude that the observed changes are attributable to SIG efforts and not other factors.

Similarly, data on referrals to and receipt of services do not show consistent patterns (Table A.4). For some states, we observe large increases in the number of claimants referred to and reporting to services; other states show much smaller increases, or even decreases. Some show an increase in WPRS referrals and a decrease in receipt of WPRS services, or vice versa.

Overall, no consistent relationship between our hypotheses and changes in the data can be found. States for which we expected increases may or may not have had them; the same is true of states for which we were not expecting increases. For example, New York had a large increase in WPRS service referrals and receipt and a large decrease in receipt of ES services; however, we did not hypothesize that New York's SIG activities would lead to these increases.⁸

⁷Most states' unemployment rates were generally low during this period compared to historical standards, ranging from 3 to 7 percent.

⁸New York's activities to improve the data system and profiling model were not implemented during the SIG period. New York's staff training and implementation of new assessment tool were implemented during the SIG period, but they are unlikely to have caused an increase in WPRS referrals.

TABLE A.4

REFERRAL AND SERVICE OUTCOMES OF SIG STATES
(Per Initial Claim)

	WPRS Referrals to Services			WPRS Reporting for Services			Employment Service: Received Reportable Service		
	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change
Alaska	5.2	4.3	-16.8	2.3	2.5	8.0	24.0	14.6	-39.1
California	8.7	8.3	-5.1	4.1	3.8	-6.6	4.0	4.3	7.2
Louisiana	15.5	13.1	-15.6	13.8	10.2	-25.8	47.9	52.0	8.5
Maryland	16.9	NA	NA	24.4	NA	NA	32.2	17.4	-46.0
Minnesota	18.2	27.8	53.1	17.6	25.9	46.9	21.9	29.3	34.1
North Carolina	7.4	5.6	-25.2	48.2	62.5	29.6	44.4	49.5	11.6
New York	3.3	15.7	373.1	3.3	15.6	376.2	35.5	7.4	-79.1
South Carolina	6.6	15.3	132.8	8.0	24.8	209.6	38.3	36.5	-4.7
Washington	20.2	29.6	46.4	20.7	24.3	17.1	48.8	49.5	1.3
Wisconsin	5.0	5.2	4.9	4.1	3.9	-5.4	21.4	18.8	-12.0
West Virginia	6.1	7.6	25.9	5.9	5.1	-12.6	41.1	47.0	14.2

SOURCE: The WPRS data and initial claims data are computed from state-level data reported to the Unemployment Insurance Service on the ETA-9048 and ETA-5159. The Employment Service data come from the ETA-9002 report.

NOTE: The pre-SIG level is the average for the first six months of 1998 and 1999. The SIG level is the average for the first six months of 2001, which are the last six months of the SIG grant period.

NA = Data not available.

Although we are not certain, the WPRS data might be capturing the increase in participation required at the non-WPRS orientation workshop. In contrast, South Carolina's large increases are consistent with what state staff reported to us, and they are likely to have been caused by the switch from profiling at first payment to at initial claim. However, because more claimants are being served by WPRS, we hypothesized that South Carolina's data on ES services would also show an increase; but they did not.

Data on determinations and denials tell a similar story (Tables A.5 and A.6). Determination and denial rates for profiling referral refusals are rare and often show extremely large changes between the pre- and post-SIG periods. Two of the four states for which we expected increases in these rates (Minnesota and South Carolina) showed increases, while the other two (Alaska and Maryland) showed decreases. The other states, for which we did not hypothesize changes, showed changes as well.

Nonseparation determination and denials for all causes had smaller fluctuations over time, most likely because these activities occur more frequently.⁹ Nevertheless, both states with hypothesized effects and those without them experienced changes, and some changes were in the opposite direction from what was hypothesized. It would be unwise to use the data to support the view that SIG activities were responsible for these changes.

⁹Although we hypothesized that nonseparation determinations and denials for all causes may increase as a result of SIG activities, these measures are more likely to be influenced by other, non-WPRS-specific factors. Thus, even if the data were consistent with our hypotheses, we would be less justified in attributing the changes to SIG activities, because most SIG activities focused on the WPRS system. An exception is North Carolina, which used its SIG to change service delivery through a program that is independent of the WPRS system.

TABLE A.5
NONSEPARATION DETERMINATIONS AND DENIALS
(Per Continued Weeks Claimed)

	Determinations			Denials		
	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change
Alaska	3.8	4.0	4.9	2.5	2.9	13.5
California	7.1	3.8	-46.7	3.2	2.6	-17.5
Louisiana	3.2	2.6	-19.8	2.9	2.4	-17.8
Maryland	8.1	9.4	16.0	2.3	2.4	4.9
Minnesota	1.8	1.7	-2.4	1.6	1.7	6.1
North Carolina	2.9	2.1	-28.5	2.2	1.6	-30.4
New York	2.5	1.3	-46.1	1.3	0.8	-42.3
South Carolina	0.9	0.8	-12.4	0.6	0.5	-10.7
Washington	1.8	2.5	40.0	1.3	2.0	49.9
Wisconsin	4.8	4.1	-13.6	2.8	2.8	-1.5
West Virginia	1.3	1.3	-2.3	0.7	0.8	21.9

SOURCE: The data on determinations and denials are reported to the Unemployment Insurance Service on the ETA-207 report. The data on continued weeks claimed are reported on the ETA-5159 report.

NOTE: The pre-SIG level is the average for the first six months of 1998 and 1999. The SIG level is the average for the first six months of 2001, which are the last six months of the SIG grant period.

TABLE A.6
NONSEPARATION DETERMINATIONS AND DENIALS
FOR PROFILING REFERRAL REFUSALS
(Per 10,000 Continued Weeks Claimed)

	Determinations			Denials		
	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change	Pre-SIG Level (Percent)	SIG Level (Percent)	Percent Change
Alaska	12.79	0.00	-100.0	11.65	0.00	-100.0
California	22.13	16.41	-25.8	4.43	7.23	63.1
Louisiana	11.10	10.15	-8.6	11.10	10.15	-8.6
Maryland	7.07	4.80	-32.1	3.88	2.81	-27.6
Minnesota	0.93	2.59	179.3	0.92	2.59	182.4
North Carolina	0.33	3.83	1,066.0	0.26	3.52	1,254.9
New York	0.90	0.58	-36.1	0.25	0.39	54.9
South Carolina	4.59	18.50	302.7	1.65	8.13	391.8
Washington	0.00	0.00	n.a.	0.00	0.00	n.a.
Wisconsin	4.09	5.70	39.3	1.79	3.52	96.7
West Virginia	0.89	0.78	-11.7	0.27	0.45	66.8

SOURCE: The data on determinations and denials are reported to the Unemployment Insurance Service on the ETA-207 report. The data on continued weeks claimed are reported on the ETA-5159 report.

NOTE: The pre-SIG level is the average for the first six months of 1998 and 1999. The SIG level is the average for the first six months of 2001, which are the last six months of the SIG grant period.

n.a. = Not applicable.

3. Summary

We examined state-level data reported to DOL to try to detect the effects of SIG activities on UI exhaustion rates, UI durations, referrals for and receipt of services, and determinations and denials. We hypothesized that SIG activities would lead to decreases in exhaustion rates and benefit durations in all states, and to increases in referrals to and receipt of services in some states. We also hypothesized that several states would have increases in nonseparation determination and denial rates, for profiling referral refusals or for all causes.

This data analysis was unsuccessful, however; we could not detect consistent, systematic patterns in the data over time. Many possible reasons for this exist, such as the effects of other factors on claimant outcomes, changes in the quality of the data, and the use of state-level data when SIG activities in some states were conducted only in some local offices. The data, therefore, cannot be used either to support or to refute our hypothesis that SIG activities led to observable changes in claimant outcomes.

APPENDIX B

**DESCRIPTIONS OF AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR
INNOVATIVE STATE ACTIVITIES**

Glossary:

AJB = America's Job Bank

ES = Employment Service

ETA = Employment and Training Administration

UI = Unemployment Insurance

WBA = Weekly Benefit Amount

WIA = Workforce Investment Act

WPRS = Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services

I. IMPROVEMENTS TO OR INNOVATIVE PRACTICES RELATED TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF CLAIMANTS MOST IN NEED OF REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Innovation: *Profiling After the Determination of Monetary Eligibility*

Objective: Profiling after the determination of monetary eligibility allows claimants to receive WPRS services earlier in their claims process than when profiling occurs after the first payment.

State: Minnesota

Description: As of April 2001, Minnesota's profiling occurs after monetary eligibility is determined rather than after the first payment. Claimants with pending monetary determinations, about two to three percent of claimants, are put in a "wrap file" for up to 21 days. If they become monetarily eligible during this time, they are added to the profiling list. Claimants whose monetary eligibility issues are not resolved in that time are dropped from the wrap file and are not put on the profiling list. To keep the profiling process simpler, Minnesota decided against recalculating the profiling score for claimants whose calculation of base period earnings changes after the initial monetary determination.

The state includes on the profiling lists claimants with holds on their claims because of nonmonetary separation issues or denials. A profiling score is calculated for these claimants, and the local office screens that display the profiling lists show that they have pending eligibility issues or have been denied benefits. The central office gave discretion to the local offices in how to handle these claimants, so local office staff can tailor their procedures based on their judgment of the potential advantages and disadvantages of providing services to these claimants. In practice, offices with the capacity to serve these claimants often invite them to orientation workshops. However, offices with capacity constraints usually do not call them in; instead, the local office staff skip past them on the lists to select other claimants.

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Innovation: *Use of Separate Profiling Models for Claimants with Different Potential Durations*

Objective: Though claimants with short potential durations had previously been excluded from the profiling selection pool, Minnesota added them to it to allow more claimants to participate in WPRS services.

State: Minnesota

Description: Before April 2001, Minnesota's profiling model excluded claimants whose potential duration was shorter than 26 weeks. Since then, the state has used four separate models for claimants with potential duration equal to 26 weeks, 23 to 25 weeks, 19 to 22 weeks, and 11 to 18 weeks. (The recent proportions of unattached claimants in these four groups are 66, 10, 10, and 14 percent, respectively.) The models have different weights for the claimant characteristics. Using separate models based on claimants' potential durations allows the state to target reemployment services to claimants with the longest potential duration when resources are constrained. This can have a greater effect on the number of weeks of benefits paid and expenditures from the trust fund. At the same time, offices can serve claimants with shorter potential durations when resources are not constrained.

Within each of these four categories, claimants are ranked from highest profiling score to lowest. Those with full potential durations are highest on the list that local offices and one-stops use to select claimants for services, followed by those with long, medium, and short durations. Each group has a different threshold, above which claimants may be required to participate in services and below which their participation is voluntary. The state is re-sorting the lists so that all claimants who are above their model-specific threshold will be higher on the list than claimants below it. This re-sorting will make it easier for staff to identify and select claimants whose participation is required.

Minnesota's policy is for local offices and one-stops to call in all claimants on their profiling lists when possible. Especially in offices that have or can develop the capacity to serve more claimants, this policy means that the claimants with fewer than 26 weeks of potential benefits, who would not have received profiling services prior to the change, now may receive them.

In local offices that are unable to serve all claimants on the list, claimants with 26 weeks of potential benefits are more likely to be served than shorter-duration claimants, because orientation leaders generally work down the list when selecting claimants to invite. Many offices are able to invite to orientation workshops at least some claimants whose

participation is voluntary. These workshops often are slightly tailored to these claimants who may be at less risk of benefit exhaustion.

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Innovation: *Improved Accuracy in Selecting Profiled Claimants*

Objective: To prevent errors in selection for profiling and allow for the correction of errors, the state implemented data system modifications and trained staff.

State: Alaska

Description: Because of previous coding errors, some claimants who should have been called in for profiling services were not. In addition, their profiling scores could not be updated to reflect corrected information. To address these problems, the state modified its data system to include computerized checks of registration codes. In addition, the state changed the profiling pool to a “dynamic pool” that allows updated information on claimants to be entered into the profiling model as claimants’ scores are recalculated weekly for the six weeks they may be in the profiling selection pool. As a result of training of UI call center staff on criteria for registration coding and these programming changes, claimants who are at high risk of long periods of unemployment and who have been miscoded are now reclassified as eligible for WPRS services.

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Innovation: *Survey of State Profiling Models*

Objective: The state conducted a survey of state profiling models to inform the development of their new profiling model and to provide a resource for others states in developing and updating their models.

State: New York

Description: The survey covers the details of other states’ WPRS systems. The survey was conducted on-line and collected information on the variables used in the model as well as the type of model used. They surveyed all states and received responses from about half.

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Innovation: *Simplifying the Process to Update the WPRS Model*

Objective: Simplifying the process to update the WPRS model is expected to save staff time in conducting the updates and to facilitate future model changes that will ensure that WPRS services target claimants with the highest risk of benefit exhaustion.

State: West Virginia

Description: When designing its WPRS model, West Virginia developed a numeric “key” for each claimant. The key was a linear combination of claimant characteristics, such as the level of education or the WBA. The values for the variables (or transformations of the variables) were strung together by being multiplied by a power of 10 to become one number, the key. As with WPRS regression models, these keys then mapped the claimant characteristics to a profiling score. Although this translation of claimant characteristics into a profiling score may seem straightforward, it made updating West Virginia’s model complex, because the state used 14 industry-specific models, which produced about 40,000 different values for the key. As part of the state’s efforts to convert the state’s 14 models to 1 model, the state added an equation to the mainframe so that claimant characteristics could be multiplied by the appropriate coefficients and directly converted to a score. Room in the equation was made for extra categories for existing variables and for extra variables (which currently have a value of zero for all claimants), so that future changes to the model could be incorporated more easily.

Contact: Contact information not currently available.

II. IMPROVEMENTS TO OR INNOVATIVE PRACTICES RELATED TO REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Innovation: *Orientation Workshop Materials*

Objective: To ensure consistency in the content and format of the orientation workshops, the state developed a video, CD, facilitators’ guide, and participant workbook.

State: Louisiana

Description: Louisiana developed these materials to enhance its six-hour orientation workshop. The video is 15 to 20 minutes long and contains five parts. A workshop facilitator can show part of the video, stop it, conduct exercises, and then return to it. The five parts of the video are (1) self-assessment (work history, education, hobbies, and goals); (2) resume preparation (what type of resume, basic rules); (3) job search (be organized and efficient, network, Job Service, telephone techniques); (4) job interview (prepare, know about company, practice, be positive); and (5) after-interview checklist (filling out applications, test-taking, keeping records). The video was distributed to facilitators at training sessions held for workshop facilitators.

The state revised the facilitators' guide to be used with the new video. The guide, designed to be concise and comprehensive, includes information on the purpose of the workshop, general instructions, "cardinal rules," and procedures for conducting the workshop. These procedures incorporate the use of the video and suggest activities relating to each section.

The state also developed a self-paced CD that job seekers can use to guide themselves through the workshop materials. This CD is available for use at local offices, although it cannot replace attendance at a required workshop.

In addition, the state developed a participant workbook to accompany the video and the facilitators' guide. The workbook contains information and exercises corresponding to the five parts of the video. Participants can use the workbook both during the workshop and at home.

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Innovation: *Local Office Review of Reemployment Workshops*

Objective: To better serve clients, local office staff reviewed their reemployment workshops and revised or added workshops.

State: Wisconsin

Description: Local offices that received extra staff through the SIG reviewed their orientation and reemployment workshops. The state asked that they review their workshop materials and offerings to identify and develop new workshops and to revise and update existing ones, if needed. Some examples of new workshops were (1) Goal Setting; (2) Attitudes, Values,

and Decisions—to reflect on attitudes in relation to work situations; (3) Skills Review—an assessment of skills and interests; (4) Internet Job Search; and (5) Mock Interview—including a videotaped interview. Some common revisions to workshops included (1) creating a more interactive format; (2) incorporating Internet materials and resources; and (3) addressing issues that older workers face.

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Innovation: *Revamp the job search workshop manual and format to make it more interactive.*

Objective: To engage participants better, thereby making the workshop more useful to claimants and helpful in producing improved reemployment outcomes.

State: Maryland

Description: Maryland developed a new manual and format for its 10-hour job search workshop. The new workshop emphasizes experiential learning through group exercises in which the participants discover the concepts themselves instead of having the instructor present them, as in the old workshop. The instructors function more like facilitators than presenters. The new workshops are also larger than the old ones (20 to 30 participants) so that the mix of issues and diversity of the groups is greater. The workshop has four parts: (1) learning about yourself, (2) learning about the labor market, (3) learning how to look for a job (resume, application, and interview), and (4) learning what is available to help you look for a job. The manual is divided into modules that can easily be modified and replaced, and new modules can be inserted as desired.

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Innovation: *An Assessment Tool That Focuses on Job Search Readiness*

Objective: A new tool that assesses job search readiness is designed to assist staff in directing claimants to reemployment service workshops so that their time unemployed is reduced and they are able to find better jobs.

State: Washington

Description: Washington state staff wanted to better identify and assess weaknesses in claimants' job search skills and, to address those weaknesses, to direct claimants to reemployment services more effectively. To do so, the state strengthened its Job Search Readiness Inventory. This inventory fills a gap in service delivery, as it focuses on job *search* readiness rather than job readiness. The inventory contains five modules: (1) skills identification, (2) job search techniques, (3) resumes and applications, (4) labor market knowledge, and (5) interviewing skills.

State staff developed an intranet pilot version of the inventory that would aid in the creation of reemployment plans. If the inventory were implemented this way, claimants could access the tool, and the state could track service receipt and client outcomes, because data could be captured electronically. However, pilot tests revealed that local office staff prefer to use a paper version of the inventory during orientation workshops. For these staff, this version is an easier and more practical tool for helping claimants identify deficiencies in their job search skills and for referring them to voluntary workshops that can address their needs.

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Innovation: *Choices Software, Distribution, and Training*

Objective: To help claimants make better career choices by deciding on a career direction, understanding whether that career is in demand in the labor market, and determining how to update their skills, the state provided computer-based career exploration tools.

State: New York

Description: The state distributed Choices software to all local offices and taught staff how to use it. Choices is a career exploration software package that includes assessments, such as interest and skills checklists, and job search assistance, such as resume and interviewing tips. It can be used with minimal staff assistance or independently by job seekers after a brief introduction by staff. All local offices received site licenses for Choices. In addition, claimants can access Choices on the Internet once they have signed up at their local offices and obtained an access code.

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Innovation: *Comprehensive Assessment Tool*

Objective: This tool is designed to help local office staff identify claimants' needs that may affect reemployment prospects and direct claimants to services either at the one-stop or in the community. One key potential advantage of the assessment is that it encourages claimants to think early in the unemployment spell about a broad range of potential barriers to and goals for job search.

State: Minnesota

Description: Minnesota worked with a university psychologist who analyzed administrative records data and survey data completed both during local office visits and about six months later. This research formed the basis for the assessment tool tailored to identify the needs of claimants at risk of benefit exhaustion. This tool covers social and psychological issues, such as the claimant's social support structure, attitudes towards being unemployed, and self-image, in addition to job search activities and labor market experiences.

Because of the sensitivity of the information covered in the assessment tool, it will be mailed to claimants along with the orientation letter so they can complete it at home. Claimants will be instructed to bring the tool to the orientation workshop. Reemployment services staff will meet individually with claimants to review their needs and guide them to appropriate services. Although the sharing of both nonsensitive and sensitive information could help staff and claimants work together to identify appropriate services, the state will not require claimants to share their assessment answers with staff.

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Innovation: *Follow-Up Reminders*

Objective: To increase claimants' participation in additional reemployment services, selected local offices made follow-up contacts with claimants who were in the 12th week of their UI claims.

State: Wisconsin

Description: In one area of the state, two local offices systematically followed up with profiled claimants 12 weeks after selection for WPRS services. They reminded claimants of the resources available to assist them in their job search and prompted them to pursue or redirect their job search while they

still had UI benefits. Staff sent a letter and followed up with a phone call. Although some claimants contacted in these follow-up efforts returned for services, many had become employed by the time of the contact or were not interested. Generally, the state and local offices concluded that a large number of claimants did not return for more services as a result of the follow-up efforts. These formal efforts were discontinued after the SIG.

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Innovation: *Using Case Managers to Work with Claimants with the Highest WPRS Scores*

Objective: Providing intensive case management follow-up services to claimants with high profiling scores was designed to reduce the UI durations of these claimants at high risk of benefit exhaustion.

State: South Carolina

Description: South Carolina provided intensive follow-up services in some of the offices with the largest claims loads. Claimants with profiling scores of 0.50 or higher—about half of those on the state’s WPRS profiling lists—were targeted for these additional services. The eight caseworkers who provided these services tried to schedule a first meeting with targeted claimants within a week of their WPRS orientation. Using work search plans as a basis for service delivery, the caseworkers then provided one-on-one services, including resume assistance, instruction on specific features of the resource room, and searches every few days for job orders matches. Some also conducted cold calls to potential employers on behalf of their assigned claimants. Although these caseworkers generally encouraged voluntary participation, the UI eligibility of a claimant who refused to work with the caseworker could be investigated.

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Innovation: *Inclusion of an Internet Module in the Orientation Workshop*

Objective: To help claimants find jobs within their occupations, learn about the potential to work in different occupations, and use information on the labor market and specific employers, California developed and pilot-tested a module on the Internet in its profiling orientation workshop. Ultimately, this module was expected to decrease the unemployment spells of

claimants receiving WPRS services by teaching them, early in their spells, computer skills to access Internet-based job search resources.

State: California

Description: The state developed this Internet module by reviewing relevant literature and Web sites, assessing claimants' computer and Internet use through field survey research, and talking with other service providers about how to conduct Internet job search training. In-house staff then drafted the 45- to 60-minute lesson plan, pilot-tested the module in 12 local offices, provided appropriate computer equipment to these offices when it was not previously available, and trained staff.

Central office staff had considered, but rejected, several other ways to provide Internet-related information to claimants. Despite the decision to give computer presentations during the workshop, staff need to have a back-up plan to convey as much of the information as possible during the workshop if the computers are not working.

During the pilot-testing period of the computer presentations, some staff were uncomfortable presenting the Internet module and emphasized it less during the orientation workshops than the lesson plan required. Further, a high level of turnover among workshop leaders made it difficult for the state to ensure that staff were adequately trained to give comprehensive presentations and handle unanticipated deviations from the plan.

The state found that participants rated workshops that followed the Internet curriculum more positively than those that did not follow it. Nevertheless, most claimants who had no or below-average Internet skills prior to the workshop reported being unlikely to use the Internet for their job search even after participating in the Internet module. In addition, the state did not find any systematic differences in the exhaustion rates or entered employment rates between SIG pilot sites and nonpilot sites. However, it concluded that the SIG Internet module was associated with an increase in the number of claimants who received Wagner-Peyser Act reemployment services. Problems implementing the module, difficulty targeting services to claimants most in need, and the workshop's emphasis on training may have led to these null effects. In addition, non-SIG offices probably expanded their discussion of the Internet around the time that all offices statewide increased access to the Internet in their resource rooms, which may have reduced the differences between the SIG and non-SIG sites.

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Innovation: *America's Job Bank (AJB) CD*

Objective: The CD was developed to address the need for better guidance on using AJB and to encourage more job seekers to use the Internet for their job search.

State: Louisiana

Description: This CD, which runs for 9 to 10 minutes, guides the user through the different ways to use the AJB to search for jobs, either by job title, job order number, military code, or keyword. The CD generates a lot of visual activity to keep the job seeker's attention. While it can be used by an individual job seeker or as part of a workshop, it is generally expected to be used in self-guided instruction. The state provided this information on AJB separate from the orientation session, because the materials may not be relevant to all participants in this workshop. One challenge in developing these types of materials is keeping up to date with the ever-changing Internet.

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Innovation: *Staffing Increases in Targeted Areas*

Objective: To address statewide staffing imbalances in local offices and to allocate services where needed, the state added staff in local offices in two urban areas to conduct profiling workshops.

State: Wisconsin

Description: Multiple local offices within each of the two urban areas, with high numbers of unserved profiled claimants, gained staff to address the need for reemployment services among profiled claimants. In one large urban area, staff were added in locations that had not previously provided profiling services. State and local staff in this area worked together to determine a sensible and efficient way to allocate the new staff to serve neighborhoods that would be convenient to claimants. State staff tracked the number of profiled claimants selected for service in each local office to monitor increases in service delivery. As expected, the offices with additional staff were able to increase service delivery proportionally to the increase in staff.

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Innovation: *Establish a temporary program to provide intensive, staff-assisted reemployment services to workers laid off in the textile, apparel, and tobacco industries.*

Objective: To target resources for reemployment services on three industries (textiles, apparel, and tobacco) that were experiencing plant closing and large layoff and to reduce the unemployment durations of workers from those industries.

State: North Carolina

Description: The SIG grant in North Carolina was used to set up a new, temporary program—Reemployment Services for textiles, apparel, and tobacco (RSTAT)—that is separate from WPRS and that provides reemployment services to workers laid off from these industries. The goal of the program is to focus intensive, *staff-assisted* services on this target group. SIG funds were allocated to local offices that were experiencing plant closings in one or more of these industries. The funds are used to pay for staff for varying lengths of time, depending on the size and duration of the local layoffs. Claimants from the targeted firms were identified at the time of the initial claim and enrolled in the program. They attended an orientation session to learn about the program and then participated in a two- to four-hour job search workshop. The claimants were then scheduled to return to the office every two weeks to see a staff member, as long as they remained on the UI program. During those visits, they were asked about their job search, given referrals, and in some cases given job development.

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III. IMPROVEMENTS TO OR INNOVATIVE PRACTICES RELATED TO COORDINATION AMONG PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES

Innovation: *Improve the tracking/scheduling system.*

Objective: To make it easier for local office staff to call claimants in for services, reschedule them if necessary, and report no-shows to UI, thereby speeding the delivery of services.

State: Maryland

Description: The local offices now use a new PC-based tracking/scheduling system that receives from the state's mainframe a weekly download with lists of claimants and their profiling scores. Local office staff use the system to select claimants for the state's job search workshop and to send them a call-in letter. The system can also be used to reschedule claimants who call in because they cannot attend or who do not attend a scheduled workshop. Local offices can easily customize both initial and follow-up letters. UI is informed of no-shows through an electronic link. This system was changed further to provide lists of all claimants who file initial claims, so that they could be called in for orientation sessions.

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Innovation: *An E-mail System Between UI Call Centers and One-Stops*

Objective: The objectives of this new e-mail system are to ensure that (1) adjudicators in UI call centers know which claims to investigate when UI eligibility issues arise, and (2) they receive a standardized set of information on them from local offices and one-stops.

State: Minnesota

Description: When Minnesota changed its UI system from in-person filing to one in which about half of initial claims are filed by mail and the rest by telephone or through the Internet, adjudication staff were no longer working in local offices. Information on whether claimants attended an orientation session when called in was entered into the UI system by local office service delivery staff. However, adjudicators did not know which claims to investigate unless they were explicitly told.

The state addressed this situation by developing a system to e-mail information to adjudicators on no-shows for services. Local office staff use a screen in their data system to record a standard set of information on claimants who need adjudication, including what they have found out about claimants' reasons for not reporting. This information is then e-mailed to one of the call centers, based on the social security number, and an adjudicator makes a nonmonetary eligibility determination based on the information provided.

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Innovation: *Improved Enforcement of WPRS Participation*

Objective: To better enforce participation in WPRS activities and to help UI and ES staff better manage adjudication workloads, the state clarified the roles of ES and UI and established new systems for tracking and enforcement of WPRS participation.

State: Alaska

Description: These improvements clarified which staff are responsible for rescheduling claimants who did not show up for a workshop and for adjudicating these cases. ES staff are responsible for recording nonattendance in the data system, communicating information to UI, and rescheduling claimants who call in after missing an activity. UI staff are responsible for fact-finding and adjudication of claimants who did not show up for a scheduled WPRS activity. Several computer enhancements facilitated the roles of ES in rescheduling activities and of UI in adjudicating cases. In addition, a new communication system allows ES staff to send e-mails to a central UI account that then distributes them to UI staff.

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Innovation: *Improved Enforcement of WPRS Participation*

Objective: To better enforce participation in WPRS activities, the state set up new procedures to allow ES staff to initiate call-ins for services and holds on UI payments.

State: New York

Description: ES staff can now call in claimants for WPRS services and automatically place a hold on the UI payments to any who do not show up when required to. The state also mails these claimants a letter that explains why their benefits are on hold and stresses their need to attend the activity they missed. Although larger system wide changes in the data system are anticipated, these procedures were implemented in the state's existing data system to address the problem of nonattendance.

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Innovation: *Tracking System Modifications*

Objective: To improve the ability of local office staff to determine which claimants need follow-up information on services and to gather information on obtained employments, Louisiana developed several new computerized reports.

State: Louisiana

Description: These new reports list claimants who received services recently without obtaining employment, claimants with job referrals, claimants who did not show up for required WPRS activities, and claimants who recently attended workshops.

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Innovation: *The Development of Frontline Tracking Systems*

Objective: These new reports provide more timely frontline and management feedback to help local office staff manage and monitor workloads and determine which clients need follow-up calls.

State: South Carolina

Description: South Carolina developed several intranet reports that list (1) claimants who filed for UI benefits each day; (2) a claimant status report showing the initial claim date, profiling score, WPRS activities, referrals, whether claimant was placed in employment, and the last UI claim date; and (3) claimants who are continuing to receive UI benefits.

South Carolina also added a local-office-level report showing the number of claimants selected for WPRS, the number attending orientation, the number completing an eligibility review, the number placed, and the number obtaining employment.

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Innovation: *Revised Reporting, 9049*

Objective: To improve the accuracy of the reporting data, and to promote performance-based accountability and goal setting, the state improved

tabulations for the 9048 and 9049 reports and developed new versions of the 9049.

State: Alaska

Description: Alaska made several improvements to its federal 9048 and 9049 reports by clarifying data definitions for them and documenting them for future reference. To provide more feedback to state and local staff for the 9048 report, the state added tabulations by the number of transactions (in addition to the number of people, as federally required) for: referrals to jobs, job placements, obtained employment, services provided, and clients excused because they found employment before they received their first service. On the 9049 report, the state created four new versions of the report, in addition to the federally required report. These are restricted to claimants who “first received reemployment services” rather than those who were “first referred to reemployment services,” and they can be generated for different time periods and claimant subgroups. All reports and their data specifications are accessible to staff through the department’s intranet. These reports are available through the local office and are intended to guide managers in determining expectations for service levels.

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Innovation: *A Data Warehouse*

Objective: The development of a “data warehouse”—to link the UI data system, wage records, the ES data system, the Labor Exchange, and the WIA data system—has the potential to improve service delivery and monitoring and to allow the development of better program policies. The data warehouse can help staff think beyond their own programs and use cross-program data for analysis and performance measurement at the local office and state levels. These types of data-linking activities can, more generally, further the one-stop concept of seamless delivery of services.

State: Washington

Description: Data systems for different programs historically have resided on different computer platforms and therefore did not link well together. Over the course of several years, Washington staff have developed a prototype online, interactive Web-based system (the “Management Decision System”) based on linked data systems. This system is similar to the ETA 9048 and 9049 reports but is more sophisticated. For example, monthly cohorts can be tracked by key WPRS measures (such as numbers profiled,

put in the selection pool, referred for services, or exempted), as well as the services they received. In addition, demographic and UI program characteristics, pre- and post-UI earnings, and pre- and post-UI industry and occupation, plus changes in some of these measures, for each cohort are available. Detailed information on reasons claimants are screened out of profiling, and a distribution of claimants by score are available. The data can be split into subgroups for a more detailed analysis (such as on subgroups based on profiling status).

The development of a data warehouse is likely to be extremely complex and, in Washington, has involved the need to resolve both technical and political issues. Technical issues included the need to coordinate calendars of activities and standardize data definitions. Coordinating calendars is necessary since UI reports are weekly, ES reports monthly, and WIA training reports quarterly. Standardizing data definitions includes the development of a common data dictionary. The political issues included the need to receive from each program an agreement to initiate participation and support the development and maintenance of the warehouse.

The ability to demonstrate the usefulness of data-linking to program administrators and policymakers is likely to determine the success of this type of comprehensive undertaking. In the long run, the benefits to be gained will depend on the amount of interaction between program staff and analytic/information staff and their understanding of important policy questions. The greatly increased access to data through the data warehouse will allow management staff to ask more-sophisticated questions than they could before. However, these staff may need to be trained to identify important measures for managing their programs.

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Innovation: *Improved Coordination Within and Between Programs*

Objective: To enhance service delivery, the state worked to improve coordination within and between programs by sharing information and expertise.

State: Alaska

Description: To improve coordination within ES and with other programs, the state conducted monthly teleconferences and statewide yearly training workshops. These activities are intended to build relationships between local and central office staff and between staff of different agencies, share information, and increase knowledge across program areas. Staff from

several programs, in addition to ES (including UI, Veterans, Job Training, and Vocational Rehabilitation) participated in teleconferences and training workshops.

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Innovation: *Using Field Coordinators for Local Office Monitoring and Technical Assistance*

Objective: Field coordinators worked to improve communication and coordination between the central office and local offices by monitoring local office program procedures and helping local office and one-stop staff to manage their workloads and address program issues.

State: South Carolina

Description: South Carolina created two new full-time field coordinator positions to act as liaisons between the central office and the local offices. These field coordinators made technical assistance visits to the local offices to provide guidance on requirements for reemployment workshops, eligibility reviews, ongoing reemployment services, and procedures such as selecting and exempting profiled claimants. Over a two-year period, the coordinators shifted from visiting local offices frequently in person to making contact by telephone. Prior to the development of these positions, this type of technical assistance was not provided as consistently or as adequately to local offices.

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