



Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Evidence Building and Implementation Study

SUMMARY

The [RESEA program](#) is a federally-funded, state-managed effort which aims to improve employment outcomes for unemployment insurance recipients, strengthen UI program integrity, reduce improper payments, and promote alignment between UI and the workforce development system. UI claimants selected for RESEA are required to attend an initial meeting with staff at a local American Job Center (AJC) to review the claimant's eligibility and receive reemployment information and services such as an individualized reemployment plan and referrals to other workforce development programs. Recent updates to federal statute requires states to demonstrate their program's evidence base and effectiveness. In FY22, 50 states are operating RESEA programs, totaling \$250 million.

In 2018, the Chief Evaluation Office partnered with the [Employment and Training Administration](#) (ETA) and contractor Abt Associates to conduct the *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Evidence Building and Implementation Study*. This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of requirements from section 30206 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, Public Law 115-123 (BBA) and Section 306 of the Social Security Act, which created a permanent authorization for a new tiered-evidence RESEA program. Specifically, states must use RESEA funds on effective strategies, or conduct evaluations on interventions without evidence of effectiveness. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [employment and training](#) programs and policies, addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities, and helps states meet legislative requirements.

The project's implementation study offers an up-to-date understanding of states' current RESEA programs, their evaluation plans, and recent programmatic changes in responsive to new statutory requirements for RESEA. It forms the critical foundation for understand what the RESEA program looks like today, and for thinking further about how to build evidence of program effectiveness across states' RESEA programs. It also suggests how states might further adopt successful approaches used to adapt services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project's literature review on the state of RESEA program evidence identifies relevant program components and the current evidence base on each, suggesting where there are evidence gaps to be filled. Results are presented in a series of three briefs, covering: (1) claimant selection, scheduling, and attendance policies; (2) basic career services; and (3) individualized career services. In short, it finds a modest-sized evidence base, with some potentially promising components but no impact studies on RESEA programs to-date. There are large gaps that need to be filled in order to meet legislative requirements and position states to improve their programs.



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Finally, in the project's report on options for building evidence on RESEA programs, researchers considered 'short-term' studies that could be completed within three-to-five years and that could satisfy help states satisfy immediate statutory requirements, as well as longer-term designs that would generate evidence on effective strategies to help states improve programs and participant outcomes. Evaluation options described could be undertaken by either state or DOL, and include both impact study designs and complementary non-impact analyses that could be useful to help improve or mature program designs or interpret impact results. It also offers discussion of key challenges that will need to be overcome to successfully meet statutory requirements and improve programs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

RESEA Program Strategies: State and Local Implementation (final report)

- **RESEA programs vary substantially across the country.** States use various strategies for promoting RESEA meeting attendance and reducing the rate of participants that fail to attend. The subject matter of RESEA meetings also varies by state and meetings may involve staff from other public workforce programs instead of or in addition to RESEA dedicated staff.
- **Staff noted few changes from 2018 to the onset of COVID but indicated interest in more changes.** These changes included implementing strategies to enhance reemployment services and changes to the criteria used to select UI claimants for RESEA to include claimants at lower risk of exhausting their UI benefits.
- **Eligibility issues identified when meeting with claimants are often not adjudicated.** Staff interviews and survey responses indicated that enforcing UI eligibility requirements often made it more difficult to establish necessary trust with claimants. For this reason, staff often prioritized educating claimants of requirements and job search strategies rather than using meetings as enforcement activity.
- **RESEA service delivery changed dramatically post-COVID.** UI applications surged as a result of COVID, with agencies reassigning RESEA staff to process new applications. Delivery of RESEA services shifted from in-person to remote. The number of claimants served decreased precipitously early in the pandemic, recovering (though not completely) in late 2020.
- **Most states are making progress toward launching evaluations and interest exists for testing new strategies.** Most state administrators expressed an understanding of and support for evidence-building and performance



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requirements. Three-fifths of states were confident in their capacity to design, administer, and undertake evaluations of their RESEA programs.

Serving Unemployment Insurance Claimants During a Public Health Crisis: The RESEA Program and the COVID-19 Pandemic (issue brief)

- **Three-quarters of state RESEA programs temporarily suspended operations beginning in March 2020.** This was accompanied by a precipitous decline in the number of RESEA participants at the start of the pandemic. A year later, all but one state had restarted their RESEA programs.
- **Operations recovered late in 2020, but participation remained well below pre-COVID levels.** The number of scheduled and completed meetings for the RESEA program did not reflect earlier figures prior to the pandemic.
- **Remote service delivery was utilized to deliver RESEA services.** The remote service model was widely adopted by the spring of 2021, with four-fifths of states indicating that initial RESEA meetings were typically conducted remotely by phone. Remote and virtual services are likely to remain as RESEA features after the pandemic.
- **Claimant selection remained consistent during the pandemic,** including the timing of claimant selection and initial meetings. A few states reported changes to work search review.

Reemployment Services Evidence: A Collection of Briefs on RESEA Program Components (compendium of issue briefs on literature review findings)

- **Available evidence suggests that the statistical likelihood that a claimant will exhaust UI benefits is not the best predictor of program impact.** This is a common method of participant selection, but other claimant characteristics, such as their weekly benefit amount at the time of enrollment, may more accurately predict impacts of program participation.
- **Additional evidence is needed to robustly demonstrate the effectiveness of several RESEA program components.** For example, most RESEA programs incorporate both basic and individualized career services, and while there is evidence that individualized and intensive services improve participant outcomes, this evidence may not align to the conditions under which RESEA programs are implemented. In addition, mandatory participation requirements appear relevant to program impacts, but few studies have isolated the effect of reemployment services from the mandate to participate.
- **Researchers identified priority evaluation options for the short and long term, as well as how those options align in an evidence-building strategy.**



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The evaluation options are related to whole program evaluations, participant subgroups, or program components. For each option, researchers showed whether it is likely to be led by states or by DOL, how soon the activity might start and end, and a rough estimate of cost.

- **Evaluation timelines imply that new RESEA-specific impact results will not be available until after evidence-based requirements are in effect.** Some requirements are currently in effect, while others take effect in FY2023. In contrast, the earliest effectiveness results may be approved in time for state FY2025 or 2026 RESEA Plans, and based on the chosen design, many states' evaluations may yield results in time for state FY2027 or 2028 RESEA Plans.
- **Longer-term evaluation studies should build on short-term designs to yield results by the early 2030s.** These studies require more preparation, including developing sufficiently large sample sizes and piloting the program or program component to be studied.

Options for Building Evidence on RESEA Programs (final report)

- **The evidence-building options report serves as a resource for decision makers to understand and weigh options for developing evidence of various types on various timelines.** Specifically, for a wide range of options, the document considers: *What* should be evaluated? *How* should that be evaluated? *Who* (states, consortia of states, or DOL) should initiate the particular evaluation? *When* should that evaluation occur? And *how* can the state workforce agency's capacity to conduct evaluations be strengthened?
- **Research may be funded and directed by individual states, a consortium of states, or the Department of Labor (DOL).** States' input and management is crucial: they administer the programs and most of the evaluation funds. The DOL can also leverage its national perspective and awareness of state RESEA plans to catalyze and support inter-state coordination when required, such as to execute design options that require larger samples than most states can develop independently.
- **Evidence building challenges exist, but DOL is well-positioned to help states address them:** Evidence-building challenges across states include: the need for very large sample sizes to conduct adequately powered impact studies; program variation across states may make partnering on consortia evaluations more difficult; states have an intrinsic incentive to not conduct their own evaluations and instead 'free ride' on others' evaluations; generalizability challenges make it difficult for states to know which evidence to use when



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informing their own programs; states may be (knowingly or unknowingly) conducting studies that are not capable of providing high quality evidence that demonstrates program effectiveness; the RESEA legislation incentivizes serving more people by providing outcome payments based on number of participants served, which disincentivizes random assignment designs that require a control group; and, the emerging timelines states are on to complete evaluations and produce new causal evidence is not timely to meet FY23 requirements. These challenges imply DOL has an important role in setting appropriate policies; providing evaluation technical assistance to states; facilitating inter-state coordination; and developing new evidence that takes advantage of results from across states in support of the nationwide program.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

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