



State of Missouri

2018 Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity

Executive Summary

Project or Team Name: Missouri Division of Employment Security (DES) - Unemployment Insurance Claims Intake Cross-Training Initiative

Nominator: Chris Slinkard

Nominating Department: (Nominations must include names of all agencies/departments/organizations/businesses, etc.) Department of Labor & Industrial Relations, Division of Employment Security

Category: Customer Service

Executive Summary: (Executive Summary page must be 500 words or less, 12 points, Times New Roman font, and left justified. Attach the Executive Summary to the front of the nomination.) During the summer of 2017, Division of Employment Security leadership created a vision to handle the annual spike in initial Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims that Missouri experiences each year during the winter. The significant influx of initial claims at this time of year has regularly outstripped the capacity of those full time staff that serve in our UI Benefits section and the result has been fewer initial claims calls answered, an increase in average wait times on the phone lines and a greater number of calls unanswered.

Division leadership undertook a unique and creative approach to greatly improve our responsiveness and customer service in the processing of UI claims. An agency-wide workforce development initiative was executed and a cross-divisional team was assembled for intensive initial claims intake cross-training for rapid staff augmentation. Division employees from every section of the agency received class-room simulation-based training and were then paired with experienced claims staff to both observe and put their training to use in a controlled setting. Over 100 staff members rose to the call, spending a portion of each week away from their regular assigned duties to man the front-lines of the agency's claims-center during the winter months. This assistance not only assured a greater number of calls answered, but it enabled the more experienced full-time UI Benefits staff to focus efforts on assisting claimants with concerns, working more complex cases and resolving issues in a more timely fashion. Every section and every staff member throughout the agency was impacted either through their service in taking initial claims calls, or through the efforts made by staff to fulfill the other duties of the agency while their peers served in the call-center. The improvements to both the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency were clearly evident. Comparing a 5 week period ending the week of January 20, 2018 to the same period one year earlier, calls answered increased 29 percent, average wait time decreased 41 percent and total number of unanswered calls decreased 72 percent.

In line with the Governor's priorities, not only has this initiative and the efforts of Division staff had a measurable impact on the services provided, it has resulted in the development of a stronger agency workforce with a greater understanding of the Division's mission and values. Furthermore, it has produced a sustainable model for quick deployment of resources to meet spikes in workload to minimize adverse impact to the public. Cross-trained staff are regularly engaged in claims intake to ensure skills are maintained for future use and to eliminate any need for retraining. Serving Missourians who have lost their employment due to no fault of their own and maintaining the integrity of the Unemployment Insurance program is, at the core, what the Division of Employment Security is about. Missouri can be proud of those that have worked to make this initiative a reality,

knowing that the staff of Missouri's Division of Employment Security are committed to service to the citizens of our great state.



State of Missouri – 2018 Governor’s Award for Quality and Productivity

NOMINATION FORM

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Department: Missouri Department of Labor & Industrial Relations

1. Project or team name: Missouri Division of Employment Security (DES) - Unemployment Insurance Claims Intake Cross-Training Initiative

2. List the name of all team members, job titles, state agency department, and/or other organizations including public, private sector or business: *(Please list alphabetically by last name – 2 to 20 team members maximum.)*

- Bricker, Amber, UI Tax -Unemployment Insurance Auditor
- Brockman, Jared, UI Benefits - Claims Center Central Operations Manager, DOLIR/DES
- Brune, Amy, Manager, UI Tax - Employer Accounts Unit, DOLIR/DES
- Bruno, Holly, Manager, UI Tax - Field Audit, DOLIR/DES
- Creek, Robert, Manager, UI Benefits - Kansas City Regional Claims Center, DOLIR/DES
- Curry, Patrick, Manager UI Tax - Field Audit, DOLIR/DES
- Hankins, Matthew, Acting Chief, UI Benefits, DOLIR/DES
- Hickey, Ryan, Manager, UI Integrity - Benefit Payment Control, DOLIR/DES
- Loehr, Patty, Manager, UI Benefits - Claims Policy & Training, DOLIR/DES
- Miller, Ron, Acting General Counsel, DOLIR
- Milton, DeSheila, Acting Chief, UI Tax, DOLIR/DES
- Molden, JoAnn, Manager, UI Benefits - St Louis Regional Claims Center, DOLIR/DES
- Peterson, Cassie, Claims Specialist III, UI Appeals, DOLIR/DES
- Pinkston, Jason, Manager, UI Tax, Liability Unit, DOLIR/DES
- Stimson, Scott, Manager, UI Benefits, Jefferson City Regional Claims Center, DOLIR/DES
- Vaughan, Anthony, Manager, UI Benefits, DOLIR/DES
- Williams, Candace, Chief, UI Integrity, DOLIR/DES
- Woerner, Darcy, Information Techologist III, OA-ITSD

3. Nomination Category: *(Check only one.)*

INNOVATION

CUSTOMER SERVICE

EFFICIENCY / PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

4. Explain why you selected this category: The Division of Employment Security's (DES) UI Claims Intake Cross-Training initiative was undertaken as a unique and creative means to address an annually recurring issue through the agency-wide leveraging of staff to meet the increased seasonal demands of our customers. Ultimately the target and result of the DES Claims Intake Cross-Training Initiative was to accomplish a “citizens first” objective in providing quality and timely services through the efficient and effective processing of incoming Unemployment Insurance claims. The improvement in response times, increase in calls answered and reduction in deflected (unanswered) calls year over year supports this initiative as a great improvement to the efficient and effective customer service provided by the agency to citizens in a great time of need. Additionally, this effort embodies the Governor's Workforce Development priority by improving agency staff knowledge and providing staff with a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the agency mission and values ensuring staff have the right skills to better serve the public and are better prepared for future opportunities within the agency and beyond.

II. BACKGROUND

1. **When did the team begin its work?** July 2017

2. **What date did the team initiate the implementation phase of the project?** September 25, 2017

3. **Is the project:**

Time Limited

Completed

Ongoing

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Why was the project necessary?** Each winter, as with all mid-western states, unemployment increases to account for seasonal layoffs at a rate that exceeds Missouri Division of Employment Security's ability for staff that are allocated to the Regional Claims Centers to effectively handle the increased claims load. It is not uncommon for nearly 25% of an entire year's Initial Unemployment Insurance claims workload to be filed during the winter months of December and January. This influx of increased claims volume results in increased wait times on the phone lines, increased call deflections, increased claims inquiry calls to the agency help lines and increased time in resolving claim issues that may directly impact the claimant's timely access and receipt of benefits, if determined eligible. To best serve the public, it is critical that the Division develop methods for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our claims process. Additionally, singular focus of function for staff that comprise an organizations workforce results, over time, in the creation of silos and knowledge, skill and abilities of staff that are constrained in scope to the limited function that they provide. Workforce development through cross-training is widely touted as an identifiable best practice in both the private and public sectors to breakdown silos and improve knowledge and skills of staff.

2. **What were the primary goals of the project?** The overarching goal was to improve the customer service experience in accessing the Unemployment Insurance program. The targets to achieve this were to increase the agency's ability to service incoming claim calls while, at the same time, improving overall efficiency and effectiveness by allowing subject matter experts to place a greater focus on addressing claimant concerns and processing claims that may have issues for investigation that require resolution. Primary target improvements were; lower average wait times for our customers, an increase in number of calls answered and a reduction in deflected calls effectively resulting in timelier processing of UI claims, quicker resolution of claims issues and greater customer satisfaction. In addition to improved customer service, the Division aimed to breakdown existing silos and improve the knowledge, skills and abilities though cross-training of its workforce to better serve the public and to develop staff for future opportunities within the agency. *(150 words or less.)*

3. **Describe the project:** The project team identified staff throughout all sections of the agency for training and quick deployment during peak workloads to, first and foremost, better serve the public but to also enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of its workforce by instilling agency mission and values through broader understanding of the Unemployment Insurance program, its purpose and those it was commissioned to serve. Experienced claims center staff developed a formal classroom training combined with computer based simulations and hands on observation to rapidly train over 100 staff throughout the agency in the proper handling of initial claims calls and in proper recording of information in UInteract (Unemployment Insurance modernized system). The agency was able to effectively and considerably augment regular claims center staff and greatly improve efficiencies in call handling, timeliness in claims processing and customer satisfaction. *(200 words or less.)*

4. **What technology, if any, was used in the development, implementation, maintenance or measurement of the project?** The Division leveraged Adobe Captivate simulations created during the UI Modernization project along with PowerPoint in the initial training of the identified staff. The Division additionally leveraged technology to allow for real-time observation prior to newly cross-trained staff taking live calls. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system as well as the UInteract and the CISCO Unified Intelligence Center was leveraged in the implementation/utilization of the cross-trained staff, ensuring calls and resulting work assignments were properly routed and assigned. Training in screen navigation and proper data entry in the new UInteract system ensured staff were sufficiently prepared to handle claims intake. (150 words or less.)
5. **Explain how the accomplishment of the team exceeds its regular duties and responsibilities.** Division sections that participate in the cross-training initiative come from every area of the agency; UI Tax, UI Appeals, and UI Integrity, not solely the UI Benefits section. The regular responsibilities of staff are typically dependent on the work section and unit to which they are assigned and would normally exclude initial claims intake for units not within the UI Benefits section. Assisting in taking initial claims calls during seasonally high workloads has helped to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the agency, eliminate silos, expand knowledge, and develop new skills of the Division's workforce beyond the role regularly assigned and into the claims intake process. (150 words or less.)
6. **Which of the following describes the intended benefits of the project?** (Check all that apply and provide an explanation.)
- Cost Reduction Time Savings Increased Effectiveness
- Improved Process Other: Describe

IV. RESULTS / MEASUREMENT

1. **Explain how the success of the project was measured and what outcomes were achieved.** Missouri Division of Employment Security leverages the CISCO Unified Intelligence Center (CUIC) to monitor call statistics for each of our claims centers individually and collectively. This allows the agency to not only monitor real-time call handling and evaluate how teams are keeping up with incoming call volumes on each of our lines, but also enables real-time resource allocation and adjustment to handle quickly shifting workloads. Additionally, the CUIC provides statistics on calls answered, calls deflected and average wait times for those in queue. The cross-training initiative of the Division was targeting increase in calls answered and decreases in both average customer wait time and calls deflected as metrics to determine success of the initiative. Comparing a 5 week period ending the week of January 20, 2018 to the same period one year earlier, the improvements to both the agency's efficiency and effectiveness is clearly evident. Calls answered increased by 29 percent, wait time decreased by 41 percent and total number of deflected calls decreased by 72 percent. Furthermore, the Division was targeting workforce development through an intensive training effort to ensure quick and significant augmentation of staff to improve service. The Division succeeded in readying over 100 additional staff to assist in initial claims intake. (Explanation should not exceed 300-500 words.)
2. **Are the benefits derived from this project:** (Check only one.)
- Recurring One-time
3. **If recurring, how will the benefits be sustained?** The Division continues to leverage cross-trained staff periodically throughout the year to ensure gained skills are maintained and can be easily

leveraged for the anticipated peak winter workload as well as other workload increases that occur throughout the year. Additionally, classroom training combined with direct mentoring by experienced staff will continue to be provided to develop newly hired staff and for those that have not previously received training in UI claims intake via the Interactive Voice Response system. In line with the Governor's priorities, this focus on maintaining the skills gained from this internal workforce development effort will result in a consistently managed pool of resources for quick deployment and greater efficiency and effectiveness in administering the UI program. (Explain in 150 words or less.)

V. RECOGNITION / AWARDS

1. Has this project previously been nominated for the Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity? If yes, when? N/A
2. If yes, for which category was it nominated? N/A
3. Has this project received any other awards or recognition? If yes, describe. No.

VI. NOMINATOR'S INFORMATION

Nominating Department: Department of Labor & Industrial Relations, Division of Employment Security

Name: Chris Slinkard

Signature:



Telephone Number: 573-751-8086

E-Mail Address: Chris.Slinkard@labor.mo.gov

VII. DEPARTMENT COORDINATOR'S INFORMATION

Name: Michelle Jacobsen

Signature:



Telephone Number: 573-751-3579

E-Mail Address:

Michelle.Jacobsen@labor.mo.gov

VIII. DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR APPROVAL

Department Director's Name: Anna Hui

Signature:



Nomination must be signed ONLY by the Department Director to be eligible for consideration. Nominations not signed by the Department Director will be returned to the agency coordinator.