

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) REEMPLOYMENT AND ELIGIBILITY  
ASSESSMENT (REA) PROPOSAL OUTLINE FOR STATES CONTINUING A UI  
REA PROGRAM**

**1. UI REA GRANT PROJECT SUMMARY**

Florida has 19 Regional Workforce Boards (RWBs) that will participate in the REA 2014 Grant. Both urban and rural regions are represented by the 19 participating RWBs as well as regions in the north, central, and southern sections of the State.

Last year, the State agreed to conduct a minimum number of 96,163 assessments with UI claimants selected from the State's profiling pool to participate in the REA program. The State did not meet this number, instead scheduling 70,000 for the grant period (April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014). Consequently, the State will first schedule the remaining 26,000 claimants to meet the terms of its agreement with ETA.

As first claims are diminishing, the State does not anticipate serving more than 60,000 claimants under this extension.

Florida selects REA participants by assigning a coefficient value to predict the likelihood of benefit exhaustion. The State does not plan to change its current REA service delivery design system and processes as Florida's system currently meets the guidelines and requirements of UIPL 10-14 for the 2014 REA program. Florida will continue to offer initial REAs to participants (see description of REA process below). Florida does not plan to incorporate subsequent REAs into its process during this grant year.

**2. PROJECT COSTS**

**A. Fixed Costs:** \$4,933,760

**B. Incremental Costs**

N/A

**C. Initial and Subsequent UI REAs**

Projected number of initial REAs 60,000

Projected number of subsequent REAs 0

Projected number of completed REAs

Projected number of REA no-shows

**a. Staff Costs**

<b>Position</b>	<b># Hours</b>	<b>Cost per Hour</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
REA Workforce Project Manager	1450	27.35	39,657
REA Operations/Contract Analyst	490	54.75	26,828
Grant Management & Contract Administration	210	54.75	11,497
REA Systems AND Data Project Analyst (see details below)	2730	54.75	149,467
RA Project Manager	720	54.75	39,420

Local Workforce Board Customer Service Representatives	130500	32.00	4,176,000
Claims Examiners	9500	26.36	250,420
Cost Pools and Risks	-	-	42,720
Indirect Cost	-	-	61,324
<b>TOTAL STAFF COSTS</b>			<b>\$4,797,333</b>

The Eligibility Review Program (ERP) is conducted by State merit staff while the REA assessments are conducted by the local workforce board staff or local service provider staff. The ERPs are estimated to take 15 minutes to conduct. Florida conducts the ERPs on all REA participants who have completed an REA assessment. Those claimants who do not attend their scheduled assessment appointment are referred to UI adjudication for fact finding.

The State employs a project manager to oversee the REA program, monitor grant performance, and provide updates to management. A part-time REA operations analyst is assigned to assist with the day-to-day operational activities of the REA program. The State utilizes the services of a UI project manager on a part-time basis as the Bureaus of Workforce Services and Reemployment Assistance (UI) operate the program jointly. Additionally, a grants manager is assigned to manage the administrative components of the REA Grant. These managers charge a small percentage of their time to the REA Grant.

The REA program is fully integrated into the State's management information system, Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM). This is Florida's official online portal to virtual job-matching services and many other workforce resources and is accessed via the Internet. REA systems and data analysts are involved with data management and also in the development of internal UI and Workforce reports as well as reports for Regional staff. As a result, the State is continuing the part-time employment of systems and data project analysts to manage the day-to-day technology interfaces and performance data requirements of the REA Program.

Here is a table that shows the CONNECT-related hours tied to REA, as well as ongoing data management and reporting:

Task / Job Order #	Design	Development	Testing	Implementation	Operations	
CR 91 – REA rescheduling process	226	381	153	841	105	
CR 174 – Regional Workforce Board Breakdown for 9129	149	218	87	49	63	
CR 39650 – ERPs & REA-	47	120	100	42		

related issues for adjudication						
Subtotal	422	719	340	932	168	2,581
Data management & reporting						149
Total Systems & Data Project Analyst						2,730

The Cost Pools and Risk Management category includes the costs associated with all work related activities, including the administration and operation of the REA program. Also included in fixed costs are those associated with hiring and supporting REA program employees and expenses such as computers, office space, postage, telephone charges and equipment maintenance.

**b. Other Costs**

Licensing Fees Workforce MIS: Tracking Module for Assessment & Work Search Activities & Assessment Component Module		\$108,000
Staff training costs (10 site visits)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 site visits \$25,000</li> <li>• Laptop purchase \$2,500</li> </ul>		\$27,500
Supplies		\$927
<b>TOTAL OTHER COSTS</b>		<b>\$136,427</b>

Florida's Workforce management information system, Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM), is a licensed system. The modules associated with the REA Program are noted above along with the annual licensing fee. Without these modules the State cannot effectively operate the REA program as they contain elements that allow for the auto-scheduling of assessment appointments, work search appointments, and the reporting of attendance (i.e. attended or no show), as well as the capture of the service codes for the required REA components (i.e. orientation, assessment, LMI, employability development plan) and the additional reemployment and training services.

Furthermore, with the launch of CONNECT, the new Reemployment Assistance management information system, several automation processes need to be updated to ensure the proper processing of REA employment reviews (ERPs): the creation and resolution of issues properly tracked through adjudication and potential disqualifications. These automation updates will be a one-time expense.

The State has strengthened its training in all workforce programs, including REA. It plans to conduct regional training for all participating RWBs. Ten visits are planned for a total of \$25,000 and a laptop is to be purchased for the delivery of training & tracking of attendance.

**c. Total Costs**

Staff Costs	\$4,797,333
Other Costs	\$136,427
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>\$4,933,760</b>

**3. INFORMATION ABOUT THE UI REA PROGRAM**

**A. UI REA Staffing and Time**

In Florida, RWBs have local autonomy (within State and federal policy guidelines) to develop processes and procedures that best address their local community and unique issues. As a result, RWBs in Florida handle the REA assessments in a variety of ways. The chart below provides a summary of this information.

**Initial REA**

Activity	Staff	Individual/Group	Average Time
Eligibility Review	UI staff only	Individual	15 minutes
Orientation	RWB One-Stop staff (merit or non-merit)	Group and individual	30 minutes
Labor Market Information	RWB One-Stop staff (merit or non-merit)	Individual	15 minutes
Assessment and Individual Service Plan	RWB One-Stop staff (merit or non-merit)	Individual	45 minutes
Referral to Reemployment Services	RWB One-Stop staff (merit or non-merit)	Individual	15 minutes
<b>Total Time for REA Assessment</b>			<b>2 hours</b>

**B. Service Delivery Staff**

In Florida, three types of staff may conduct portions of the REA required assessment staff:

- **UI Staff:** Claims-takers, who are state merit staff, conduct the ERPs. They are housed within DEO and are not located in local career centers. The ERPs are performed after the workforce activities have been completed. UI supervisors train the UI claims-takers and UI adjudicators to ensure that the ERPs are properly conducted, that eligibility issues are noted, and that they are adjudicated to determine whether a disqualification should be recorded. The UI Supervisor randomly reviews cases to identify and correct errors in the process.
- **One-Stop Staff:** RWBs may assign merit staff, employed by DEO but who report to the RWBs operationally, or non-merit staff to provide the required REA workforce activities. The REA Workforce Project Manager provides guidance, training, and technical assistance to these front-line staff.

### C. Selection of UI REA Participants

Florida uses its Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) pool for selecting its REA participants. Working with USDOL's profiling expert, the State has developed a profiling methodology which assigns a coefficient value to predict the likelihood of benefit exhaustion. In keeping with USDOL's recommendations for selection from the WPRS pool, those with the highest scores are deemed to be the most likely to exhaust and are selected for Florida's Priority Reemployment Planning Program (PREP).

Claimants excluded from entering the WPRS pool include those who reside out of State, claimants with a return to work date within 8 weeks of filing their claim, claimants who are members of a labor union, and claimants who were issued their first payment after 42 days of filing their claim.

To ensure that a representative comparison group is in place, 15% of the non-PREP claimants are randomly set aside. RWBs schedule REA workforce activities from the remainder. The automated process currently in place schedules REA claimants based on their profile score –filling the slots with those with the highest scores. However, in order to make the REA-scheduled claimants better match the comparison group, the State intends to schedule REA claimants randomly as well.

### D. Description of a UI REA

REA workforce activities are mostly conducted as one-on-one, in-person appointments by a career center staff representative who assists selected claimants with the intensive reemployment services that will help them get back to work quickly.

These services are provided to the REA-scheduled claimants:

- Orientation  
Type of staff: merit or non-merit career center staff.  
The orientation is a basic overview of the available services and programs offered through the career center. This may include information about the resource room, partner programs, veteran services, EFM, supportive services or organizations which may assist the claimant obtain employment or training.  
The manner in which orientation is provided varies among the RWBs: individually, in group setting, or virtually.
- Initial assessment  
Type of staff: merit or non-merit career center staff.  
The initial assessment is conducted in a one-on-one interview at the career center and includes a review of the participant's strengths, weaknesses, and barriers. Assessment tools vary among RWBs.
- Labor market information (LMI)  
Type of staff: merit or non-merit career center staff.  
LMI is provided to all REA claimants individually. The claimant receives information on how to access LMI in EFM and through other databases. Each REA participant is shown how to tailor the LMI to meet his or her unique employment needs relative to education level, employment history, experience, interests, and local demand.
- Employability development plan (EDP)  
Type of staff: merit or non-merit career center staff.  
The EDP is developed jointly by the REA staff and the claimant during one-on-one assessment interviews. It takes into account the initial assessment results and develops a strategy for the

claimant to obtain employment in a demand occupation. The EDP includes goals and action steps, referral to work search activities or to other services. The State requires REA participants to sign a separate EDP Responsibility Statement that clarifies the participant's responsibilities in attending work search activities. At the conclusion of the EDP process, career center staff identify job openings for which the REA participant is qualified and provides job referrals.

Once all of the REA services are completed, career center staff record this information in EFM. This triggers the eligibility review which is conducted by UI staff through telephone interviews.

#### **E. Scheduling the UI REA in the Claims Series**

Florida uses the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services program for selecting its REA participants. The pool created is the Priority Reemployment Program (PREP). UI claimants enter the PREP pool on the fourth week of the claim if they meet the required criteria and have received payment within 42 days of filing the initial claim. Exclusions from entering the UI profile pool include claimants who reside out of State, claimants with a return to work date within 8 weeks of filing their claims, claimants who are members of labor unions, and claimants who were issued their first payments after 42 days of filing their claims.

The UI profile pool is processed weekly to the Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM) management information system enabling the career centers to schedule claimants for REA appointments during the fifth week of their claim. Claimants who are not monetarily eligible or have a pending adjudication issue are not populated in the profile pool at that time as they will not meet the requirements of the study.

#### **F. Single or Multiple UI REAs**

Florida does not plan to conduct multiple UI REAs for each claimant.

#### **G. Failure to Report for a UI REA**

When a claimant is scheduled for an REA activity, the notice informs him or her that failure to report as scheduled and/or failure to participate in scheduled REA activities may lead to disqualification. The notice provides a contact number to allow the claimant to notify the career center staff that he or she will be unable to attend the scheduled REA. Career center staff may reset the appointment within seven days of the original appointment date. If the claimant cannot reset the appointment within the 7 day time limit, the career center staff advise the claimant that failure to report as instructed will be reported to UI Adjudication.

REA-scheduled claimants who did not show up for their appointments and failed to contact the career center are marked as "no-shows" in EFM. A no-show report is generated on a weekly basis and sent to UI adjudicators to conduct fact finding.

If an REA participant fails to participate in required work search activities appointments as noted in their EDP, the participant will also be referred to adjudication for fact finding. A UI adjudicator contacts the claimant by telephone and conducts fact-finding to determine why the claimant did not report for the REA appointment as instructed. Reasonable attempt criteria must be met when contacting the claimant. The claimant is questioned thoroughly to determine if an eligibility issue exists. If an issue exists, the appropriate nonmonetary determination will be issued on the claim. Specific nonmonetary determination reason codes are being created for this purpose. If the claimant does not have a specific status on the claim such as moved out of State, returned to work, etc., the claimant may be held ineligible to receive benefits for the week in which the failure to report to the REA appointment occurred. If the claimant does not respond to the UI adjudicator regarding the issue, the payment of benefits will be stopped on the claim.

At this time, Florida is not rescheduling REA appointments.

#### **H. Collaboration with Service Providers**

The 24 RWBs are subrecipients of the State. To formalize this relationship, DEO executes memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and grant agreements with the RWBs that set forth the terms of agreement for cooperation and consultation with regard to the workforce program services. The purpose of this agreement is to establish an organizational framework to integrate the delivery of workforce program services into the one-stop delivery system managed by the RWBs.

Each RWB receives its level of allocated workforce funds by way of a Notice of Funds Availability (NFA). The NFAs for the REA grants require the RWBs to follow the State's REA Policy Guidance.

RWBs are provided ongoing feedback about the program through monthly reports and periodic conference calls. REA is included as a part of DEO's training activities and is the subject of program monitoring.

#### **I. UI REA Required Reports**

- **ETA 9128 UI REA WORKLOADS REPORT**

Over the last four quarters, Florida has seen a decrease in the total number of REAs scheduled. This is probably due to the shift in the economy. The decrease was exacerbated by the transition to Florida's new UI system, CONNECT: from the time when the system first went live in October 2013 until the end of January 2014, no pool counts were generated and therefore no new claimants were being scheduled for REA services. The pools are now being generated, but the mechanism with which to track the REA claimant statistics and completed ERPs in CONNECT is not in place at this time.

The disqualifications and overpayments on Florida's outcome reports for the last four quarters show only 1 disqualification for issues other than failure to report. There were no other types of disqualifications. During the USDOL onsite monitoring visit of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's (DEO) REA Grant from December 9 through December 13, 2013, it was discovered that when releasing decisions in the old UI system, Legacy, an REA indicator was not being selected, and therefore the count was going to the regular ERP count, not the REA ERP count. It was also discovered that the training system within the Adjudication section was not properly training staff about the requirement for REA coding during the release of their decisions. For a more thorough discussion about this issue, please see Attachment D.

- **ETA 9129 UI REA OUTCOMES REPORT**

In terms of the average duration and benefits payments for Florida's REA program during the last 3 quarters reported on the ETA 9129, the study group appears to have underperformed versus the control group. This is probably due to Florida's previous method of selecting the REA control group that was determined to be incorrect: Florida was first serving the "most likely to exhaust" in PREP and then REA in a descending coefficient order. For a more thorough discussion about this issue, please see Attachment D.

#### **J. Narrative Description of Data Reporting Problems**

Because Florida anticipates a continued decrease in the overall number of initial claims, and therefore smaller PREP pool counts, we have reduced our service levels for the 2014 REA grant year to 60,000.

In response to USDOL's onsite monitoring visit and REA Review, Florida's UI program created training documents specifically targeting REA issues, coding, and determinations. They also conducted an REA

training session in February 2014. ERPs are now being conducted and monitored closely, and Florida expects to see a definite increase in the number of completed REAs reflected in ETA 9128 reports later this year.

CONNECT issues are continually being addressed. DEO's IT teams, along with the workforce and UI business units, are working closely with the CONNECT vendor to tie REA claimants' adjudication issues to the REA program so that any disqualifications, overpayments, etc. are properly reflected on the ETA 9128 and eventually ETA 9129 reports.

As for Florida's methodology for selecting the REA control group, a new process was established in August 2013 such that the group is being chosen randomly from the REA pool prior to scheduling. This has resulted in a more valid comparison between the treatment and control groups for the REA study and eventually will produce better outcomes on the ETA 9129.

#### **K. REA Activities to Share with Other States**

- **Appointment Reminders**

Having staff call selected claimants a day prior to remind them of their scheduled appointments has increased the "show rate" for REA participants.

- **Easily Identified Appointment Letters**

It is recommended that RWBs use either brightly colored envelopes or paper when they mail the notifications of the REA appointments. Stamping the envelopes with the words "Reemployment Appointment" may catch the claimant's attention and encourage them to open the piece of mail.

- **Work Search Activities**

Develop an introduction method or system for the REA participants to meet WP or WIA staff that will be providing the additional work search activities discovered during the EDP. This type of hand-off for the specialized work search activity has proven to return the REA participant to the workforce more quickly than someone not afforded REA participation.

- **Follow up with REA Participants who have Not Found Employment**

Although the REA program does not require this, it is recommended that each RWB establish a process within its local policies and procedures to follow up with REA participants who have not found employment after all required services have been rendered. As an example, some RWBs have an initiated alerts system in EFM for 30 days prior to soft exit for follow up.