



NEWS RELEASE

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Illinois Awarded Additional \$11.25 Million Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor *Funds Will Support Continued Strengthening, Modernizing Unemployment Insurance System*

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) has been awarded an \$11.25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to support continued modernization, fraud defense, and equitable access to unemployment insurance (UI) systems nationwide. Illinois was one of 19 states and territories selected to receive more than \$204 million in federal funds to help make UI systems more reliable and accessible to users.

This is the sixth UI modernization award IDES has received from U.S. DOL, totaling nearly \$30 million, to better strengthen, streamline, and enhance the customer experience and accessibility of the UI program and defend against fraud. Previous grant awards have focused on fraud prevention and detection and begun to fund equity-focused projects, all grounded in using expanded data to identify potential inequities in the unemployment pipeline within underrepresented groups. Using new demographic data and user insights, the Department intends to refine UI service delivery technology, processes, and communications for more equitable access and experience. This includes making UI information easier to understand, translating information into multiple languages, expanded self-service digital options, and increased outreach to community level organizations.

“IDES remains fully committed to enhancing accessibility, improving the claimant experience, and strengthening the defense of the UI system, all of which are long-term projects supported by these grant awards,” **said IDES Acting Director Ray Marchiori**. “The Department is proud to be one of the grantees selected to receive these funds and will continue to leverage as much federal funding as possible to make critical modernization improvements in Illinois.”

IDES has partnered and worked closely with U.S. DOL on cutting edge user research over the past year, analyzing more than 300,000 survey responses directly from claimants about their experiences applying for UI and conducting live claimant filing observation to identify burdens and challenges for applicants. This research is informing new future technological upgrades to the online claim application and user portal.

“The U.S. Department of Labor prioritizes the modernization of the nation’s unemployment insurance systems and making them more accessible, efficient and secure,” **said Laurence Bafundo, Director of the Department of Labor’s Office of Unemployment Insurance Modernization**. “Through the recent award of an IT modernization grant to Illinois, the Department of Labor continues its partnership to help the state make measurable improvements to their customer experience and adopt modular approaches that make technology easier to change and maintain.”

U.S. DOL announced this current grant opportunity, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, for states in July 2023 to continue to support UI system improvements nationwide.

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About the Department of Employment Security

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) provides vital employment services to Illinois workers, jobseekers, and employers with resources including [Job Fairs](#), [IllinoisJobLink.com](#), and [WorkShare IL](#), analyzes and disseminates actionable [Labor Market Information](#), and administers the [Unemployment Insurance Program](#). To see the full range of services provided by IDES, and for the latest news concerning the department, visit IDES.Illinois.gov.