

2016

Documentation and Validation *of*

Required Work Search for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Eligibility

In the 21st Century *Labor Market*



EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR





Documentation and Validation of Required Work Search

Changing labor markets and advances in technology have revolutionized how businesses find talent and jobseekers look for work. This development makes it imperative for the public workforce system to continuously adapt and reframe reemployment strategies and policies designed to support reemployment of unemployed workers.

Online talent platforms, professional networking sites, and social media are evolving drastically, perpetuating the shift in labor market dynamics. Online job boards such as Indeed, CareerBuilder, or Monster are still among popular ways to connect job seekers to employers. However, a simple Google search (e.g., “What is the best way to look for a job?”) will reveal that even such online job boards that seem advanced when compared to the old-fashioned circling of job ads in the Sunday newspaper, may no longer be among job seeker or employers’ top choices for modern job matching.

Recognizing that how people find work in today’s labor market is very different from how that was done in past decades, many states are re-thinking their work search policies to expand the scope of actions that meet their requirements. A Pathway to Reemployment Framework has been developed by a collaborative of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, states, and the U.S Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration which provides state policymakers and other stakeholders an alternative approach to UI work search policies, and a set of promising practices, behavioral insights, and tools related to UI work search requirements that states may elect to adopt. Examples of proposed job matching strategies in this Framework include a wide variety of Internet-based activities such as posting resumes to job boards, using online career tools, and creating profiles on professional networking sites, as well as participation in industry networking events, workshops on job search techniques and skills, and using labor market and career information to inform reemployment plan development.

To effectively support reemployment, work search requirements for the 21st Century must include an array of activities that support reemployment rather than limiting those requirements to traditional “employer contacts” which does not reflect how most jobseekers find work today. In addition, work search policies should be flexible by, for example, adjusting the number of required activities each week based on the length of unemployment, labor markets, and economic conditions.

In the process of “re-envisioning” work search requirements, it is essential to bear in mind that a founding principle of unemployment insurance is that unemployed workers must be able, available, and actively looking for work in order to be eligible for benefits. Through laws, regulations and policies, each state defines what “work search” means for UI eligibility purposes.



Ensuring that UI beneficiaries are actually meeting work search requirements has always been a challenge for state UI programs. Some states accept an attestation that the requirement was met each week; some states require submission of a description of work search contacts each week; other states tell beneficiaries to keep a written record of their work search which they can be asked to submit to state staff for review. Some states that collect information about work search activities try to verify some portion of the submissions, e.g., a random sample each week or one or two weeks from each individual. Still, we know that failure to meet work search requirements significantly contributes to improper payments of UI benefits.

One’s first thought might be that revising work search policies to include Internet-based job search activities could make it more difficult for states to monitor and/or verify that their requirements are being met. However, careful analysis shows that many of today’s on-line, networking, and other job search methods can be documented and verified as easily, if not more so, than traditional work search activities.

A menu of 21st century job search activities, as proposed in the Pathway to Reemployment Framework, is described below, along with suggestions for documenting and/or verifying each activity for UI eligibility purposes.

Proposed Work Search Activity	Documentation/Verification Strategy
Creating a Reemployment Plan using a state-provided electronic tool can be an important first step for UI beneficiaries in returning to work.	Plans could be submitted electronically or on paper when initially developed and revised and/or when requested by the state UI agency.
Creating a resume and/or uploading resumes to an online job board.	A print out of the resume or a confirmation email from the site used.
Registering for work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State’s labor exchange system, • Placement firms, • Temporary work agencies, or • Educational institutions that have placement offices. 	While a “basic” registration with the State labor exchange is generally required for UI eligibility, a “full” registration (work history, resume, job preferences, etc.) could be considered a work search activity that is easily verified by electronic crossmatch. Registration with private employment agencies can be documented by providing an electronic or paper copy of the registration form or a copy of an email confirming registration. Some private employment agencies, particularly temp agencies, are willing to provide an electronic file of their registrants to state UI agencies.

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Proposed Work Search Activity	Documentation/Verification Strategy
<p>Using on-line career tools, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job match advisors, • Other national job boards, or • My Skills My Future. 	<p>A print out or screen shot of the results from tools used.</p>
<p>Logging in and looking for work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the state labor exchange, or • In any other online job matching system. 	<p>A print out of a resume or job application or a confirmation email from the site that was used.</p>
<p>Using reemployment services in one-stops, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining and using labor market and career information, • Participating in profiling (if required to do so), • Participating in instructional workshops (resume, interviewing, job searching, etc.), or • Participating in other activities/specialized services, e.g., job clubs, job fairs, etc.) 	<p>Use of these services is documented in state and/or local case management systems which are generally accessible to state UI agencies electronically. One-Stops frequently have sign-in logs when customers participate in events or use the resource room that may also be a source of documentation.</p>
<p>Completing job applications for employers that have (or are reasonably expected to have) job openings, or following through on job referrals or job development attempts, as directed by workforce center staff.</p>	<p>As is the case today, these activities can be documented by the individual's attestation and potentially verified by follow-up contacts with employers to whom an application was made.</p>
<p>Applying for and/or participating in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner-sponsored reemployment services, or • Non-WIOA-related/sponsored training, such as digital literacy, GED, or ESL, when the training is job-related and the individual remains available for work. 	<p>Generally, these activities are documented by the individual's attestation along with any documents issued by the sponsor or training provider showing enrollment, participation, or completion.</p>

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Proposed Work Search Activity	Documentation/Verification Strategy
Creating a personal user profile on a professional networking site (e.g., LinkedIn).	A printed screen shot of the profile which could be verified by the state agency through access to LinkedIn or other sites.
Participating in work-related networking events (e.g., job clubs, industry association events).	A registration confirmation, ticket, or name badge showing the name and date of the event.
Making in-person visits to employers that have or are reasonably expected to have job openings.	These visits are difficult to document or verify and the individual’s attestation may be the only documentation available.
Going on interviews with employers (virtually or in-person).	As they are today, these are generally documented by attestation and can be potentially verified by contact with the employer.

Making a Reemployment Plan the foundation for UI claimants’ work search efforts, including those activities outlined above, serves dual purposes and achieves important outcomes. The Plan serves as a valuable reemployment tool for the individual as well as a place to document work search activities to meet state UI eligibility requirements. The result is a win-win scenario. More UI claimants engage in more effective work search activities that get them back to work faster and also meet state requirements; there are fewer improper payments due to failure to meet work search requirements; and states reduce benefit costs and lower employers’ UI taxes.

*The **Pathway to Reemployment Framework** is a set of resources and tools that provide state policymakers and other stakeholders with a “re-envisioned” approach to work search for unemployment insurance claimants, and a set of state strategies, behavioral insights, and tools related to UI work search requirements that states may elect to adopt.*
