

# Agenda

## Agenda for UI Working Group, November 17th, 2021

- Welcome
- Introductions
- 2022 UI Tax Schedule
- Facilitating and streamlining applications for Unemployment insurance pursuant to Title 26 Sec. 1194 Sub-sec. 1-A
- Creation of Employer Liaison program
- Review of UI technology and software
- Closing and Next steps

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# *2022 UI Tax Schedule*

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Laura Boyett, Director  
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation  
Maine Department of Labor

November 17, 2021

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# 2022 UI Tax Schedule

- Governor Mills transferred additional \$88 million to Trust Fund (combination of CARES Act Relief & ARPA funds)
- As a result, UI tax rate will remain at Schedule B
- Without fund transfer, Schedule E (56% increase)
- *Adjusted Annual* Rates will range from a low of \$63.60 to a high of \$739.20, with an average (new employer) rate of \$268.80 per employee paid on the first \$12,000 in wages
- 20 rate categories – individual employer rate based on their total taxable wages, total contribution history and their unemployment experience in relation to other employers



# Comparison to 2021 & Schedule E

Adjusted UI Rates	Schedule B - 2021	Schedule E in 2022 if \$88 million <i>not</i> transferred	Schedule B in 2022 w/\$88 million transfer
Lowest annual rate	\$58.80	\$100.80	<b>\$63.60</b> <b>(\$4.80 increase over 2021)</b>
Highest annual rate	\$697.20	\$1,066.80	<b>\$739.20</b> <b>(\$42.00 increase)</b>
Average annual rate	\$253.20	\$394.80	<b>\$268.80</b> <b>(\$15.60 increase)</b>



Filing for Benefits  
and Employer  
Reporting:  
*Current state, challenges, and  
planned enhancements*

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Suzan McKechnie, Deputy Bureau Director  
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation  
Maine Department of Labor

November 17, 2021

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# Overarching Question

- D. Methods to streamline and facilitate application for unemployment insurance benefits that will increase access for unemployed workers, simplify reporting requirements for employers and determine any clarifications or modifications that may be needed related to the submission of partial unemployment claim forms in accordance with Title 26, section 1194, subsection 1-A;

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# Filing for Benefits

## Current State:

### 1. Claimants: online

- Self-service
- By phone with a staff person

### 2. Claimants & Employers:

#### • Workshare:

- ✓ *Employer submits Workshare plan*
- ✓ *Claimant files initial claim for benefits*
- ✓ *Claimant and employer file weekly claims for benefits*

#### • Partial claim forms under 1194(1)(A):

- ✓ *Form B-9 (“Green Slip”): First one both initial and weekly claim form*
- ✓ *Subsequent Green Slips: Weekly claim form*

## Challenges:

- Misinterpretation
- Technological challenges
- Wait times on the phone
- Resolving mistakes
- Workshare depends on claimant and employer
- Green slips are a paper process.
- Green slips are limited to a single submission without earnings
- Claims filing (initial and weekly) requires a claimant certification.

## Pending enhancements:

- Human-centric re-design of claims process
- Mobile friendly app
- Significant hiring
- Workshare enhancements and outreach
- Review of green slips process



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# Employer Reporting

## Current State:

- Wage information and Separation response options (Me. B-1):
  - ✓ *Paper (fax, mail, email)*
  - ✓ *SIDES (via Third-Party Administrator/TPA)*
  - ✓ *SIDES E-Response (via web service)*
- Fact-Finding Notice:
  - ✓ *Paper (fax, mail, email)*
- Wage Verification Forms
  - ✓ *Paper (fax, mail, email)*
- Quarterly Wage Reports:
  - ✓ *Electronically*
  - ✓ *Bulk upload*
  - ✓ *Paper (fax, mail, email)*

## Challenges:

- Paper processing delays
- Mail delivery times increased
- Volumes of paperwork
- Receiving quarterly reports without a matching employer record in system
- Employers knowing whom to contact for different issues (Tax or Benefits)
- Employers having different contacts for payroll, HR, claims paperwork

## Pending enhancements:

- Increased promotion of SIDES E-Response
  - ✓ *Secure*
  - ✓ *Faster reporting false claims*
  - ✓ *Quicker knowledge of claim filing*
- Integration of the wage audits into the SIDES product



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# Maine Bureau of Unemployment Tax Division: *An Overview*

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Kerry Hekl, Tax Division Director  
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation  
Maine Department of Labor

November 17, 2021



# Overarching Question

- E. How an employer liaison contract might be designed to provide assistance to the business community in interacting with the unemployment insurance program, focused on the goal of reducing administrative burden and improving user experience, including recommendations of a funding source to support such a contract;

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# Overview of Tax Division

- Currently maintain approximately 50,000 employer accounts
  - 49,000 rated employer
  - 1,000 direct reimbursable accounts
- Around 80% of employers use a Third-Party Administrator (TPA) or transmitter to file their quarterly tax and wage reports through a bulk upload process and pay contributions through ACH credit.
- Remaining 20% of employers file and pay electronically in ReEmployME or by paper
- Employer Services Provided
  - Register new businesses and process acquisitions
  - Provide assistance with questions and issues
  - Assist in understanding Maine UI laws and employer requirements,
  - Assist with navigating the system (self service portal)
  - We are available to speak to business associations about UI tax matters
  - Provide account maintenance

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# Employer Services and Resources

- In ReEmployME employers have access to their accounts for inquiry, account maintenance, filing reports and making payments. This was not available with the prior UI tax system.
- Correspondence continues to be updated to make it easier to read and understand - new format and everyday language. Correspondence has been “tested” with employers. (examples on next slides)
- Online resources are available including:
  - Employer Guide to UC Tax, benefits and appeals
  - Frequently Asked Questions and Tax Glossary
  - Videos that show how to register a business, create a ReEmployME portal account and how to protect your business from higher UI taxes
  - ReEmployME self-service manual for employers and TPAs
  - A specific webpage for Payroll Providers, TPAs and Transmitters
- Tax phone lines are open from 8 -12:30, Monday through Friday
- UC Tax email address for employers to email questions and documents. Email is noted on all correspondence and after hours phone line recording.
- Constituent Messaging Portal





Maine Department of Labor  
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation  
End of Program Notice



Date Mailed: XX/XX/2021

EMPLOYER INFORMATION

Employer Name:

MDOL SEIN:

Employer Address:

NOTICE INFORMATION

**What is this notice for?**

This notice announces that key provisions under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Continued Assistance Act, and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) will expire the week ending September 4, 2021.

**Why are you receiving this?**

As a Maine direct reimbursable employer you are eligible to receive a 75% reduction of benefit charges from week ending April 10, 2021, to week ending September 4, 2021.

**What you need to know?**

This provision of ARPA will expire the week ending September 4, 2021. There will be no reduction of benefit charges for weeks filed on or after September 5, 2021. Your charge statements beginning with the September 2021 statement will reflect this change.

**What are the next steps?**

No further action is needed. If you have questions, please call the Maine Department of Labor at (207) 621-5120.



*ReEmployME System:  
Planned Improvements  
to Improve Access*

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Laura Boyett, Director  
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation  
Maine Department of Labor

November 17, 2021



# Overarching Question

- G. Any software or technology issues contributing to delays, claims processing issues and paperwork burden to businesses that may be resolved through technological means or any ways to promote improved claimant or employer user experience and interface with the unemployment insurance system.

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# ReEmployME System

- Benefits implemented in late 2017, Tax in 2018. Replaced 40+ yr old brittle, inflexible, unreliable & unsupportable systems
- Powerful back-end, rules-based engine – Cloud hosted, enhanced security & fraud protections
- Multi-state core program plus individual state unique programming
- Flexible & readily adaptable to changing needs
- Benefits & Tax systems fully integrated – previously had been separate with complicated bridge system that limited functionality

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# ReEmployME System

## Benefits:

- Pre-pandemic: supported 9 - 10 ongoing State & Federal UI Benefit programs (reg UI, UCX, UCFE, EB, DWB, TRA, ATAA, DUA, RESEA, plus MEO although not currently active).
- During early pandemic: *rapidly* added 6 new & complex benefit programs (PUA, PEUC, FPUC, LWA, PRP, MEUC)
- Since 3/15/20: processed over 154 thousand (not ID theft) initial claims (95% found eligible) & 4.6 million weekly claims
- Paid close to \$2.5 billion in state & federal benefits

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# ReEmployME System

## Tax:

- Currently supports just under 50,000 taxable & direct reimbursement employers
- Full, online functionality – reduced reliance on paper
- Provides employers with in-depth view of their own account including:
  - unemployment history,
  - payments,
  - changes

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# ReEmployME System

## **Advantages:**

- New system is far more robust, stable, adaptable & powerful
- Leverages multi-state funding for new & ongoing functionality
- Increased capacity to remain current & modernized

## ***But:***

- Existing customer interface does not meet needs of ***all*** individuals & employers for four reasons:
  - Unemployment terms and text used is not easily understood by those outside of the unemployment program
  - Look & feel of online screens can make navigation confusing
  - Not web/mobile responsive
  - Difficult for those with limited English proficiency

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# Goal – Equitable Access For All

Improvements using human-centered design began in Fall 2020 and continued through Winter/Spring:

- Used claimant surveys, interviews, design feedback & prototype testing to:
  - Create confirmation email/screen
  - Redesign weekly claim app & work search form
  - Update claim status terminology
- Incorporated “Plainspeak” in correspondence – claimant & employer
- Workshare improvements based on employer interviews
- Strengthened System Integrity – Fraud Protections



# Current & Ongoing Improvement Plans:

- Multi-state consortium commitment to improving customer experience for both claimants & employers
- Claimants:
  - Currently redesigning claimant registration & account screens which will be followed by:
    - Initial claims
    - Review weekly claim
    - Appeals & remaining functions
  - Chatbot & Voicebot (multi-lingual)
  - Web Responsive Apps (mobile friendly)
  - Improved communications – plainspeak, nano-videos



# Goal – Equitable Access For All

## Employer application plans:

- Chatbot & Voicebot
- Workshare improvements – self assessment tool, online login, inquiry screen, dashboard & reports, online application & weekly certifications
- Improved communications (plainspeak) w/employer input & testing
- Employer Portal improvements – communication hub



# Maine Involvement w/National Initiatives

- **US Digital Services – UI Modernization Project**
- **USDOL Office of Data Evaluation – Equitable Access Initiative**



# Next Meeting

## December 15th meeting items to discuss (December 15th 2-4 pm):

- Initial findings
- Additional discussion
- Report Deadline to Committee is January 15<sup>th</sup>
  
- Working Group Webpage:
  - <https://www.maine.gov/unemployment/stakeholders/>
  
- Working Group Email:
  - [UIStakeholdersGroup.DOL@maine.gov](mailto:UIStakeholdersGroup.DOL@maine.gov)

