

## **Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefit Operations Self-Assessment Tool: *Adjudications and Benefits Timeliness and Quality Reviews (BTQ)***

This self-assessment review of the state's Adjudications and Benefits Timeliness and Quality Review (BTQ) functional areas will examine fact-finding, adjudications, and BTQ processes as well as program performance. The reviewer will consult with appropriate staff in each functional area, as necessary, to ensure accurate and complete information is reported. This will include Unemployment Insurance (UI) administrators, IT managers, fiscal officers, office/call center managers, adjudications supervisors, and the BTQ coordinator or reviewers.

The reviewer will provide information regarding the state's performance for each calendar quarter of the review period for non-monetary determination time lapse and non-monetary determination quality for separation and non-separation issues. Use this link for more information regarding UI PERFORMS ALPs/Performance Criteria: [Acceptable Level of Performance](#). Adjudications workload data will also be provided.

Upon completion of this review, the results should be shared with UI administrators, program manager(s), and supervisors. The self-assessment findings, in conjunction with the state's quarterly BTQ scores, can provide a very good analysis of the state's adjudications and BTQ operations and performance. The results should be used to drive process and program-improvement initiatives.

A comments section is provided for each operational element, which the reviewer should use to document any observations regarding issues identified related to that specific operational element. This space may also be used to provide any additional information relating to a specific question in this section. In doing so, the reviewer should reference the specific question by number and insert the additional information related to that question.

In addition, a concluding comments section is provided at the end of the self-assessment instrument to capture any strengths identified by the reviewer in this functional area which could constitute a successful practice(s) to be shared with other states; any issues identified by the reviewer in the functional area that adversely impacts the state's performance and to identify any possible corrective actions to address the issue; and general comments about this functional area that are not covered elsewhere. The reviewer can provide information here that Federal reviewers and state UI administrators can use to assess program operations and the state's effectiveness in providing quality services in this functional area.

***Save your entries regularly as you complete the review and when you close the self-assessment to ensure your answers are saved.***

## SECTION 1: Procedures, Policies, and Confidentiality

The purpose of this section is to review the policies and procedures provided by the agency for staff to use in operating this functional area of the UI program. These are the written (in hard-copy, electronically, or both formats) standards, instructions, and guidelines that staff regularly use in the operation of the program. The reviewer may utilize resources that include manuals, handbooks, desk aids, computer help screens, training guides, organized collections of procedures or policies, or other readily accessible instructions which can help staff do their work correctly, including [ETA Handbook No. 301](#) for guidance regarding adjudications and BTQ reviews. Instructions will normally include general information such as compilations of relevant laws and regulations, as well as detailed instructions for carrying out individual jobs in the agency. Reviewers may need to look in many places to examine all relevant instructions and consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers, adjudications supervisors and the state's BTQ coordinator.

The reviewer will document whether the state has policies and procedures sufficient to provide guidance and instruction to staff that conduct fact-finding, adjudications, and the BTQ reviews. Existing policies and procedures should be examined to determine whether they are up-to-date and address all law changes, organizational changes and technology changes that occurred during the review period.

### Helpful Info.

Question 4: Document statutory changes only for this question, including any state and/or Federal law changes impacting the state adjudication policies and procedures. Changes to administrative regulations are usually the result of law changes and do not need to be noted.

Question 7: Automated fact-finding systems the state may use are examined. Such systems, if used, must be designed to meet BTQ standards for fact-finding.

Question 8: Obtaining a rebuttal statement when a controversy exists in the information provided by an employer or claimant is a key element in BTQ reviews and for issuing a quality determination, and should be addressed in the state's policies and procedures.

Question 9: Data regarding issues created and adjudicated can be obtained from the office/call center manager or Information Technology (IT) unit. Adjudicated issues data should include only those cases where a valid non-monetary determination was issued.

**Helpful Info. (continued)**

Question 14: The detection date of an issue may be the source of erroneous reporting; the reviewer must determine whether the state is using the correct application of detection date, whether it is done manually or automatically by the computer system as defined in [ETA Handbook No. 301](#) and [ETA Handbook No. 401](#).

Question 15: The state's policies and procedures must comply with Federal standards for a "reasonable attempt" to obtain fact-finding information from claimants and employers.

Questions 16 and 17: The reviewer must determine whether the state is applying the correct criteria for countable/non-countable determinations. To do so, it will be necessary to ensure the criteria used by the IT unit adhere to Handbook 401.

## SECTION 2: Training

Managers/employees should possess and maintain a level of expertise which enables them to accomplish their assigned duties. Training systems should be sufficient to ensure that personnel understand and perform their duties properly. When reviewing training systems, the reviewer should consult with the state's training unit/staff and examine formal training procedures (e.g., the training is conducted using an established schedule and using set guidelines to make judgments about the quality of work being produced). The state should have procedures for identifying general and specific training needs, for developing a training curriculum and training materials, and for delivering training as needs are identified. The reviewer must also examine training methods used to ensure BTQ reviewers are adequately trained and that the results of BTQ reviews are considered when determining training needs for staff that conduct fact-finding and that adjudicate issues.

**Helpful Info.**

Question 7: The reviewer must determine whether the state's training curriculum includes training on the detection date of an issue and that the training correctly defines detection date.

Question 8a: The reviewer may consult with the state agency's Human Resources department or their U.S. Department of Labor Regional Office for information regarding merit staff regulations.

**Helpful Info. (continued)**

Questions 9 and 10: These questions are asking similar questions, but about two distinct matters. Question 9 is asking about changes in technology or operations affecting adjudications or the BTQ review processes. Question 10 is asking about changes in laws, program implementation, or policy and procedures affecting adjudications or the BTQ review processes.

Question 14: The reviewer should consult with the BAM or BPC managers to determine whether their staff adjudicates issues and, if so, whether those staff are provided formal adjudications training.

### **SECTION 3: Workload Analysis/Management Controls**

The reviewer will examine the state's ability to manage adjudications workloads, particularly through periods of unforeseen spikes in workload, and will also review the methods used by the state to mitigate backlogs, when they occur, to ensure the state's ability to provide timely and quality adjudications. The reviewer will document process-improvement initiatives aimed at minimizing adjudications backlogs. The state must ensure that qualified staff is available to conduct the quarterly BTQ reviews. The reviewer will interview office/call center managers, adjudications supervisors, performance management staff, and the BTQ coordinator to thoroughly document the state's practices for managing its adjudications and BTQ workloads.

**Helpful Info.**

Question 4: If the state has a systematic plan to manage adjudications workload increases, document the methods used and explain in the Training section how training is delivered to supplemental staff, if used.

Question 5: If the state has a systematic plan to manage adjudications backlogs, document the methods used and explain in the Training section how training is delivered to supplemental staff, if used.

Question 6: The reviewer should not report backlogs caused by seasonal fluctuations in workload, such as at the end of a school-year or an increase in construction-related claims during winter months.

**Helpful Info. (continued)**

Question 8a and 8b: Describe all business process analysis initiatives the state conducted during the review period regarding its adjudications and/or BTQ processes, and what operational changes have been implemented as a result of those initiatives and what recommended changes were not implemented.

Question 9: The reviewer will report all staff classifications that conduct fact-finding for adjudications. If the state's processes for fact-finding are considered to be especially effective and/or efficient, explain fully in the Comments area at the end of this section.

## SECTION 4: Performance Management

The reviewer will examine the state's practices for monitoring program performance and compliance with Federal and state law and regulations. Review the state's practices for the preparation and monitoring of corrective action plans to ensure timely and accurate submittal and methods for continued monitoring of program performance in relation to designated milestones. If the state has a performance management unit, the reviewer should consult with performance management staff in addition to UI administrators, office/call center managers, and adjudications supervisors when completing this section.

**Helpful Info.**

Question 2: The reviewer should consult with appropriate UI managers for information regarding any Corrective Action Plan(s) or Narrative that the State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) contained during the review period.

Question 3a: If the state did not meet designated milestones on its SQSP during any quarter(s) during the review period, the reviewer will need to provide information about why the milestones were not met from the UI administrators, office/call center managers, adjudications supervisor(s), or performance management staff.

Question 4a: If the state has submitted multi-year CAP(s) the reviewer will document progress made in meeting designated milestones based upon information obtained from UI administrators, office/call center manager, adjudications supervisor(s) or performance management staff.

### **Helpful Info. (continued)**

Question 5a: The reviewer will document the methods the state uses to monitor its adjudications operations. If the state's processes for monitoring its adjudications performance are considered to be particularly effective and/or efficient, explain fully in the Comments area at the end of this section.

Questions 6 and 6a: The reviewer will indicate whether the state monitors state activities and performance in a manner or to an extent that is different than Federal requirement, for example, pulling samples (beyond BTQ samples) of denials to review the fact-finding to ensure staff are addressing the state requirements consistently; or, other types of activities or other methods used to both help better inform claimants of their responsibilities and prevent payment errors and overpayments.

## **SECTION 5: Information Technology (IT)**

When completing this section of the self-assessment the reviewer should consult with UI and IT administrators and office/call center managers. IT projects relating to UI adjudications that were completed during the review period and that are needed in the future will be detailed. The reviewer will assess the state IT department's delivery of programming and technical support to the adjudications and BTQ functional areas.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1a: The reviewer should describe any major IT projects that were conducted during the review period and provide information regarding the project status, and if completed, the success of the project. *(If space is not adequate to fully respond to this question, the reviewer may use space in the Comments area at the end of this Section.)*

Question 3a: If the state had IT needs related to its adjudications or BTQ programs that were not met, the reviewer should document the needs that were not met and the impact it had on the timeliness and/or quality of adjudications, if any. *(If space is not adequate to fully respond to this question, the reviewer may use space in the Comments area at the end of this section.)*

**Helpful Info. (continued)**

Question 4: The reviewer will report whether the state is using the SIDES system to exchange claim and separation information with employers or employers' third party administrators (TPAs), and if not, why.

Question 6a: If the state uses a system to schedule and/or route claimant and employer calls for fact-finding, describe the system being used and its features.

## SECTION 6: Claimant/Employer Access & Communication

The reviewer will examine the state's methods for conducting fact-finding and issuing regular and automated non-monetary determinations, if applicable. Methods used must comply with requirements set forth in Federal law. The reviewer will consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers, and adjudications supervisors when completing this section of the self-assessment. The state's methods for conducting fact-finding and issuing determinations will be reviewed to ensure they meet Federal regulations and guidance regarding accessibility, including [UIPL No. 02-16](#).

**Helpful Info.**

Question 2: For each method the state uses for fact-finding (Internet, telephone, and in-person), the reviewer should indicate the means that are available to claimants and employers to submit documentation for each method.

Question 3: For each method the state uses for fact-finding (Internet, telephone, and in-person), the reviewer should indicate the means that are available to provide forms to claimants and employers for each method.

Question 4: For each method the state uses for fact-finding and adjudications (Internet, telephone, and in-person), the reviewer should indicate the help resources that are available to claimants and/or employers for each method.

Question 5: The reviewer will identify any issues that are adjudicated through automation (e.g., by computer system) without human intervention.

## **SECTION 7: Operational Efficiency/Resource Allocation**

Through interviews with UI administrators and office/call center managers the reviewer will assess the staff, processes and operations supporting adjudications and BTQ reviews. The reviewer will identify efficiencies and automation the state has used to improve operations and provide better service to the public.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1: The reviewer will provide the ratio of full-time employees (FTEs) allotted to adjudications compared to the total FTEs of UI Benefits operations.

Question 2: The reviewer will document the methods the state uses to manage documents submitted related to adjudications. If the state's documents management systems or processes are considered to be especially effective and/or efficient, explain fully in the Comments area at the end of this section.

Question 5: If the state uses any automated processes for conducting fact-finding or making a second attempt at gathering separation information, the reviewer should document the methods used.

Question 6a: If the state does not have a dedicated unit that performs BTQ reviews, explain how staff members are assigned this function to ensure reviews are conducted and completed in a timely manner.

## **SECTION 8: Staffing**

The reviewer will examine organizational changes that occurred during the review period, if any, and their effect on the state's ability to manage its adjudications workload and to meet timeliness and quality standards for non-monetary determinations. The reviewer should consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers, and the state agency's human resource manager when completing this section of the self-assessment.

### **Helpful Info.**

Question 1: Staffing allocations are examined to determine whether an adequate number of FTEs are allocated for fact-finding and adjudications.

Question 2: The reviewer will report the number of FTEs budgeted for adjudications, that is, the positions budgeted by the state after Federal “base” allocations.

Question 3: The number of FTEs dedicated to adjudications impact the state’s ability to meet Federal requirements for timeliness and quality of its adjudications. Dedicated FTEs means the number of FTEs that were charged to the function.

## **SECTION 9: Concluding Summary Comments**

The reviewer will use the Concluding Summary Comments section to highlight the state’s strengths and weaknesses that impact the adjudications and BTQ functional areas and to identify issues that have not been addressed in any other section of the self-assessment. These comments are intended to provide Federal reviewers and the state’s UI administrators with additional insight into these program areas, focusing on methods that have proven to be successful and can be capitalized upon, or areas where corrective measures may be needed.

The first comment area provides the reviewer an opportunity to share any examples of good and/or exemplary operations in this functional area after reviewing each operational element. The reviewer can use this space to identify any policy, procedure or operation that would constitute a successful practice that can be shared with other states.

The second comment area provides the reviewer to document issues detected during the review that are having an adverse impact on the functional area, affecting the state’s performance, ability to meet performance standards or customer service. It is also a place to recommend corrective actions for the agency’s leadership to consider implementing.

The final comment area in this section provides the reviewer space to share any additional comments, concerns or observations regarding the state’s operations in this functional area.