



Unemployment Insurance Navigators Addressing Technology Barriers: Findings from New Mexico and Pennsylvania

SUMMARY

This spotlight brief describes technology barriers to accessing the unemployment insurance (UI) program that Navigator staff in New Mexico and Pennsylvania reported some claimants and potential claimants face, especially those who were older (ages 55+), had low incomes, or lived in a rural area. The brief then describes how UI Navigators in both states helped to remove those barriers by providing in-person assistance, technology equipment, and internet access so individuals with technology barriers can access the UI program. This brief is part of a study funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Chief Evaluation Office, that explores the implementation of UI Navigator Grants, which seven states received in 2022. The DOL's Employment and Training Administration funded these three-year competitive grants, which aim to support efforts to promote equitable access to UI benefits. Visit the [Navigator Evidence-Building Portfolio](#) website for additional information about the study's design and related publications. A full study report will be available in early 2025.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent widespread unemployment underscored the need to modernize UI Information technology (IT). However, study respondents in New Mexico and Pennsylvania reported that UI claimants and potential claimants who are older (ages 55+), have low incomes, or live in rural areas may face technology barriers, which can prevent them from being able to utilize and fully benefit from UI IT modernization.
- Navigators described four main technology-related barriers that UI claimants and potential claimants face: 1) lack of internet access; 2) lack of equipment, such as computers and smartphones; 3) low technology literacy or experience; and 4) limited language access, which compounds existing technology barriers.
- UI Navigators in New Mexico and Pennsylvania aimed to remove technology barriers by helping claimants and potential claimants use technology effectively and accurately through direct in-person assistance at one-on-one meetings, as well as providing equipment and internet access so potential claimants can access the state's workforce system to create an online account and file claims successfully.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

TIMEFRAME: 2023-2024
SUBMITTED BY: Mathematica

PARTNER AGENCY: Employment and Training Administration
SPONSOR: Chief Evaluation Office



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