



# Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Evidence Building and Implementation Study

## SUMMARY

In 2018, the Chief Evaluation Office partnered with the [Employment and Training Administration](#) (ETA) to fund contractor Abt Associates to conduct the *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Evidence Building and Implementation Study*. This project's objectives were to work with DOL to develop strategies to support the evidence requirements in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 that relate to the RESEA. This project: (1) developed options to meet legislative requirements related to evidence at the Federal and state levels; (2) identified the current state of the evidence of RESEA and presented it in a usable framework; (3) conducted an implementation study of RESEA programs; (4) developed options to advance the RESEA evidence base; and (5) provided evaluation technical assistance to states to build their technical capacity to meet the requirements of the legislation if they conduct an RESEA program.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of requirements from section 30206 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, Public Law 115-123 (BBA) and Section 306 of the Social Security Act, which created a permanent authorization for a new tiered-evidence RESEA program. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [employment and training](#) programs and policies and addresses departmental strategic goals and priorities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

*Evidence Building at the U.S. Department of Labor: Lessons from Delivering Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Evaluation Technical Assistance*

- **The RESEA legislation included several provisions that laid the groundwork for evidence use and evidence building to play a central role in the program.** A unique and important aspect of RESEA is that rigorous evaluation was explicitly recognized as a core element of the program as part of the authorizing 2018 amendment to the Social Security Act. Moreover, program funding is tied to the use of well-conducted, credible impact studies that inform the design of states' RESEA programs.
- **DOL has experience, capacity, and an infrastructure that it was able to draw from and build upon to support RESEA evaluations and evidence building.** DOL has a strong evidence-building culture and has since 2010 been undertaking activities—such as having evaluation officers, developing learning agendas, and establishing an evaluation policy—now required of most federal agencies by the Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. Additionally, DOL has a



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clearinghouse that conducts evidence reviews and assigns causal evidence ratings in the way required by the new law.

- **Federal-level leadership and cross-agency coordination, across the program and evaluation offices in providing evaluation technical assistance, was considered critical to the progress made by states in developing and launching evaluations to build evidence.** The Chief Evaluation Office and the Employment and Training Administration's Offices of Unemployment Insurance and Policy Development and Research collaborated closely to support states in meeting requirements of the law, including beginning new evaluation efforts.
- **It was important for the evaluation technical assistance (EvalTA) to adapt and respond to evolving state needs in evaluation planning and implementation as these shifted over time.** The three primary EvalTA-focused areas include (1) helping states to understand the evaluation-related RESEA legislation; (2) supporting states in planning and conducting high-quality evaluations; and (3) assisting states in using evaluations, such as for program improvement. All are important, but the emphasis on each has changed over time as states progressed with their evaluations.
- **The broad range of EvalTA activities—including both generalized and customized support—helped make evaluation accessible to all states.** It also ensured that a subset of states ready for it could receive more-intensive assistance to implement high-quality, rigorous impact evaluations, so they could make contributions to the evidence base relatively quickly.
- **Engaging states early on—and often—by soliciting feedback about their preferred modes of delivery, cadence, and topics was an important element of the EvalTA.** DOL's experience implementing RESEA and its evidence-building requirements indicates the importance of developing a wide continuum of EvalTA materials and remaining responsive to states' needs as they change over time and as staff advance in their ability and capacity to plan, implement, and conduct evaluations.
- **In addition to state RESEA leaders and program staff, a key audience for the EvalTA is the array of independent evaluators actively working on state RESEA evaluations.** These third-party evaluators—among them state evaluation offices, university research centers and faculty, and research and evaluation firms—play an important role in producing the evidence needed on the RESEA program.



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## *Tracking Changes in Program Implementation: Findings from Multiple Rounds of the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Implementation Survey*

- **States consistently reported that they targeted claimants identified as most likely to exhaust Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits when selecting UI claimants for the RESEA program.** While states also used other criteria when selecting UI claimants for the RESEA program, they prioritized those who are most likely to exhaust UI benefits before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **The timing of when the initial RESEA meeting takes place, relative to the notification of selection, remained relatively consistent between Waves 1 and 4.** Across the four waves, the initial RESEA meeting most often occurred within two weeks after notification of RESEA selection regardless of when in the UI claim RESEA participants were selected for the program. In Wave 4, a larger percentage of states reported selecting claimants early into their claim period.
- **Overall, states appeared to be providing more flexibility to claimants in scheduling RESEA meetings and in the location of those meetings than they did prior to the pandemic.** Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of remote service delivery options, including phone calls and videoconferences, increased. Despite increased flexibility with mode of service delivery, the content and services provided during the initial RESEA meetings remained similar in all waves (fielded between 2020-2023).
- **In Waves 1, 3, and 4, more than half of states reported conducting a subsequent RESEA meeting after the initial RESEA meeting.** In Wave 4, the number of subsequent meetings states reported conducting increased, with several states conducting more than one subsequent meeting.
- **States reported increased use of activities designed to promote RESEA program attendance and service delivery, such as reminder notifications to claimants.** Many states leveraged the use of letter, phone, email, and text reminders to increase attendance at mandatory RESEA meetings, thereby reducing the failure report rate. Non-attendance at RESEA meetings can result in suspension of UI benefits, among other consequences.
- **By Wave 4, nearly all states had resumed pre-pandemic, staff-led review while sustaining more flexible and online review procedures.** Before the pandemic, RESEA staff were required to review claimants' work search logs that detail contacts with prospective employers. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, states changed their approach to conducting RESEA's work search review, either suspending the requirement or transitioning to an online system.



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- **Relative to the first wave in 2020, states reported conducting more analyses of their data on RESEA participants to assess program effectiveness by Wave 4.** Since Wave 1, both the number of states that analyzed participant-level data and the extent to which states analyzed that data increased.
- **In Wave 4, 12 states reported having completed an evaluation of their RESEA program and 37 states reported planning for future RESEA evaluations of program components.** Most of the completed evaluations were experimental impact evaluations that randomly assigned claimants; this design produces strong evidence of program effectiveness since it generates a credible comparison to claimants enrolled in the RESEA program. Some of the states planning for future RESEA evaluations of program components plan to evaluate the impacts of job readiness workshops, intensive career services, the number of RESEA meetings, or service delivery mode.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

**TIMEFRAME:** 2018-2023  
**SUBMITTED BY:** Abt Associates  
**DATE PREPARED:** March 2024

**PARTNER AGENCY:** Employment and Training Administration  
**SPONSOR:** Chief Evaluation Office  
**CEO CONTACT:** [ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov](mailto:ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov)

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