



# UI Equity Grant Adverse Impacts

**Executive Summary:** In 2022, the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) received funds from the US Department of Labor (USDOL) as part of the UI Equity Grant outlined in [UIPL 23-21](#) and funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Under this grant, the Adverse Impacts Team plans to conduct a targeted outreach campaign to workers and evaluate whether this improves access to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. By directly engaging with workers who have recently lost their jobs, the project aims to improve equity in UI access and ensure that those in need, particularly marginalized workers, are aware of and can access benefits.

**Project Objectives:** In [UIPL 01-24](#), USDOL elaborates on its goals for state agencies receiving the UI Equity Grant. USDOL calls for state UI agencies to adopt an equitable access framework which ensures that “all individuals have an effective and meaningful opportunity to obtain the benefits to which they are entitled” (pg. 4, UIPL 01-24). The USDOL cites declining UI reciprocity as a core equity issue, stating “low reciprocity has been particularly difficult for marginalized groups that experience high rates of unemployment” (pg. 2, UIPL 01-24). The USDOL then recommends state agencies evaluate whether affirmative outreach may improve reciprocity rates between groups and identify what barriers prevent potential claimants from successfully filing. With this federal funding, ESD intends to answer these questions.

**Project Overview:** As emphasized by the USDOL, marginalized workers are less likely to apply for UI benefits, creating inequitable access in benefit receipt. A lack of information about the UI program may create a barrier for marginalized workers who do not know about UI benefits, whether they are eligible, how to apply, or the benefits of doing so. Additionally, it may be especially difficult to acquire this information when a worker just lost a job. With this project, ESD will better understand whether providing timely information can improve access to UI benefits among marginalized communities.

ESD will implement and evaluate an outreach mailer campaign that notifies workers about UI benefits shortly after they experience a job loss. Using ESD’s quarterly employment records, ESD will first identify potential applicants as workers with stable employment with a single employer for several quarters who then experience a significant drop in hours and do not find reemployment at another firm in the most recent quarter. ESD will further target the sample to monetarily eligible, low-wage workers in industries with historically lower UI receipt. Workers who are near retirement age or already receiving UI or Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) will be excluded. ESD will then divide the sample into a treatment and control group. Those in the treatment group will receive an outreach letter using language from ESD’s website about the UI program. The control group, which will not receive a letter, will be used to compare key outcomes with those in the treatment group, such as application rates, receipt rates, UI claim duration, and re-employment wages.

**Project Timeline:** ESD will launch a pilot on March 13, 2024. ESD will use results from the pilot to make any necessary changes to the outreach. This will be followed by two main waves of outreach in mid-May and mid-August 2024. After the campaign launches, ESD will conduct an evaluation focusing on the impacts of this outreach. ESD will submit a final report to the USDOL in March 2025 with findings and key takeaways.