



Unemployment Insurance Advisory Committee

Meeting details

Date: Thursday, June 24, 2021

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Location: Zoom

Committee members present

- Robert Battles
- Julia Gorton
- Tammie Hetrick
- Sybill Hyppolite
- Kevin Perkey
- Cindy Richardson
- Josh Swanson
- Jerry VanderWood

Committee members absent

- Brenda Wiest

ESD staff

- Joy Adams
- Nick Demerice
- Joshua Dye
- Stasha Espinosa
- Wendy Goldmark
- Matthew Klein
- Matt LePalm
- Nona Mallicoat
- Scott Michael
- Jairus Rice
- Jeff Robinson
- Dan Zeitlin

Summary

Meeting Recorded

This meeting was recorded and is available at <https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/UIAC/recordings>.

This meeting was also livestreamed by TVW and the broadcast can be found at:

<https://www.tvw.org/watch/?clientID=9375922947&eventID=2021061159>

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Employment Security Department (ESD) Policy Director, Dan Zeitlin, welcomed everyone and asked Wendy Goldmark to take roll call. All committee members were present except Brenda Wiest.

Agenda

Dan Zeitlin reviewed the meeting agenda and asked if anyone had any questions. (See Addendum I.)

Meeting Minutes

Dan Zeitlin requested that everyone review the meeting minutes for May 12, 2021 and provide their feedback. Kevin Perkey made a motion to approve the minutes and Cindy Richardson seconded the motion. Dan asked for all members in favor to say, “Aye”. All members responded, “Aye”. Dan asked members that disapprove to say, “Nay”. No one responded. The May 12, 2021 meeting minutes were approved.

Dan Zeitlin requested that everyone review the meeting minutes for June 9, 2021 and provide their feedback. Keven Perkey made a motion to approve the minutes and Josh Swanson seconded the motion. Dan asked for all members in favor to say, “Aye”. All members responded, “Aye”. Dan asked members that disapprove to say, “Nay”. No one responded. The June 9, 2021 meeting minutes were approved.

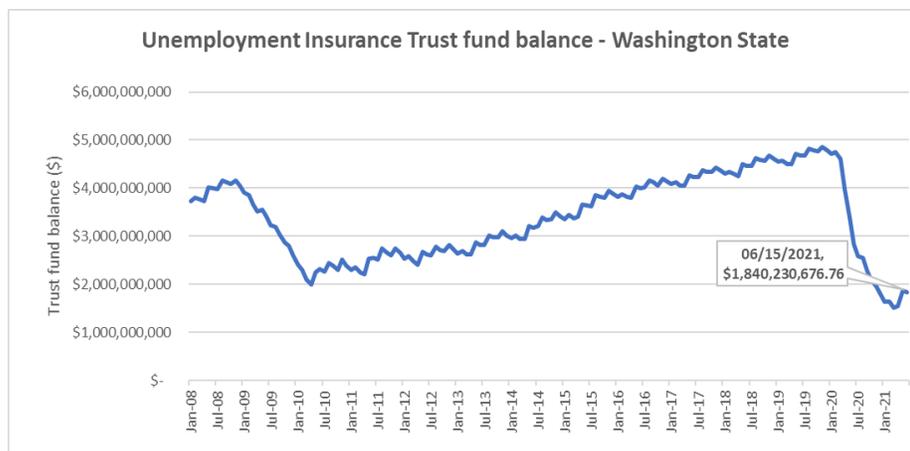
Opening Discussion

Dan Zeitlin opened the meeting discussion with a [slide presentation](#) and highlighted the below topics to be covered:

- [UI Trust Fund Forecast June 2021](#)
- UI Policy Update (Work Search and Rulemaking)

Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund

- On June 15th, the UI trust fund balance was \$1.84 billion



Months of Benefits Calculation (6/15/2021)

Trust Fund Balance: \$1.84 billion

Total Wages: \$196 billion

Reserve Ratio (RR): $\left(\frac{\$1.84 \text{ billion}}{\$196 \text{ billion}}\right) * 100 = 0.94$

Average High-Cost Rate (AHCR): 2.44

Months of Benefits: $\left(\frac{0.94}{2.44}\right) * 12 = \mathbf{4.6 \text{ Months of Benefits}}$

June UI Trust Fund Report: Key Takeaways

- The better-than-expected economic recovery has resulted in a more optimistic trust fund forecast.
- Taxes are expected to be lower than previously anticipated with the average overall tax rate 1.15% lower in 2022 and tax revenue from 2021-2025 roughly \$3.5 billion lower than the November projection.
- Benefit payments are projected to be approximately \$1.4 billion less in 2021 and \$500 million less in 2022 than the November projection.
- The state is not projected to need a federal advance or to draw a federal loan at this time with 4.3 month of benefits projected in the fund at the end of 2021.

UI Trust Fund Report

- The report provides the status and updated projections of the state’s unemployment insurance (UI) trust fund for 2021 through 2025.
- The report is based upon the June 2021 economic forecast released by the state’s Economic and Revenue Forecast Council (ERFC).
- The report uses quarterly forecast information and UI tax and benefit data through March 2021 (Q1 2021).

Unemployment-insurance trust fund: June 2021 Baseline Forecast (based on actuals reported in the March 31 st , 2021 Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council)							
Taxes	CY 2019	CY 2020	CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025
Average experience tax rate (percent)	0.93%	1.00%	0.80%	0.97%	1.00%	1.00%	0.90%
Experience tax contributions (in millions)	933.7	\$1,040.7	\$955.8	\$1,202.8	\$1,289.1	\$1,332.0	\$1,232.4
Flat social tax rate (percent)	0.16%	0.15%	0.50%	0.75%	0.60%	0.60%	0.50%
Social tax contributions (in millions)	\$160.4	\$169.2	\$362.8	\$601.8	\$541.5	\$541.1	\$471.8
Solvency tax rate (percent)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Solvency tax contributions (in millions)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total average tax rate (experience + social tax)	1.08%	1.16%	1.10%	1.45%	1.42%	1.41%	1.24%
Total tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,094.1	\$1,209.9	\$1,318.6	\$1,804.6	\$1,830.6	\$1,873.0	\$1,704.2
Benefits							
Weeks compensated (in millions) - regular benefits	2.1	10.3	3.7	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.1
Average weekly benefit amount	\$477.84	\$447.41	\$464.26	\$493.60	\$540.90	\$625.94	\$674.11
Regular benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,010.6	\$4,544.8	\$1,717.7	\$1,031.9	\$1,065.0	\$1,245.1	\$1,416.0
Total benefit liability (in millions)	\$949.9	\$4,272.1	\$1,614.6	\$969.9	\$1,001.1	\$1,170.4	\$1,331.1
Reimbursable benefit payments (in millions)	\$60.6	\$272.7	\$103.1	\$61.9	\$63.9	\$74.7	\$85.0
Total benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,010.6	\$4,544.8	\$1,717.7	\$1,031.9	\$1,065.0	\$1,245.1	\$1,416.0
Trust fund							
Beginning trust fund balance (in millions)	\$4,731.1	\$4,988.3	\$2,003.8	\$1,749.3	\$2,637.1	\$3,552.5	\$4,362.7
Trust fund interest (in millions)	\$113.0	\$ 77.8	\$41.6	\$53.1	\$85.8	\$107.6	\$125.3
Total tax contributions (in millions)	\$1,094.1	\$ 1,209.9	\$1,318.6	\$1,804.6	\$1,830.6	\$1,873.0	\$1,704.2
Reimbursements from reimbursables (in millions)	\$60.6	\$272.7	\$103.1	\$61.9	\$63.9	\$74.7	\$85.0
Total benefit payments (in millions)	\$1,010.6	\$4,544.8	\$1,717.7	\$1,031.9	\$1,065.0	\$1,245.1	\$1,416.0
Ending trust fund balance (as of 12/31, millions)	\$4,988.3	\$2,003.8	\$1,749.3	\$2,637.1	\$3,552.5	\$4,362.7	\$4,861.2
Months of benefits available (as of 9/30)	15.0	6.6	4.3	7.0	8.9	10.4	11.3

UI Trust Fund Forecast (June 2021)

	November Forecast	June Forecast
2021 Unemployment Benefit payment projection	\$3.12 Billion	\$1.72 Billion
2022 Unemployment Benefit payment projection	\$1.59 Billion	\$1.03 Billion
2021 Employer Contributions	\$1.92 Billion	\$1.32 Billion
2022 Employer Contributions	\$2.95 Billion	\$1.80 Billion

Benefit Payments

- The average annual wage is used to calculate unemployment benefit levels for the year (July-June).
- The minimum weekly unemployment benefit, calculated per state statute at 20 percent of the average weekly wage, will increase by \$94, from \$201 to \$295 for new claims opened on or after July 4th.
- The maximum weekly benefit, which is the greater of \$496 or 63 percent of the average weekly wage, will increase by \$85 to \$929.

Benefit Payment Amounts

Year:	CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025
Amount (in billions):	\$1.72	\$1.03	\$1.07	\$1.25	\$1.42

Experience Tax Rate

- The experience rate tax is an annual calculation based on the ratio of benefit claims charged to the employer and “taxable wages” reported by the employer over the preceding four fiscal years.
- Per state statute, the taxable wage base was \$56,500 in 2021 and will be \$62,500 in 2022.
- The trust fund balance has no impact on the experience rate tax.

Average Experience Tax Rates

CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025
0.80%	0.97%	1.00%	1.00%	0.90%

Social Tax Rate

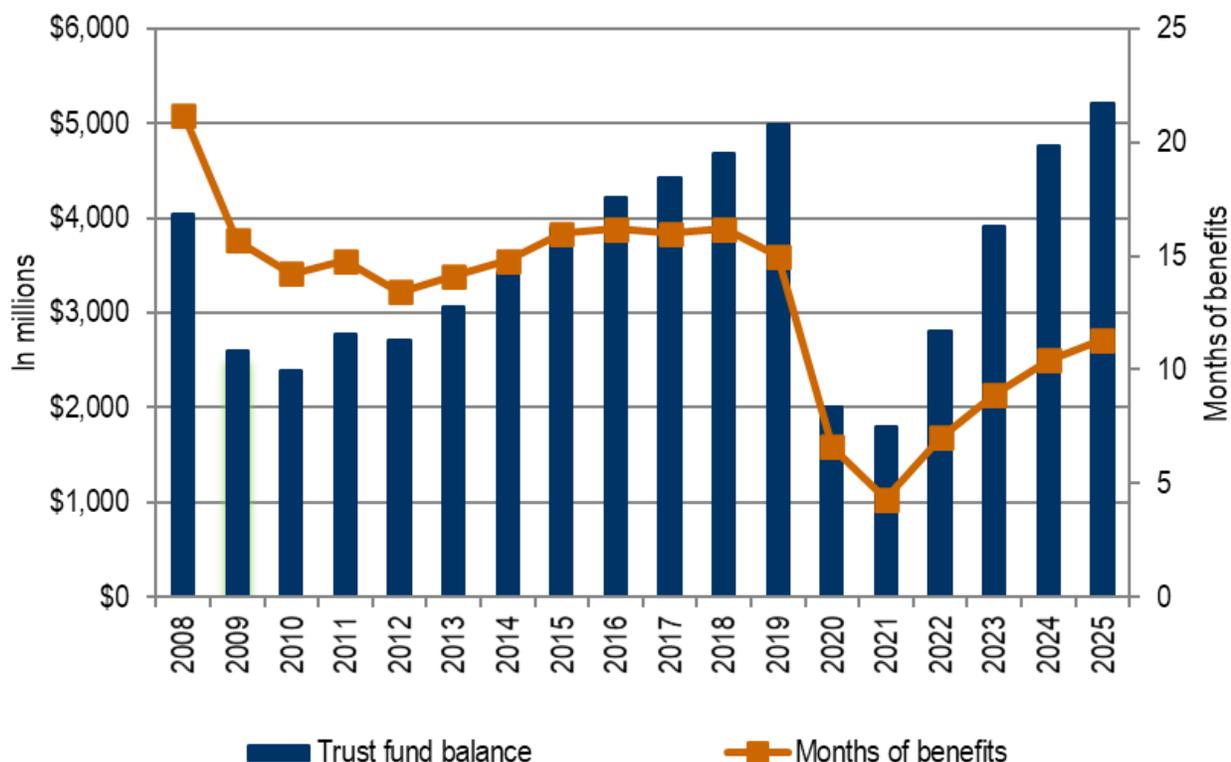
- The “flat social tax” is an annual tax calculation subtracting total experience rated taxes paid by all employers over four consecutive quarters from total unemployment benefits paid to all claimants over those same quarters.
- This amount is then divided by total taxable payrolls and expressed as a percent.
- Per SB 5061, the flat social tax rate has a maximum tax cap of 0.75% (2022), 0.80% (2023), 0.85% (2024), and 0.90% (2025). The tax is then adjusted for each rate class. The tax is projected to be below the caps in 2023-25.

Projected Flat Social Tax Rates

CY 2021	CY 2022	CY 2023	CY 2024	CY 2025
0.50%	0.75%	0.60%	0.60%	0.50%

Projected Trust Fund Balances

- Approximately \$1.75 billion (2021); \$2.64 billion (2022); \$3.55 billion (2023); \$4.36 billion (2024); and \$4.82 billion (2025)



ESSB 5061 and ESSB 5748 Impacts

- [ESSB 5061](#) waived employer benefit charging during the Governor’s initial stay-home order, as well as lowered the social tax cap and froze the social tax from 2021-2025. [ESSB 5478](#) provides \$500 million to buy down certain employers’ 2022 experience tax rates.
- The legislation is projected to reduce tax rates in each year from 2021-2025 with a corresponding \$2.38 billion reduction in tax revenue.
- When factoring in both the legislation and better than expected economic conditions, the report projects a drop from roughly \$12 billion to \$8.5 billion in revenue over the 2021-2025 period, a \$3.5 billion or 30% reduction from the November projection.
- ESSB 5061 increased the minimum weekly benefit amount from 15% to 20% of the average weekly wage. The report due on December 1st will measure the impact on benefit payments.
- It was projected that enactment of ESSB 5061 would result in the need for a \$500M loan, but better than projected economic conditions and trust fund health mean the state is no longer projected to need a federal loan.

Reinstating Work Search

Dan Zeitlin handed the meeting over to Joy Adams to continue the discussion.

Resuming Work Search Requirements

- Concurrent with the reopening of the economy, ESD will again be asking claimants to actively look for work.

- Even as work search has been voluntary, about 40% of our regular UI claimants have been completing at least three work search activities each week and recording them when they apply for benefits.
- To claim benefits starting the week of July 4th through 10th, claimants will be required to complete three work search activities.
- A list of acceptable activities is on our website at esd.wa.gov.
- Communications to claimants highlight virtual resources and opportunities available.
- We have a robust campaign to claimants and employers, including:
 - ✓ Up to 7 direct claimant messages – one sent last week, second at end of this week
 - ✓ Updating letters as needed – in process
 - ✓ Information in employer newsletter – in process
 - ✓ Website content – pre-launch complete
 - ✓ Social media – ongoing
 - ✓ Press release – set for week of July 4
 - ✓ FAQs – ongoing; first wave complete
 - ✓ Phone hold message – in place

Reaching All Our Customers

- All communications will be made available in English and Spanish.
- We will translate relevant web pages (Job search, Return to work, Refusal of work) into 16 languages on esd.wa.gov. You can find links to the language landing pages in the footer of every page on esd.wa.gov.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| ✓ Spanish | ✓ Laotian | ✓ Chinese | ✓ Russian |
| ✓ Korean | ✓ Farsi | ✓ Punjabi | ✓ Somali |
| ✓ Amharic | ✓ Oromo | ✓ Chuukese | ✓ Marshallese |
| ✓ Cambodian | ✓ Arabic | ✓ Tagalog | ✓ Palauan |

- A Babel notice will be included in correspondence that points claimants who speak 25 languages to call the claim center with questions.
- We will have mailers and robocalls going to customers who don't have eServices accounts.

Joy Adams handed the meeting over to Scott Michael to continue the discussion.

Rulemaking

- Hours of Availability public hearing was held on June 22.
- ESD will finalize the rule this year.

Scott Michael handed the meeting back to Dan Zeitlin.

Action Items

- How is refusal of work tracked?
Joy Adams will get the details and report back to the committee.
- Language access – partner with other media outlets in different languages.
ESD do Spanish language radio and will reach out to other language media.
- Highlight the Babel notice included in correspondence.
ESD will use a different color for the Babel notice.

ESD is committed to reviewing action items and returning to these topics.

Next Agenda Discussion

- UI Policy Update
- UI Operations
- USDOL UI Performance Management Requirements

Public Comments

None

Adjourned

Dan Zeitlin thanked everyone for their continued active participation and for their commitment to this work, then ended the meeting at 10:56 a.m.

Next meeting

The next Unemployment Insurance Advisory Committee meeting is on Wednesday, July 14, 2021 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Addendum I

Agenda

Unemployment Insurance Advisory Committee (UIAC)

Thursday, June 24, 2021 | 10:00 am – 11:00 am | Via Zoom

Agenda Items

Time	Topic
10:00 am	Welcome from Dan Zeitlin, Director, Employment System Policy & Integrity (ESPI) Division, Employment Security Department (ESD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Agenda Review
10:05 am	Approval of May 12, 2021 and June 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes
10:10 am	June 2021 Trust Fund Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Dan Zeitlin, ESPI Director, ESD o Jeff Robinson, UI Research and Forecasting Manager, ESD o Matthew Klein, Operations Research Specialist, ESD
10:40 am	UI Policy Update (Work Search/Rulemaking) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Dan Zeitlin, ESPI Director, ESD o Joy Adams, UI Quality Assurance and Operations Manager, ESD o Scott Michael, Legal Appeals and Rulemaking Manager, ESD
10:50 am	Next Agenda Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Dan Zeitlin, PDPI Director, ESD
10:55 am	Public Comments
11:00 am	Adjourn

For more information, please visit the UIAC website at <https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/UIAC>

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