

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS**

### **1. Feasibility Studies - Modernization Planning for UI Benefits and/or UI Tax Systems**

**Purpose:** To provide funds for a state consortium to develop and administer a study to determine the feasibility of designing, developing and implementing a core UI tax or a core UI benefits system that could be used by multiple state workforce agencies. Many state UI systems are out-of-date and in danger of failing. The cost to implement and maintain these UI systems is considerable. A feasibility study would determine if a cost effective model system could be developed that would contain UI tax or benefits core functions which could subsequently be exported and implemented by other states without the need to significantly customize the system, and/or be hosted in one state and providing automated services to other states. The goal is for multiple states to share a common core system that accommodates each state's individual needs.

The states will jointly establish a project team to develop a planned approach for collaboratively developing a Benefit or Tax system and will conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the proposed plan. The system design, development and implementation planning process as well as the feasibility study may require the assistance of one or more contractors. One state must be willing to act as the lead contracting party for the consortium for a given contract. The lead contracting state will be responsible for developing and awarding a contract with the support and participation of the other consortium states.

The consortium will be administered by a Steering Committee consisting of the Project Lead from each of the participating states. Each state will provide project staff (program and technical) to work as a Project Team. The Project Team will carry out the work of the consortium based on the direction of the Steering Committee. The Project Team will work with the other state consortium staff and contractor staff, as necessary, to provide information that the contractor needs to develop, plan and design an approach for a common Benefit or Tax system. The Project Team will seek input from and provide feedback to other interested state staff as well as to regional and national office staff. The consortium Project Team will be responsible for providing input for and reviewing the Request for Proposal(s) (RFP) for any contract(s) and participating in or providing input on the vendor selection, helping to define appropriate activities for the contractor(s), and providing UI program and technical experts to support the feasibility study.

The consortium may also request via its SBR proposal that US Department of Labor re-allot specific funds necessary for contracts to the lead state for that contract effort.

#### **Examples of the lead state responsibilities:**

1. Coordinate all activities related to this effort with the other participating states.

2. Develop, in consultation with participating states, an RFP for a feasibility study, lead in the selection of the contractor, and administer the grant award with the selected contractor.
3. Host the selected contractor on-site to review tax or benefit operations and provide staff to support the effort and respond to requests for information.
4. Develop and present the findings of the study (may include contractor participation) upon completion of the project.

**Examples of the participating state responsibilities:**

1. Assist with development of the RFP.
2. Attend meetings/conferences with lead and participating states.
3. Host contractor on site to review tax or benefit operations and provide supporting staff to respond to specific requests for information.
4. Assist in developing/presenting findings of the completed study.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

## **2. Enhanced Call Center and/or Interactive Voice Response System Technology**

**Purpose:** To meet the current needs of UI telephone systems. During periods of extraordinarily high unemployment many call centers have been unable to withstand the increased workload volume. Some states have call center technology that is out-dated and in need of enhancements to provide quality service.

### **Examples of the use of funds may include:**

1. Modifying call center systems to reroute calls in a virtual call center system;
2. Revising automated messages for claimants on the interactive voice response system;
3. Implementing enhanced security systems;
4. Linking call center systems to automated job listings;
5. Implementing automated scheduling systems for adjudication, worker profiling and reemployment services, UI scheduling of claimants for interviews and/or appeals (see Smart Scheduler for Lower Authority Appeals in Section 7 of this Attachment);
6. Implementing enhanced technology that will handle increased workload volume;
7. Replacing out-of-date equipment for telephone claims taking; and
8. Implementing automated out bound calling during off peak times for other UI activities like BPC overpayment recovery calls or job openings information for claimants.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

### **3. UI Appeals - Conversion from Tape to Digital Recordings of Appeal Hearings**

**Purpose:** Clear and reliable audio recordings of hearings are crucial to the UI Appeals process. Recordings made from magnetic tape are archaic, cumbersome to store, and most importantly, the quality deteriorates over time. The digital audio recording should be able to capture, maintain, index, share, and archive a clear and accurate recording of the Lower Authority Appeals (LAA) hearing. The system could also be used for Higher Authority Appeals proceedings including hearings, reviews, additional testimony, etc.

The transformation from tape to digital recordings may include hardware, software, sound integration and support. Proposed solutions need to integrate with the state's LAA processes, procedures, and policies.

#### **Examples of the use of funds may include:**

1. Developing and issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to procure a vendor to purchase hearing audio recording equipment necessary to implement the new system.
2. Purchasing and implementing a digital audio system for the state's appeals hearing proceedings including both the purchase of necessary equipment and the development of the automated system to meet the state's specific needs.
3. Training staff in the use of the automated equipment and writing procedures, as necessary, to use the equipment efficiently.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

#### **4. Maintenance and Support Costs for UI Automated Systems**

The amount of funding available is specified for the three (3) maintenance and support projects listed below. For any of the 3 projects, states only need to provide information in items #1 through #3 from the Supplemental Budget Request Outline (Attachment A). States may submit a request for these funds using the examples below and may request that the funds be deobligated to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation, which is the lead state for these projects.

##### **a. SUTA Dumping Detection System (SDDS) – Maintenance/Support Consortium**

**Purpose:** To provide states with funds for 2 years of support for their SDDS. The existing SDDS state support agreements expire on September 30, 2009. A designated lead state will be responsible for continued SDDS software and system support after September 30, 2009.

**Available Funds:** Up to \$7,000 is available for each state for 2 years of maintenance and support (\$3,500 per year) for its SUTA Dumping Detection System (SDDS). The 43 states that use the SDDS (designed by the State of North Carolina on behalf of USDOL) may continue support through a designated lead state.

USDOL strongly encourages all 43 SDDS states to take advantage of this opportunity to acquire system support for the next 2 years as it will provide access to the upgraded and enhanced version of the original 2006 SDDS software. Most importantly, version 3 of the software provides states the ability to remove older quarterly data from their SDDS data base to create room to add new quarters. The ability to roll-off older data is critical for continuing SDDS operations. Every state that obtains system support through this SBR will have access to the new software release.

The continuing costs for maintenance and support of SDDS are \$3,500 per year for each state. The funds provided by this SBR will provide maintenance and support from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011. The support funds will pay for maintaining the system.

Maintenance costs 10/1/09 – 9/30/10	\$3,500
Maintenance costs 10/1/10 – 9/30/11	\$3,500
Total	\$7,000

The state may request funding as follows:

The [State Workforce Agency Name] requests \$7,000 for maintenance and support of the SUTA Dumping Detection System and requests that the U. S. Department of Labor reallocate these funds to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation to enter into an agreement with the Information Technology Support Center to provide the support for the SDDS software.

**NOTE:** A state that developed its own detection system for SUTA Dumping activities may request up to \$7,000 for maintenance and support costs for that system. Attachment A (items #1 – 3) must be completed to request funds.

**b. AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ – Maintenance/Support Consortium**

**Purpose:** To provide states with funds for 2 years of support for their AutoCoder/ OccuCoder™ software. The existing AutoCoder support agreements expire on September 30, 2009. USDOL will pay for continuing AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ software and system support after September 30, 2009.

**Available Funds:** Up to \$14,000 is available for each state for 2 years of maintenance and support (\$7,000 per year) for its AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ software. The states that use the AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ will obtain support through a designated lead state.

USDOL strongly encourages all states using AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ to take advantage of this opportunity to acquire system support for the next 2 years as it will provide access to an enhanced version of the original AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ system. Every state that obtains system support through this SBR will have access to new software releases issued during this time period.

The continuing costs for maintenance and support of SDDS are \$7,000 per year for each state. The funds provided by this SBR will provide maintenance and support from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011. The support funds will pay for maintaining the system.

Maintenance costs 10/1/09 – 9/30/10	\$7,000
Maintenance costs 10/1/10 – 9/30/11	\$7,000
Total	\$14,000

The state may request funding as follows:

The [**State Workforce Agency Name**] requests \$14,000 for maintenance and support of AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ and requests that the U. S. Department of Labor reallocate these funds to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation to enter into an agreement with the Information Technology Support Center to provide the support for the AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ software.

**c. State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) - Operations, Maintenance, Enhancement and Support**

**Purpose:** To provide states with funds for 2 years of operations, maintenance, enhancement and support for SIDES for those states that are currently participating in this initiative. Support activities will include: ensuring system availability and acceptable system performance, defect correction, associated system testing, enhancements approved by the consortium, technical assistance, and help desk support. These funds will provide support the SIDES system through September 30, 2011.

**Available Funds:** Up to \$300,000 is available for each state for 2 years of maintenance and support (\$150,000 per year) of the SIDES and the SIDES Employer Website (SEW). The states that use the system will obtain support through the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), which provides for maintaining the system on behalf of the consortium.

USDOL encourages all states to take advantage of this opportunity to acquire system support for the next 2 years. Every state that obtains system support through this SBR will have access to any new software releases issued during this time period. Further, states that want USDOL to obligate these funds directly on their behalf to the designated lead state should indicate this in their request.

The continuing costs for maintenance and support of SIDES are \$150,000 per year for each state. The funds provided by this SBR will provide maintenance and support from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011. The support funds will pay for maintaining the system.

Maintenance costs 10/1/09 – 9/30/10	\$150,000
Maintenance costs 10/1/10 – 9/30/11	\$150,000
Total	\$300,000

The state may request funding as follows:

The [**State Workforce Agency Name**] requests \$300,000 for maintenance and support of SIDES and requests that the U. S. Department of Labor reallocate these funds to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation to enter into an agreement with the Information Technology Support Center to provide the support for the SIDES software.

**To submit SBR(s) the state may complete Attachment A (only information in items #1 – 3 are needed for these support and maintenance projects); indicate whether the state requests that USDOL reallocate funds to the lead state (requests to reallocate funds may be transmitted via an email message (similar to the examples above) or included on Attachment A).**

## **5. Unemployment Insurance (UI) Data Validation for Benefits**

**Purpose:** To obtain an independent (third party) verification that the state's data validation extract files meet Federal UI data validation requirements for benefits related reports. The basic UI data validation design is for states to reconstruct the numbers/counts reported to USDOL's Employment and Training Administration on UI required reports. To do this, states write computer programs that search their electronic databases and extract all transactions that should have been reported.

This SBR funding is for states to obtain an independent verification that their computer programs are extracting the correct transactions for each data validation "population." States must submit a copy of the independent verification certification to their respective Regional Office upon completion. States that choose to obtain an independent verification may use any funds not needed for the verification to correct errors in data validation extract files, complete data validation implementation, train staff, and correct reporting errors discovered through data validation.

This funding is available for states that have not yet received full funding of \$100,000 (the amount that was made available in a previous year's SBR opportunity) for this purpose.

### **Examples of the use of funds may include:**

1. Developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for data validation services from an outside vendor.
2. Working with the selected vendor to provide information needed and to secure necessary data files including:
  - writing programs to create the population 1-14 datasets,
  - modifying existing computer systems to add new fields needed for data validation, and
  - updating the data validation Module 3 document – the state specific set of instructions for the data validator, and
3. Correcting reporting errors and ensuring that the corrections pass data validation guidelines.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

## **6. Unemployment Insurance (UI) Data Validation for Tax**

**Purpose:** To obtain an independent (third party) verification that state's data validation extract files meet Federal UI data validation requirements. The basic UI data validation design is for states to reconstruct the numbers/counts reported to the Employment and Training Administration on UI required reports. To do this, states write computer programs that search their electronic databases and extract all transactions that should have been reported.

The data on the ETA 581, Contributions Operations, report is used for a variety of national and programmatic purposes, including: Tax Computed Measures for UI Performs, BLS statistical information, and workload measures for UI budget allocation. It is important for all states to report the ETA 581 data on a consistent and comparative basis. Data validation ensures that states report the same data elements by validating the logic used to identify the data elements. For this reason, states have been required to validate certain data on the ETA 581 for 5 tax data validation populations since 2006.

This funding is available for states that have not yet received full funding of \$100,000 (the amount that was made available in a previous year's SBR opportunity) for this purpose.

### **Examples of the use of funds might include:**

1. Developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for data validation services from an outside vendor,
2. Working with the selected vendor to provide information needed and to secure necessary data files including:
  - writing programs to create the population 1-5 datasets,
  - modifying existing computer systems to add new fields needed for data validation, and
  - updating the data validation Module 3 document – the state specific set of instructions for the data validator, and
3. Correcting reporting errors and ensuring that the corrections pass data validation guidelines.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

## **7. Smart Schedulers and Related Automation for Appeals**

**Purpose:** UI Appeals hearings preparation activities in a state's Lower Authority Appeals (LAA) process are an important variable in achieving timeliness and meeting appeals performance standards. Assessments of the LAA preparation activities should include a review of the intake process, reviewing how a case file is created, what it contains, and how it is scheduled as well as the mailing procedures and processes, and case management processes. Many of these functions can be automated. Posting appeals electronically, supporting documentations, and assigning docketing information should assist states in decreasing the time from when an appeal is first received to when the hearing is actually held. An automated docketing and scheduling system can allow states to better fill gaps in scheduling so hearing officers minimize lost time/downtime. States can also consider automating the issuance of hearing notices and LAA decisions.

### **Examples of the use of funds may include:**

1. Issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an automated system of recordkeeping, filing procedures, case-flow processing, and scheduling orders.
2. Managing the contract with the vendor ensuring that all system needs are clearly identified and incorporated into the proposed system.
3. Implementing the case management software, hardware and peripherals, network and communications for in-house customization.
4. Training staff and writing operational procedures addressing use of the new automated system.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

## **8. State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES)**

### **a. New Implementation of SIDES**

**Purpose:** The UI State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES), formerly called the Separation Information Data Exchange System, is a secure electronic-based system that enables communication and transmission of UI separation information, and other information, between UI agencies and large multi-state employers or third party agents (TPAs).

The SIDES Employer Website (SEW) provides additional functionality to the web service-based SIDES system that allows an Employer/TPA to enter separation information into the system for the requesting state to electronically collect. The SEW is intended for Employers/TPAs that have a low volume of separations such that developing a web service connector solution is not cost effective, yet want to improve their separation response process in terms of effort, timeliness, and quality.

In particular, SIDES and SEW capability are expected to improve the quality and timeliness of non-monetary determinations. They provide a common format that employers can use to quickly respond to requests for separation information from various states.

#### **Examples of the use of funds may include:**

1. Developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a contractor or state staff to implement programming changes to -
  - Construct tables, which can be expanded as needed to identify employers/TPAs participating in SIDES.
  - Suppress separation information request mailings to SIDES participants.
  - Construct output file to SIDES host (secure transmission).
  - Pick-up data from SIDES.
  - Construct tables to receive SIDES information.
  - Integrate SIDES responses to automatically set separation issues and assign cases in adjudication management system.
  - Integrate SIDES responses into adjudication fact-finding procedures.
  - Integrate the SEW into the adjudication management system.

States requesting to implement the SIDES initiative should include a request for support and maintenance costs of \$200,000 to cover maintenance and support through September 30, 2011. States only need to submit a request for the funds and request that the funds be deobligated to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation, which is the designated lead state for this project. The request should read as follows:

The [**State Workforce Agency Name**] requests \$200,000 for maintenance and support of the State Information Date Exchange System and requests that the U. S. Department of Labor reallocate these funds to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation to enter into an agreement with the Information Technology Support Center to provide

the support for State Information Data Exchange System software as a part of the consortium for this project.

**b. SIDES Employer Website (SEW) Enhancement for Current Consortia States**

States currently participating in the SIDES consortium may request funds to implement the SEW if they have not yet done so. It is not necessary to complete the entire Supplemental Budget Request Outline (Attachment A) for this enhancement. States need to complete the project timeline and provide a description of costs as defined in the Supplemental Budget Request Outline (Attachment A).

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (only items #1 –3 and items #5 - 7 are needed)**

## **9. AutoCoder/OccuCoder™ Integration**

**Purpose:** To provide automated access to claimants who are receiving UI payments and to employers to a cost effective system that allows them to select Occupational Codes that are appropriate for the claimants' experience and skills. States may elect to provide this information in an interactive voice mail system or over the Internet. Costs incurred in this function must be related to the development of the appropriate delivery system. States may install and maintain AutoCoder themselves or obtain technical assistance and support from the Information Technology Support Center (ITSC) or other vendors. When completing the SBR application, states should indicate whether ITSC technical support and maintenance are desired.

**Available Funds:** Up to \$250,000 is available for the integration/interface of occupational coding software within the UI benefits system.

### **Examples of the use of funds might include:**

1. Issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for necessary programming.
2. Programming changes including testing.
3. Maintaining the system.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

## **10. Educating UI Beneficiaries about Debit Card Fees and How to Avoid these Fees**

**Purpose:** To provide information to claimants who are receiving benefit payments via a debit card about how to effectively use the debit card at no cost. Education and outreach efforts may include information on how to avoid fees, locations where the debit cards are accepted, and related information. Costs incurred for this project must be related to the development of an appropriate automated delivery system.

### **Examples of the use of funds might include:**

1. Studying problems experienced by current users.
2. Developing voice messages and automated text to advise claimants of cost effective debit card usage.
3. Programming and testing the appropriate messages.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**

## **11. Programming to Include Entire Name in UI Wage Records**

**Purpose:** To provide states with funds to upgrade their wage record systems to capture the complete/entire name associated with UI quarterly wage records, and to transmit the entire name to the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH). States may revise their wage record systems for capture, storage and transmission of wage record data. A wage record file that contains the entire name for each wage record will allow the Social Security Administration (SSA) to perform integrity related activities including a name match on the social security number, thereby improving the integrity of the wage record files. Examples of permissible uses for these funds include:

1. Revising wage record data gathering systems, such as paper/OCR forms, internet reporting systems, electronic wage formats.
2. Revising data base structure to accommodate full name.
3. Revising computer wage record system to process and display the entire name.
4. Revising outbound wage record transmission to NDNH to include the entire name.

**To submit an SBR complete Attachment A (items #1 – 10)**