

NASCIO 2006 Recognition Awards Entry
Mt.gov Unemployment Insurance For You service
Executive Summary

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The Unemployment Insurance For You (UI4U) service was designed to address the growing difficulty in filing unemployment claims with the state of Montana. The UI4U service took eight months to develop and went live on January 10, 2005.

Prior to the online service the only way for an individual to file their unemployment claim was by telephone and the agency does not have a toll-free number for filers to use. Now, filing an unemployment claim in Montana is easy with the UI4U online service. The service allows a customer to open, review, reactivate their claim online, and file their biweekly requests for payment.

The Unemployment Insurance For You service has given Montana taxpayers the ability to file for unemployment benefits without making a long distance phone call or leaving their home. The agency and the customers have immediate access to current information about the claim, allowing customers to make necessary changes and representatives from the agency to process claims quickly. The service has improved the availability of the unemployment benefits and the timeliness of the process.

With the UI4U service, Montanan's have the option to file a claim from their home 24 hours a day. The system is easy to use and gives customers the option to open, review, or reactivate their claim and file their continued claim online. This new, simple and inexpensive solution will make a huge impact on the speed and accuracy in which a claim can be filed and reviewed and will save the customer time and money.

Additionally, the agency will see benefits from the online service. The reduction in phone calls to the agency will allow the Department of Labor and Industry to reallocate staff to help review and process claims. This increased efficiency for the agency will increase customer satisfaction.

The Montana Department of Labor and Industry used federal grant money to contract with mt.gov to build the UI4U service for \$175,000.00. Maintenance and enhancements to the service will be performed free of charge to the agency saving them approximately \$30,000.00 in maintenance costs each year. The state did not spend any tax dollars or general fund appropriations to be able to offer this service for free to the taxpayers of Montana.

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Description of business problem and solution, including length of time in operation-

The UI4U service was designed to address the growing difficulty in filing unemployment claims with the state of Montana. Prior to the online service the only way for an individual to file their unemployment claim was by telephone and the agency does not have a toll-free number for filers to use. Montana is a geographically large state with only two claims offices so a majority of the claimants must make a long distance phone call to receive their benefits. The two claims offices serve all 56 counties in Montana and they are only staffed from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and on Wednesday from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm. Additionally, the offices are closed on state and federal holidays and weekends giving the claimant limited hours and availability to get through to a representative and file their unemployment claim. Due to the limited amount of state resources there can be a fifteen to twenty minute wait when customers call into the offices and if the lines are full then the customers get a busy signal. This process costs the claimant money to apply for benefits because of the expense for the phone call and the long wait on hold. The online service was developed to alleviate these issues by allowing individuals to access their information twenty-four hours a day with the ability to file a claim or check the status of a claim.

The UI4U service was developed with funding from a federal grant that gives Montana an opportunity to help those who qualify for benefits without the use of tax dollars or general fund appropriations.

Now, filing an unemployment claim in Montana is easy with the new online Unemployment Insurance For You service. Montana offers the most complete, comprehensive, and easy-to-use unemployment service. The service allows a customer to open, review, reactivate their claim online, and file their biweekly requests for payment.

The customer logs in to the online service using their social security number and their date of birth. They are prompted to select a PIN that will allow them to log back into the system at any time. With the ability to log into the system at anytime the customer can complete their filing at their convenience and are able to make changes, update their information, or check the status of their claim, all in real time. The online application will display important information for each page as the claimant goes through the filing process, giving them pertinent information to make the process as simple as possible.

The UI4U service asks all the necessary questions and follow-up questions so that a claimant never has to talk to a Department of Labor and Industry representative, resulting in time and money savings for both the customer and the agency. The Unemployment Insurance for You online service is the fastest, easiest way to file unemployment claims in Montana.

Mt.gov, the official state website, developed the Unemployment Insurance For You service in partnership with Montana Department of Labor and Industry. The service was launched January 10, 2005.

The UI4U service runs on our production web server, with the following specifications:

Production Database Server - 161.7.140.62
IBM ASCII Monitor/Console (shared between the 4 AIX boxen)
IBM p640 database server (B80)
375MHz POWER3-II
1GB RAM
2 - 9GB SCSI drives - mirrored
2 - 36GB SCSI drives - mirrored
AIX 4.3.3 Operating System
Oracle 8.1.7
Backup performed daily via Upstream

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Production Web Server - 161.7.8.17
IBM ASCII Monitor/Console (shared between the 4 AIX boxen)
IBM p640 Web Server (B80)
375MHz POWER3-II
1GB RAM
2 - 18.2GB SCSI drives - mirrored
AIX 4.3.3 Operating System
IBM_HTTP_Server/1.3.12 Apache/1.3.12 (Unix)
Backup performed daily via Upstream

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Blade enclosure
Dell 1655MC PowerEdge blade enclosure
Headless
2 - Gigabit switches
2 - power supplies

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Blade 1 - app.mt.gov - 161.7.9.81
Dell 1655MC PowerEdge blade server
Headless
1.4GHZ Processor - Dual procs
2GB - RAM
2 - 146GB SCSI hard drives - mirrored
2 - gigabit NIC cards
SuSE Linux Standard Server 8
Kernel 2.4.21-281-smp
Backed up by Upstream

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Blade 2 - mtprodj1.mt.gov - 161.7.9.83
Dell 1655MC PowerEdge blade server
Headless
1.4GHZ Processor - Dual procs
2GB - RAM
2 - 146GB SCSI hard drives - mirrored
2 - gigabit NIC cards
SuSE Linux Standard Server 8
Kernel 2.4.21-281-smp
Backed up by Upstream
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Blade 3 - mtprodj2.mt.gov - 161.7.9.85
Dell 1655MC PowerEdge blade server
Headless
1.4GHZ Processor - Dual procs
2GB - RAM
2 - 146GB SCSI hard drives - mirrored
2 - gigabit NIC cards
SuSE Linux Standard Server 8
Kernel 2.4.21-281-smp
Backed up by Upstream
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Blades 4-6 - 161.7.9.87
Dell 1655MC PowerEdge blade server
Headless
1.4GHZ Processor - Dual procs
2GB - RAM
2 - 146GB SCSI hard drives - mirrored
2 - gigabit NIC cards
SuSE Linux Standard Server 8
Kernel 2.4.21-281-smp
Backed up by Upstream
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APP3 - app3.mt.gov - 161.7.9.161
Dell 2550 PowerEdge server
Headless
931 MHz Processor - Dual procs
4GB - RAM
50+GB SCSI disk space - RAID5
Ethernet Pro 100 NIC
Kernel 2.4.21-281-smp

Backed up by Upstream

Significance to the improvement of the operation of Government-

The UI4U service has been very effective in helping citizens access their benefits in an easy to use and cost effective way. In the first year that the service has been available it was utilized over 75,937 times to either file or reactivate a claim, which is 27% of new claims filed.

Montana's Unemployment Insurance for You service enables customers to file their unemployment claim online without having to talk to a representative. The innovative service allows customers to open, review, or reactivate their claim by logging into the system using their social security number, date of birth, and a pin that they select. Additionally, for ongoing unemployment payments, customers can log in and file a biweekly claim request. This process involves the customer logging into the system and answering a few yes or no questions to receive unemployment benefits. Claimants can view and print a 1099, which are required for income tax returns and they can check the status of a claim. Giving customers the opportunity to manage their unemployment claim online gives Montana's online unemployment insurance service a unique advantage over similar applications.

The service was designed to offer a complete unemployment filing solution so that the Department of Labor and Industry would be able to process a claim based on the online application. With the full range of options for the customer and complete fact finding for the agency there is not the need for follow-up phone calls before the claim can be processed. For the agency this means less time on the phones and for the customer this means that they have more control over their filing.

The Unemployment Insurance For You service provides simple navigation through the service. The filing process for unemployment claims consists of many questions so the system displays a status bar at the top of each page to tell the customer how much of the application they have left. The system also allows the customers to log out and come back to the service to complete their filing. The information is saved and the user has up to ten days to log back into the service and continue with the application. The user must answer every question that is required and the system will display any follow-up questions based on the customer response. At the end of the application the customer can review their filing in a summary and edit any information that they need to. The claim can also be printed for future reference. This step-by-step process makes the service easy to follow and assures the users that they are completing the process correctly.

The service updates the Department of Labor and Industry's oracle database (MISTICS) in real time so there is current information at all times for both the user and the agency. This gives customers the chance to log back into the system to complete their application if they didn't finish and allows them to make changes to their application that are seen by the agency right away. This exchange also provides the agency with the information they need to help customers complete the online application. If the customer has trouble with the service they can contact the Department of Labor and Industry and the agency can

pull up the claim and find out where the customer left off and where they may have had problems. This gives the agency the ability to help customers right away with all the information available.

Benefits Realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency, or state-

Unemployment Insurance For You provides both cost benefits and value added benefits to the customer. The claimant no longer has to pay the long distance phone costs of calling the agency to file their unemployment claim, which saves them money. The customer also benefits because of the service's ease of use and the ability for them to manage their claim at their convenience. The immediate transmission of information to the agency is a benefit to the customer as well, giving the agency the ability to help customers with any problems they may be having.

The agency will be able to spend fewer resources staffing the phones due to a decrease in phone calls to the Department of Labor and Industry. The immediate information provided by this service gives the representatives the ability to help customers with the online application.

The state of Montana, Department of Labor and Industry, applied federal grant money to the development of this service and the maintenance to the service will be provided by mt.gov free of charge. The benefit to the state is a maintenance cost savings of \$30,000 a year and the ability to offer this service free to tax payers.

Return on investment, short-term/long-term payback-

The Montana Department of Labor and Industry received a federal grant to build an unemployment filing service online and they contracted with Mt.gov, to develop the service for \$175,000.00. The maintenance for the service will be performed at no charge to the agency. The state did not have to spend any tax dollars or general fund appropriations to provide this service to Montana citizens.

Unemployment Insurance For You allows customers to file their unemployment claims online making the process more efficient and cost-effective for the customer. Before the service was available online the only way a customer could file a claim was by calling the Unemployment office and answering the questions over the phone. This was a lengthy, long distance phone call to the agency for many customers. Now the customer can file and manage their claim online at their convenience without paying the long distance phone charges saving the customer time and money.

The agency will be able to reallocate staff time because of the reduction in phone calls to the offices. Thanks to the online service the agency will be able to utilize their staff in more productive ways