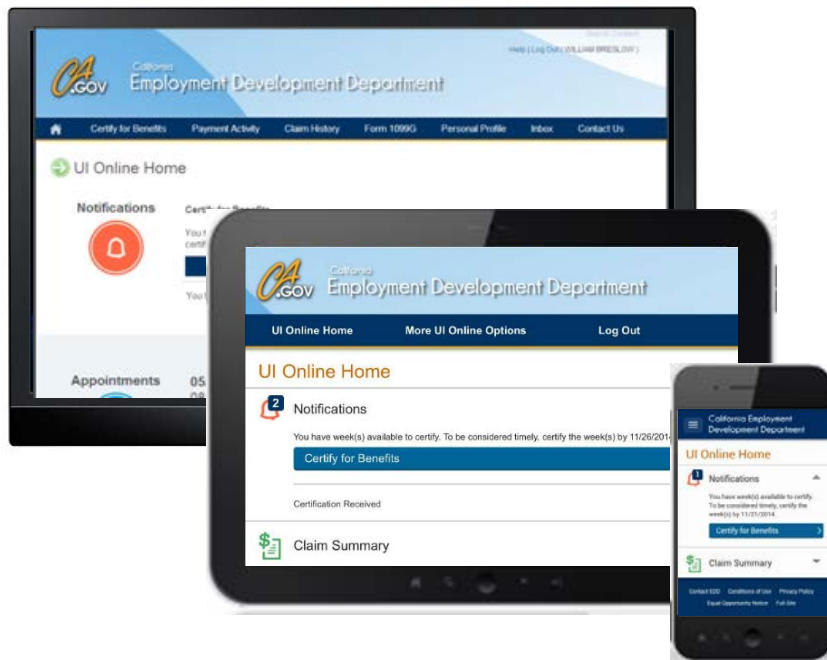


UI OnlineSM



A **fast, convenient, and secure** way for unemployed Californians to access detailed claim and payment information, certify for benefits and manage their Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim online 24/7.



Digital Government - Government to Citizen

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Executive Summary:

In April 2015, California's Employment Development Department (EDD) transformed the delivery of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits when it launched UI Online – a fast, convenient, and secure way for unemployed workers to certify for weekly benefits, view payments, and manage their claims 24/7, from the convenience of a computer, tablet, or smartphone. UI Online (available in English and Spanish) eases what can be an overwhelming process for unemployed Californians and helps them take care of their benefit needs faster, allowing them more time to focus on their all-important job searches. UI Online and the UI Online Mobile (mobile-optimized application) represent the EDD's commitment to expanding access to services, saving taxpayers' money, and revolutionizing the way UI claimants interact with the department. In addition to improving customer service, UI Online has boosted the efficiency of EDD workers by automating manual claims processing and enabling other tasks to be done more quickly. Since implementation, UI Online has processed over \$1.5 billion in payments, accelerated the delivery of benefits to unemployed workers (most claims via UI Online are paid within one day), and improved the State's ability to detect and prevent UI fraud.

UI Online:

- Enables UI claimants to certify for benefits and manage claim information online or from a mobile device, re-open existing claims, reschedule appointments, and update address and contact information without EDD staff intervention.
- Allows the EDD to communicate directly with claimants about other EDD services, changes in legislation that may impact their UI benefits, and natural disasters that may impact EDD operations.
- Improves the online certification process to handle more types of claims. Previously, any weekly claims with wages or other eligibility related issues had to be submitted through paper forms only, a slower process.
- Adds clarifying questions to the certification process to help EDD staff more quickly determine if eligibility issues exist. This reduces the likelihood of determination appointments, which can cause up to two weeks of delay in payments.
- Enhances the department's ability to meet federal performance standards.

UI Online exemplifies how the government can digitally transform and enhance the way it interacts with its customers – in this case, California workers at their time of need who have lost their jobs and need efficient, accurate, and timely access to their UI benefits. And in its first year of availability, customers are really responding. In a Rate Your Experience Survey, 90% of more than 250,000 respondents called the new services “excellent” or “good.”



Concept

Project Narrative: Concept, Significance, and Impact

Concept - The project successfully addresses an important dilemma in public service and/or encourages civic engagement.

California's UI program (largest in the nation) provides vital assistance to millions of Californians who have lost their job through no fault of their own. Last year, California's UI program via UI Online processed 5.4 million weeks in continued claims and paid over \$1.5 billion in benefits to over half a million claimants (\$150 million paid via UI Online Mobile). To collect benefits, individuals must first file a claim and meet certain eligibility requirements. Once enrolled in the program, UI claimants must certify that they have met the eligibility requirements for each week of benefits they claim; in some cases, they must also provide work and wage information. Prior to the launch of UI Online, most certifications were submitted via paper or through an IVR or web-cert process that did not allow claimants to report work and wage information. UI program staff at the EDD had to manually transcribe information into an outdated system, which increased claim processing time and delayed payments to unemployed workers.

California's population growth, the dramatic rise in unemployment during the recent recession (California's unemployment rate peaked at 12.2%), as well as the federal government unemployment insurance extension that allowed Californians to be eligible for up to 99 weeks of benefits, strained EDD resources and nearly doubled the number of UI claimants in California as compared to today. This surged the UI program's claim processing and call volume rates to record highs when there were fewer federal resources to administer the state's UI program. The reduction in UI program staff and the volume of claims made it very difficult for EDD to serve claimants seeking to contact the UI program about their claim. This situation, coupled with the UI program's outdated technology made it imperative that EDD develop new and innovative ways to complete its work with limited resources.

UI Online automates manual claims processing and enables work to be done more efficiently. It has significantly expanded access to services and accelerated the delivery of benefits to claimants. With a huge percentage of customers having access to a mobile device (especially those in rural areas), the EDD has gone beyond traditional desktop self-service portals and built a mobile solution to better serve its customers. UI Online allows California to be more effective in serving the unemployed when the demand for unemployment benefits increases in a future economic downturn. Having this self-serve option now available will greatly minimize the impact a recession can have on the delivery of critical unemployment services and benefits.



Significance

Significance - The project is consequential, relevant and transformational for state government and/or constituents.

UI Online completely transformed the nation's largest UI program by modernizing its business processes, improving the quality and timeliness of service provided to UI claimants, and strengthening the EDD's ability to detect and prevent fraud. For unemployed Californians, UI Online provides claimants with convenient, 24/7 self-service access to information via desktop, tablet, or mobile device; eliminating the need to reach UI staff for assistance through the mail, by email, or over the phone. Claimants no longer have to certify their continued eligibility using paper, saving the cost of postage and accelerating the payment of vital UI benefits.

To the EDD, UI Online has been transformational; to unemployed workers and their families, it remains very much a critical time-saving convenience that takes some of the stress out of a difficult situation, and allows individuals to focus their energies on re-entering the workforce.

UI Online was designed to fit the EDD customer's needs. California took a customer-centric approach to designing UI Online and its UI Online Mobile. State usability experts partnered with industry experts to design a clean, easy-to-use, and highly intuitive application – accessible via computer, tablet or smartphone. The EDD conducted usability studies and adapted the design to meet the needs of unemployed workers. The EDD's user interface standards and the State's responsive web template were followed to maintain a consistent look, feel, and functionality across the various EDD web applications.



Impact

Impact - The project leads to substantial and measurable change; it makes state government better.

There is no question, UI Online has made a significant impact on the lives of unemployed Californians and on their view of the way the State implements large, complex information technology projects. In fact, a recent Rate your Experience Survey, with 250,000 claimants responding, found that 90% of UI Online users rated their experience as "good" or "excellent", and a remarkable 100% of UI Online Mobile users report satisfaction with the way they can access the system on their smartphones and tablets. Here's just some of what they had to say about the new online services:

- *"Great job modernizing a government service. Help other agencies please."*
- *"I am happy to see that the California UI Department has become fully online capable! Great work!"*

- *“This system is quick, efficient and fair. It gives me the time and energy I need to keep my chin up and my résumé out.”*

UI Online has made state government better. In its first year:

- **More than 500,000** customers registered in UI Online.
- More than **a third of active claimants** certify for their ongoing benefits through UI Online every week resulting in over **5.4 million weeks** processed and **\$1.5 billion** in benefits paid.

The first year of UI Online shows just how much time unemployed Californians can save along with the many convenient options they have to manage a claim online. Some of these conveniences include:

- **37% of customers have saved a couple of days to a couple of weeks in claim processing** time by avoiding common mistakes made on paper forms like leaving off a signature, and by supplying more details made possible by UI Online that would've required scheduling a phone appointment before. Over the past year, paper form certifications have been **reduced by 26%**.
- **52% of customers got their important payment information immediately online** rather than submitting a request through email, or getting through to the call center as required in the past. Over the past year, customers have accessed UI Online **8.4 million times**.
- **45% of customers received their benefits faster** by certifying for their benefits on the first day of their bi-weekly eligibility period, with the help of email reminders.
- UI Online provides several convenient services that used to require a phone call to the EDD or requests through the mail including:
 - Update contact information (address, phone number) and personal preferences – **over 262,000 updates** received in the past year.
 - Reschedule phone interview appointments to a time better suited for an individual's schedule.
 - View payment and claim information – **over 3.4M** views for payment info in the past year.
 - Reopen a current claim.
 - Obtain tax information (Form 1099G).

UI Online substantially changed the way UI program staff communicated with customers. The EDD embarked on a strategic marketing and media campaign to inform UI claimants, government officials and the general public about the new system and its benefits. In addition, there is a dedicated UI Online Home Page that provides helpful links, videos, and information on UI Online and UI Online Mobile. Marketing efforts have included:

- Customer Outreach and Education:
 - Dedicated UI Online Home Page with help links and program information – http://www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/UI_Online.htm.
 - A full suite of educational UI Online videos/tutorials that are available in English and Spanish to help ease the transition for customers in conducting business online. These videos are viewed more than 2,100 times a week and counting as more languages are introduced. Versions are now available in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1W8aUNU38BM>.
 - A UI Online User Guide that shows step-by-step instructions on how to use UI Online and UI Online Mobile.
 - Updates to the EDD Website – front page banner, FAQs and helpful tips.
 - Print materials at career center and other community partners including UI Online posters and bookmarks.
 - Personalized letters to UI claimants, inserts in the bi-weekly continued claim paper certifications, and more.
- Legislative Outreach and Training:
 - UI program staff conducted a roadshow of over 12 legislative briefings across the state to share information about UI Online with UI program advocates and labor groups.
- Media Outreach
 - EDD conducted a series of media briefings and issued press releases that resulted in positive press for UI Online.
 - EDD monitors and addresses any questions or concerns via social media posts about UI Online.

UI Online also transformed the way state agencies design IT systems. UI Online is a model system that is usable, secure, accessible, and private.

- Usability: State usability experts partnered with industry experts to design a clean, easy-to-use and highly intuitive application. The EDD's user interface standards and the State's responsive web template were followed to maintain a consistent look, feel and functionality across the various EDD web applications.
- Security: The application was integrated with an enterprise-strength identity and access management software to provide advanced security features such as strong password and security questions for authentication, site key images and captions for anti-phishing attempts and automated-bot prevention technologies were implemented.
- Privacy: The application displays an EDD Customer Account Number (EDDCAN) in lieu of an SSN to safeguard personally identifiable information. Access to personal information is protected by a user id and password; a valid user account is required to log in to the system. Once logged in, the system automatically logs a user out after a period of inactivity to safeguard customer account information.

In conclusion, UI Online has been a transformational system for California. It has changed the way the state interacts and communicates with its customers. It has transformed the way the state agencies design IT systems. And it has digitally transformed and enhanced the delivery of government services to Californians in their time of need. The customer usage and satisfaction during the first year of offering these new online and mobile unemployment services demonstrate the tremendous impact the state can make to the lives of over half a million Californians who have chosen to use UI Online because the services are fast, easy and secure.