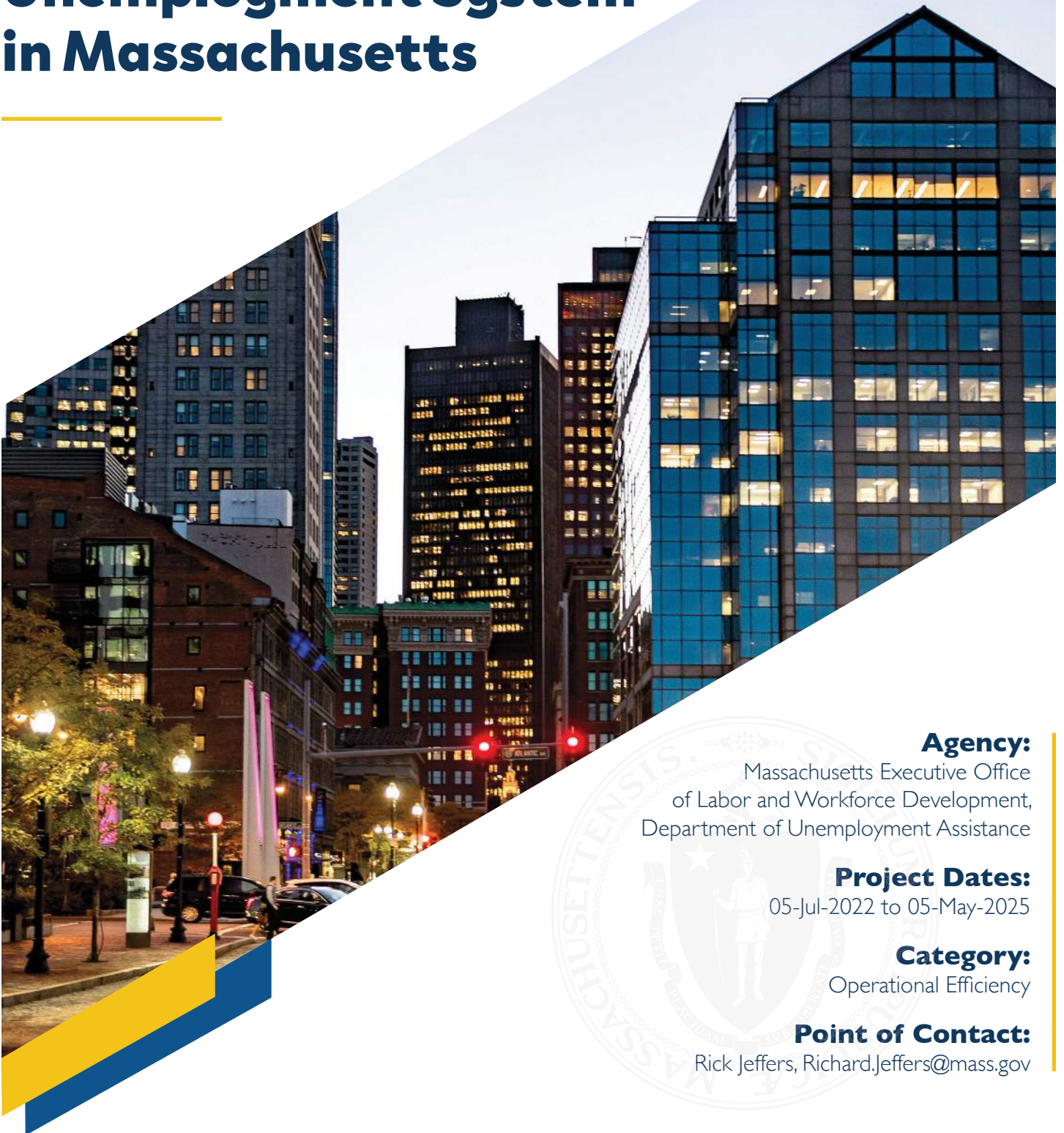


EMT

EMPLOYMENT MODERNIZATION
& TRANSFORMATION

A Future-Ready Unemployment System in Massachusetts

**Agency:**

Massachusetts Executive Office
of Labor and Workforce Development,
Department of Unemployment Assistance

Project Dates:

05-Jul-2022 to 05-May-2025

Category:

Operational Efficiency

Point of Contact:

Rick Jeffers, Richard.Jeffers@mass.gov

Executive Summary

The Employment Modernization and Transformation Project

Massachusetts has long been a place where history is made, from education to technology. Today, that spirit of progress extends to how the Commonwealth delivers critical services. In May 2025, the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) launched a new cloud-based system for unemployment insurance (UI) tax, benefits, and appeals—positioning Massachusetts to meet future demands with agility, equity, and resilience.



Massachusetts *Welcomes You*

Population: **7.15M**

3rd most densely populated state

~\$5B paid in yearly UI benefits

Highest maximum weekly benefits in U.S.



Idea

What problem or opportunity does the project address? Why does it matter?

- Massachusetts has a highly competitive labor market paired with a high cost of living, making unemployment insurance (UI) a critical safety net for workers navigating employment transitions.
- The Commonwealth's legacy system, implemented in 2013, was inefficient, inflexible, and lacked the functionality needed to properly administer UI.
- These limitations became especially pronounced during the pandemic, when the system made it difficult for the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) to respond quickly to unprecedented claim volume, rapidly changing federal requirements, and heightened customer expectations.
- Customer expectations for UI services—and all government services, for that matter—have fundamentally changed. Claimants and employers now expect government systems to deliver the same level of speed, usability, and reliability commonly found in the private sector.
- We saw a clear opportunity to enhance customer service, accessibility, and equity for both claimants and employers while strengthening program integrity and ensuring efficient, timely service delivery.

What makes it different?

Massachusetts has some of the strongest accessibility and disability protections in state government. We also have a high population of immigrants; 25% of households speak a language other than English.

Therefore, we went above and beyond to ensure equitable access for all, engaging three independent expert groups to review our digital services and ensure they were accessible and convenient for Massachusetts's diverse populations.

What makes it universal?

The Employment Modernization and Transformation (EMT) Project addressed challenges faced by workforce agencies everywhere: aging technology, changing customer expectations, and growing cybersecurity threats. Rather than pursuing one-off fixes, we prioritized a long-term solution built around core elements that are broadly applicable across states and programs:

- **AI-driven Chatbots:** Virtual assistants for claimants and employers address common issues quickly and efficiently.
- **Cybersecurity:** Strengthen program integrity without increasing burdens on customers.
- **Risk Management:** Proven, production-ready technology reduced implementation risk while enabling long-term flexibility and scalability.
- **Modernization and Consolidation:** Fragmented, aging systems were replaced with a single cloud-based platform.
- **Digital Government:** Self-service, multi-channel access, and user-centered design align with modern expectations for public services.
- **Data and Business Intelligence:** High-quality data, reporting, and real-time analytics support better decision-making, operational oversight, and continuous improvement.
- **Interstate Cooperation:** Participation in the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Integrity Data Hub ensures the quality and accuracy of data shared with other states, helping to prevent fraud across state lines.



Hi, I can assist with
benefit-related questions!

Implementation

What was the roadmap?

- When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, DUA partnered with Fast Enterprises (FAST) to quickly implement the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program in a standalone system.
- With a PUA system successfully in place and the pandemic winding down, we continued our modernization efforts and ultimately decided to partner with FAST again.
- A key motivator behind the EMT project was our genuine desire to better serve the public.

Timeline:

July 2022 - September 2023

Launch of tax and appeals functionality, improving service for over 500,000 employers and third-party administrators

December 2023 - May 2025

Launch of redesigned benefits system and portal, improving the experience for claimants

Who was involved? How did you do it?

The EMT Project was funded through a combination of federal grants, legislative funding, and bonds. We ensured enterprise alignment by engaging the Massachusetts Office of the Comptroller, Department of Workforce Development, Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security. We hired additional experts to conduct accessibility and usability reviews, and engaged claimant advocates in online service configuration.

The project was delivered in a hybrid environment, requiring adaptable collaboration and proactive change management. Leadership prioritized staff participation by empowering end users to replace outdated processes, automate routine work, and adopt modern, user-centered practices—driving strong buy-in and adoption.

Because DUA had already partnered with its primary software vendor, FAST, on the PUA project, the team was able to hit the ground running with established working relationships. This foundation enabled stronger collaboration, streamlined communication, and a high level of trust from the outset, significantly supporting efficient project delivery.



Our new system was purpose-built for UI and designed to:

Reduce risk

Keep costs under control

Provide a scalable foundation for the future

Deliver a strong return on investment



Impact

What did the project make better? How do you know?

The new system allows DUA to execute its enterprise goals of timely, equitable, and effective service—always with an eye on the future.

Operational Efficiency and Staff Productivity

- Automation eliminated paper costs, scanning, mail handling, and inefficient workarounds—significantly reducing manual work and enabling leaders to consolidate staff units.
- With streamlined workflows and fewer phone calls to answer, staff spend less time searching for data and more time on high-value tasks.
- New system includes an integrated accounting ledger, which the previous system lacked.
- Real-time dashboards and reporting provide unprecedented visibility into workload, staffing needs, and processing timelines—enabling rapid, data-driven adjustments, such as expedited claim filing.

Faster Service Delivery

- The 24/7 online portal allows customers to:
 - File claims on their own (a process that previously required a high amount of staff intervention)
 - Track payments and see claim and adjudication statuses in real time
 - Easily upload wage and employment documents (e.g., pay stubs), resulting in more timely and accurate benefit determinations, as staff no longer have to wait for mail or fax.
 - See everything in one place—previously, they had to navigate various sites to view hearing notices, payment statuses, etc.
- Improved electronic employer wage reporting increased compliance and data accuracy, reducing administrative burden for both employers and staff.

76% reduction in
backlog for benefit
eligibility issues

Employer assessments
increased from
50 to 250/week

\$2.7B+
in UI benefits issued
in first 6 months



Claimants receive first payments **44% faster**

Average time to complete a weekly benefits request is **under 4 minutes.**

Call wait times reduced from over 2 hours to **5–10 minutes**

Claims meeting federal 21-day benchmark **increased from 46% to 62%**

Hi, I can assist with employer questions!



Impact

Ease of Use and Accessibility

- Claimants and employers can interact with DUA through multiple channels, including the new 24/7 online portal and our AI-driven chatbots: Terry the Boston Terrier for claimants and SamOwl Adams for employers.
- Customer-facing interfaces are designed to support independent task completion through personalized, intuitive online services.
- Unprecedented mobile access expanded benefit availability beyond desktop-only systems.
- Materials were translated into 12 languages to promote equitable access; within the first few months, more than 2,200 claimants used the system in Spanish.
- A focus on plain language messaging ensures customers can clearly understand what they are being asked to do at each step in the process.



4.5 out of 5 stars:
average claimant rating
out of 93k reviews

>60% of claimants
access services
using mobile or
tablet devices



Security, Integrity, and Fraud Prevention

DUA has demonstrated that security, identity management, and accessibility can—and should—advance together. We have seen significant time savings and fraud prevention by streamlining and strengthening identity verification and login security, and expanding cross-matching to detect fictitious employer schemes.

DUA is also able to expand participation in two national programs with the new system:

- NASWA's Integrity Data Hub, with automated data sharing that helps to safeguard UI nationwide
- State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES), with automatic workflows that strengthen cooperation between states, employers, and third-party administrators



Millions
prevented in fraud

Improper payments:
23% *immediate* reduction
50.4% *reduction over time*



What now?

From shaping the nation's earliest institutions to leading modern advances in technology and healthcare, the Commonwealth has consistently set a higher bar for what's possible. That same mindset now defines the future of unemployment insurance.

DUA's new system can evolve alongside the workforce it serves—supporting new federal programs, adapting to economic shifts, and continuously improving the customer experience through data, automation, and user-centered design.

Customer feedback:

"A true improvement, leading to efficiency and clarity."



"This straightforward process has been comforting, giving me the confidence that I'll be able to continue to provide for my family while I search for another position."

"Being unemployed is already incredibly stressful but this website update has helped relieve some of the stress because I no longer dread the claim process! The addition of a chatbot is also great – I got an answer to my question immediately."

Thanks for visiting **Massachusetts**

2025 Commonwealth Equity in
Governance Award: **EMT Team**

Unemployment & Worker's Compensation
Integrity Award: **Rick Jeffers, EMT Director**

