

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

**Reemployment Eligibility and Assessment (REA) Services
Pilot Project
Q-54**

Issued on September 3, 2009

By

**The New York State Department of Labor (Department)
Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions (DEWS)
State Office Campus
Building 12 – Room 440
Albany, NY 12240**

Submission Deadline: September 10, 2009

The New York State Department of Labor is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities

I. Introduction

A. Purpose:

Through this Request for Applications, the New York State Department of Labor is seeking qualified Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) to pilot the use of an enhanced Reemployment Eligibility and Assessment (REA) program. REA-funded activities do not supplant current funding, but provide value-added services. The REA program design strategy focuses on regularly scheduled in-person office assessments throughout the period of the claim. These services include the provision of Labor market information, developing a work search plan, evaluation of individual re-employment assessment needs; review of continued UI eligibility and *referral* to re-employment services (e.g. job search assistance workshops or job placement services) or to occupational or skills training, when appropriate. Providing re-employment services such as resume' writing or interviewing workshops and job placement activities are *not* permissible uses of UI grant funds.

A minimum of one LWIA in each of eight (8) Labor Market regions in New York State will be selected. Priority for consideration will be given based on numbers of REA customers to be served. The purpose of this pilot is to provide a heightened level of services to Unemployment Insurance claimants. This process has been shown to return claimants to work an average of one week earlier, thereby reducing the average duration of their UI Claim. Potential annual savings to the UI Trust Fund could be as high as \$10.4 Million, based upon the current average benefit rate.

B. Background:

For four (4) years, New York State has conducted a pilot Reemployment Eligibility and Assessment (REA) program in the Oneida/Herkimer/Madison local area. The REA program model emphasizes a case management approach through repeated, scheduled, one on one, in-person contact with each participant for the duration of the UI claims period. Through these periodic mandated REA interviews, REA funded staff assess the individual's skills and service needs, work with them to develop an individual work search or employment plan, monitor their progress against the plan, update/modify the plan as may be needed over time, and refer and/or schedule them for employment and training services as indicated. The actual delivery of employment and training services are not funded by REA grant. The REA grant funds support merit staff dedicated to conducting the one-on-one REA interviews. In applying for the REA grant the LWIA is agreeing to leverage available local One Stop resources to provide the needed employment and training services to REA participants as referred by REA staff.

Through these REA interviews REA staff work one-on-one with grant participants helping them identify and eliminate skills gaps, determining needed job-hunting and training services, then developing customized job-search plans. Information on the local labor market is also used to help focus the customer's specific job search. Staff will continue to follow-up with each worker throughout the job-search process, until the worker gets a job or exhausts his or her unemployment benefits.

USDOL has awarded New York State increased REA grant funds which will allow the NYS Department of Labor to expand the REA grant model using a modified version of the program design piloted in Oneida/Herkimer/Madison to other local areas. REA awards to local areas approved in response to this

RFA will take the form of additional REA funded state merit staff at the local level to provide an enhanced service to individuals who receive unemployment insurance benefits.

Each local area application under this REA RFA must follow the prescribed program model:

1. The REA Program model will focus on Unemployment Insurance claimants who have been profiled 1-45 (excluding seasonal claimants with at least a 2 year attachment to the same employer; claimants confirmed as union members who obtain employment exclusively through a union hiring hall, Trade Act participants and those on temporary layoff -TLO).
2. Of the total UI claimants meeting the criteria outlined in item 1 above, the local area will develop a “random sampling” methodology to assign each claimant at the time of the weekly REOS download scheduling to one of two groups:
 - a. Between 65% to 75% are randomly assigned as REA participants. These REA participants must be scheduled from the weekly REOS download for an initial, one-on-one, in-person REA interview (a specific REOS appointment purpose will be created to designate these participants as REA participants).
 - b. The balance (25% to 35%) is randomly assigned to be the REA control group. These individuals will not be scheduled for service, but will be sent letters informing them of the availability of One Stop system services that they can access voluntarily. If they choose to access One Stop services, they will be treated the same as any other One Stop walk-in customer. The federal REA program requires a control group to be designated in order to assess program outcomes by comparing the REA participants’ outcomes to the control group outcomes.
3. Those assigned to the REA participant group (2a) will be served on an “in person” basis utilizing the REA grant model outlined below and in the flowchart “Attachment A - REA Project Design”.

Local area data on customers profiled 1-45 is included with this document.

C. Benefits:

REA will provide additional staff to schedule those profiled 1 to 45. Since those profiled 31 to 45 are currently required to be scheduled from existing resources, this will free up some existing resources now used to schedule those profiled 31 to 45. In addition, because of the “random sampling” requirement of REA, only between 65% to 75% of those profiled 31 to 45 will need to be scheduled, whereas currently 100% are required to be scheduled. These freed up resources will be available to provide other services, such as more intensive ongoing services to those profiled 46 to 100.

Based on the outcomes of the Oneida, Herkimer, Madison REA pilot, there is an expectation that local areas implementing the REA program model will experience improved system indicator outcomes, particularly for the “initial assessment” and “UI Customers at exit” indicators.

Participating local areas will:

- become part of nationally recognized REA study, incorporating a wholly new REA service model, and
- be afforded the opportunity, based on dedicated resources, to provide services using an intensive case management approach which has not been previously realistic given current resource levels.

II. PROCESS FOR PARTICIPATION

Participating local areas must complete the Request to Participate form (Attachment B) and e-mail it no later than 5:00 PM on Thursday, September 10, 2009 to: Deborah.Spaulding@labor.state.ny.us with the subject line: "REA Project Application".

III. Program Requirements

A. Description:

Participating local areas must put procedures in place which include the provision of Re-Employment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) services to customers profiled as least likely to exhaust UI benefits (1 – 45). While the new pilot program is currently funded through March 31, 2010, it is anticipated that this program will be subsequently funded on an on-going basis.

Additional State Merit staff will be hired or redeployed by the NYS Department of Labor for the purpose of providing enhanced REA services under this revised pilot program. This program is scheduled to begin October 1, 2009.

The local area REA process must include:

- method and timeframes for scheduling initial and subsequent REA services
- inclusion of a random sampling approach to designate as REA participants 65 to 75% of UI customers who have been profiled least likely to exhaust benefits (1 to 45 -- not including seasonal claimants with at least a 2 year attachment to the same employer; claimants confirmed as union members who obtain employment exclusively through a union hiring hall, Trade Act participants and those on temporary layoff -TLO)
- provision of services on an "in person" basis
- each local area will specify in their RFA response the percentage of the estimated target UI population (profiled 1-45) that will be designated as REA participants (i.e. a specific percentage between 65 to 75% must be established for each local area as part of the RFA response)
- a modified *state merit staffing* plan to accommodate increased REA services (The Request to Participate form will automatically calculate additional staff needs based on estimated participant numbers input by the local area)
- anticipated outcome will be a reduction in UI duration: one week minimum.

B. Case Management Strategy:

Local REA service procedures must also include an intensive case management strategy. Note that the formula used in the Request to Participate form that calculates the number of staff awarded based on the estimated number of REA participants, assumes that each REA staff will be able to handle an average workload of 5.5 REA interviews per day. This assumes that each REA interview will be an intensive service. The REA design assumes that each REA interview will include the following:

- Utilization of a locally customized Customer Needs Survey
- Completion of the *UI Benefit Compliance Review form (Attachment C)*

- Completion of an Individual Employment Plan or *UI Work Search Agreement* (*Attachment D provides a sample agreement*)
- Provision of *Current Labor Market Information* to customer
- Referral to job search, resume review and additional in-depth workshops
- A *Job Zone* Assessment, as deemed necessary
- Discussion of work search progress and further job referrals
- Referral to career counselor on an as-needed basis
- Referral to supportive services or other Community Based Organizations and agencies
- Identify and address skills gaps through referrals for skills development or occupational training
- 100% of customer resumes will be sent to Burning Glass. (Burning Glass is an automated skill-to-job matching process and will be available statewide effective October 2009. Guidance to local areas will be provided at that time).

A sample *Assessment Interview Checklist*(*Attachment E*) is provided. While not required, this form may help local areas to organize and case manage UI customer activities.

C. UI Information Sharing:

The local REA service program must include a process for sharing information, internally, for UI fact finding and adjudication purposes. Should a customer fail to report for scheduled REA services or should other issues related to availability, capability, barriers to employment and/or inadequate work search be identified by staff during REA customer contacts, immediate notification shall be made to UI through the use of the Reemployment Services Operating system (REOS).

D. Additional Requirements:

By participating in this program, local areas agree to:

- include all aspects the program requirements as outlined above in Section III
- leverage existing resources
- integrate customer feedback
- incorporate monthly reporting to NYSDOL for continuous improvement
- analyze UI exhaustee information to identify trends and develop plans to address identified barriers
- additional assurances as listed on the Request to Participate form.

E. General Requirements:

All Request to Participate forms received will become the property of the State of New York and will not be returned.

FY 2009 NYS REA Attachment A - REA Project Design

