



Reemployment Services Evidence: A Collection of Briefs on RESEA Program Components

Evaluation to Advance RESEA
Program Evidence

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Introduction

The federal government has increasingly emphasized the use of rigorous evidence to inform policymaking and program design decisions to better serve participants. For example, the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 requires federal agencies to develop learning agendas and evaluation plans to build evidence.¹ Building such evidence often requires partnerships with state agencies.² In the spirit of this legislation, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Chief Evaluation Office, in close collaboration with the Employment and Training Administration, is supporting and catalyzing research to build evidence on effective strategies in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program. Prompted by recent amendments to Section 306 of the Social Security Act (SSA) that permanently authorized the RESEA program, states must also implement evidence-based strategies or evaluate their programs to build evidence.³

How to Use this Report

These Evidence Briefs aim to inform states about the current status of evidence on RESEA programs and strategies. The briefs are intended to be useful to states as they refine their programs and build evidence in response to the legislative and administrative requirements.⁴ The briefs describe findings from research on the effectiveness of elements frequently used in RESEA programs. Each of the three briefs reviews and considers the evidence and gaps in one of three subject areas:

- **Brief 1:** research related to program activities that precede the in-person RESEA meeting, namely **claimant selection, scheduling, and attendance policies**;
- **Brief 2:** research on the impact of **basic career services**;
- **Brief 3:** research on the impact of **individualized career services**.

To gain a broad overview of the evidence base for RESEA programs and their key components, the collection is best read as a whole. To learn more about a specific issue, review the next section which summarizes key findings and then read the brief of most interest to you.

RESEA Program Overview

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program is a federally-funded, state-run effort to:

- improve employment outcomes for recipients of UI;
- strengthen UI program integrity; and
- promote alignment between UI and the broader workforce development system.

Legislation enacted in 2018 required that states’ RESEA programs be supported by evidence and allowed states to use a portion of their RESEA grant monies to fund evaluations to help generate such supporting evidence.

¹ See Public Law No: 115-435, available at: <https://www.congress.gov/115/plaws/publ435/PLAW-115publ435.pdf>

² Under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), states are required to conduct evaluations of title I core programs to promote continuous improvement in the program (20 CFR § 682.200).

³ These amendments to the Social Security Act were included in the Balanced Budget Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123), signed by the President on February 9, 2018. The RESEA provisions are contained in the new Section 306 of the Social Security Act.

⁴ Readers may find other useful resources related to RESEA program evaluation at https://rc.workforceegps.org/resources/2019/07/30/17/32/RESEA_Evaluation_Evidence_Resources. These include evaluation technical assistance materials, such as webinars, an RESEA Evaluation Toolkit, and other written products. All reports and briefs from DOL’s *Evaluation to Advance RESEA Program Evidence* will be posted on the Chief Evaluation Office website at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/completedstudies>.

Summary of Key Findings

Though the evaluation literature on programs to assist UI claimants is among the deepest in labor policy, nearly all completed impact evaluations focused on estimating the effectiveness of whole RESEA programs, not components of those programs. These briefs review the evidence and summarize key findings as follows:

- **Claimant Selection.** For states interested in targeting services through the selection of claimants for participation, the best available evidence on selection criteria comes from whole-program impact studies that test for differential impacts across subgroups of claimants. Though programs often select claimants based on statistical models that predict likelihood of benefit exhaustion, available evidence suggests that impacts usually do not vary with the scores from those models. Other claimant characteristics, such as their weekly benefit amount, may better predict program impact (Klerman et al., 2019). States may have other motivations for relying on profiling scores or other criteria for selection.
- **Scheduling and Attendance.** One impact study finds that an emphasis on clear and concise communication may improve program attendance rates, but most analyses of approaches to improving program attendance are descriptive (Darling et al., 2017). Scheduling and communication strategies have rarely been tested rigorously, and additional research would deepen the field’s understanding of the effects of self-scheduling, alternative communication channels, and non-compliance policies on attendance.
- **Mandatory requirements.** Reemployment programs for UI claimants sometimes mandate program participation, and the mandate to participate appears to be relevant to program impacts (Klerman et al., 2019). Few studies have isolated the effect of reemployment services from the mandate to participate in those services. When reviewing existing or future evidence for specific reemployment services, states may wish to focus on the role of any mandates to participate.
- **Career and employment services.** RESEA programs often consist of a combination of different career development and employment-related services. States may be interested in the available evidence for specific services or groups of career services. The briefs below review the evidence for basic and individualized career services separately. However, in general, previous studies have not isolated the effects of these types of services. Among the credible studies that have tested for the marginal impact of basic and individualized services, one older study found that mandatory basic career services shorten durations on UI (Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor, and Human Relations [DILHR], 1984). A more recent evaluation found that requiring attendance at multiple RESEA meetings—which can be considered a kind of individualized (or intensive) approach to services, depending on how the state implements the activity—can improve outcomes (Klerman et al., 2019). And intensive services available through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) were found to improve participant employment and earnings, though for a sample of largely non-UI claimants (Fortson et al., 2017).
- **Evaluation design considerations.** RESEA programs’ reemployment services, particularly when evaluated separately, are often basic and of limited intensity, and therefore can be expected to have small impacts when compared to a control group. Therefore, evaluations of low-intensity components require large samples, sometimes larger than all but the largest states can support in two to three years. As relevant, each of the briefs discuss options for overcoming these sample size requirements.

About the Study

In response to the legislative mandate for evidence on the RESEA program, DOL’s Chief Evaluation Office sponsored the *Evaluation to Advance RESEA Program Evidence* and hired Abt Associates, in partnership with the Urban Institute, Capital Research Corporation, and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, to conduct an implementation study, develop strategies to support new evidence requirements, and provide a range of technical assistance activities to support states and DOL in building and using evidence.

This series of briefs offers an overview of the current evidence regarding the effectiveness of reemployment interventions and strategies for UI claimants, many of which are components that, when bundled together, comprise states’ RESEA programs. The authors suggest what can be learned from that evidence to inform RESEA programs and where more evidence is needed.



Selecting Claimants and Meeting Attendance

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Selecting Claimants and Meeting Attendance

The initial service activity in the RESEA program is a mandatory meeting between the Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant and an RESEA caseworker. Strategies for selecting participants and scheduling that mandatory meeting both contribute to a program's success (Darling et al., 2017; Klerman et al., 2019).¹

Because there tend to be more eligible UI claimants than there are available program participant slots, states use selection criteria to identify which RESEA-eligible claimants to select for an RESEA meeting.² When designing a program, a key consideration related to program impact is how to identify claimants who are most likely to benefit from participation.

To benefit from the services offered by RESEA, claimants must first attend the RESEA meeting(s).³ However, achieving high attendance rates is challenging; about half of selected claimants do not attend as initially scheduled and about a third never attend (Darling et al., 2017; Klerman et al., 2019).

Though states may want to select appropriate claimants and promote high attendance rates, strategies for selecting RESEA participants and for promoting meeting attendance constitute only a relatively small part of RESEA as a whole (see box below). This suggests that they likely contribute a small share of the program's overall impact.

About this Brief

This brief summarizes the state of the evidence about two RESEA program components: (1) which UI claimants would benefit the most when selected to participate and (2) changes in scheduling practices to increase meeting attendance rates. The brief closes with a discussion of gaps in the current evidence base and implications of evaluating these kinds of RESEA program components. This brief is the first of three summarizing the current state of the evidence relevant to the RESEA program.

About the RESEA Program

RESEA supports states' activities to improve employment outcomes among persons receiving UI, strengthen UI program integrity, promote workforce program integration, and connect UI claimants with partner programs.

At a minimum, participants must meet with a service provider who completes a review of the claimant's UI eligibility, delivers customized labor market information, enrolls the claimant in the Wagner-Peyser Act-funded Employment Service program, develops an individual reemployment plan, and refers the claimant to additional reemployment services.

The most recent program guidance is available at <https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/>.

This is one of several "State of the Evidence Briefs" prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office, under Contract 1605DC-18-A-0037, Evaluation to Advance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Program Evidence. Visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/completedstudies> for other briefs and reports. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of the same by the U.S. Government.

As a result, measuring the impact of these initial components on final outcomes (employment and UI duration) requires larger samples than are needed to evaluate the impact of more intensive components, such as reemployment services.

Which Claimants Benefit Most from RESEA?

This section reviews the literature on the use of *profiling scores*—a product of the UI system’s Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) program—as a criterion for participant selection, because those scores have been, and as of 2021 continue to be, the primary method that states use to select claimants for RESEA (Trutko et al., 2022). The discussion covers the theoretical motivation for using profiling scores and the evidence for whether RESEA has a greater impact on the outcomes of claimants with high profiling scores. It concludes with a brief discussion of evidence for other plausible selection criteria.

Most states target their RESEA programs to those claimants deemed most likely to exhaust benefits as determined by a profiling model that statistically estimates a claimant’s probability of benefit exhaustion.⁴ The details of each state’s profiling model can differ in many ways, but models generally intend to identify claimants who, in the absence of reemployment assistance, are projected to have lower employment rates and higher exhaustion rates relative to other claimants.⁵

There is room for debate as to whether an RESEA program should be expected to have larger overall impacts if it serves claimants with higher profiling scores than if it served claimants with lower profiling scores. On the one hand, claimants with higher profiling scores could have the greatest potential for improvement in their outcomes because their expected average claim durations are longer. On the other hand, some of the reemployment barriers faced by claimants with lower profiling scores may be more readily addressed through the services offered by RESEA than can the kinds of barriers faced by claimants with higher profiling scores.

The available evidence generally does not support the hypothesis that reemployment programs’ impacts on UI duration are larger for claimants with higher profiling scores, relative to those with lower scores. Based on data collected in Kentucky in the 1990s, for example, Black et al. (2003) explored whether the WPRS system had larger impacts on reducing weeks of UI received for those claimants profiled as more likely to exhaust. They found no evidence of such a relationship.⁶ More recent evidence partially affirms that finding. For example, a 2013-2014 impact study estimated the impact of four states’ Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program—Indiana, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin (Klerman et al., 2019). Like Black et al. (2003), this study found no evidence that REA was more effective for claimants with higher profiling scores in New York and Washington. However, in one state (Indiana), the study did find that REA was more effective for those with higher profiling scores.⁷

In examining how REA’s impacts varied across different claimants, the Klerman et al. (2019) study found that benefit duration impacts across four states, as a whole, were larger for claimants with lower weekly benefit amounts (WBAs). Differential impacts were moderately large: decreases in UI duration nearly twice as large for those with a WBA below the median (1.6 weeks) compared to those with a WBA above the median (0.9 weeks). A more robust analysis in that study suggests that the relation is nearly linear: impacts were progressively greater for claimants with lower WBAs.⁸

These findings suggest that if a state’s goal is to select those claimants who will experience the largest drop in UI duration, states might want to consider selecting those with lower WBAs.⁹ However, states may need to weigh such goals against other priorities and outcomes (e.g., earnings and employment) when deciding on claimant selection criteria.

What Promotes RESEA Meeting Attendance?

UI claimants who are selected for RESEA can only benefit from its services if they first attend its initial meeting(s), since that is the way they can obtain the services. But many claimants do not attend the mandatory meeting(s) on time or at all (Klerman et al., 2019; Darling et al., 2017).¹⁰

Non-attendance causes two problems. First, as noted above, claimants who are selected but do not attend cannot receive the services provided by the RESEA meeting. Second, missed meetings are an inefficient use of RESEA caseworkers' time, as they reserve portions of their workdays for scheduled meetings that ultimately do not occur.

Here we identify available evidence for four approaches that states have taken to increase attendance at RESEA meetings.

1. **Improved communication.** RESEA programs face a significant communication challenge (Darling et al., 2017). Programs need to get claimants' attention and explain their responsibilities as UI recipients, the role of the RESEA program, its benefits, and how to comply with its requirements.

A growing body of research has studied strategies for communicating with participants of public programs (Chetty et al., 2009; Cooke et al., 2018; Milkman et al., 2011; Rogers et al., 2013; Dai et al., 2014; Beshears et al., 2009). But there is limited research on the effects of communication mode, timing, or content specifically in the context of RESEA-like programs. One study of behavioral messaging strategies for UI claimants selected to participate in Michigan's REA program suggests that states might pursue communication strategies that prioritize clarity and concision and that emphasize program benefits (Darling et al., 2017).¹¹ That study—a randomized controlled trial—involved a series of behaviorally-informed emails sent as a follow-up to the state's standard notification letter initially sent to UI claimants selected for REA. The authors report increases in attendance rates at the initial REA meeting of about 14 percentage points (e.g., 50 percent attendance in the control group vs 64 percent attendance in the treatment group), compared to those who received only the standard letter. The emails' clear and concise messages promoted a positive relationship with REA program staff while reminding claimants of upcoming appointments.

2. **Stronger penalties.** States treat non-attendance as non-compliance with UI eligibility requirements, triggering a suspension of benefits. However, the immediacy and duration of those suspensions are left to states' discretion. Studies find that about two-thirds of states respond by suspending benefits until the claimant attends the meeting, and evidence suggests that this policy could be related to attendance rates (Trutko et al., 2022; Minzner et al., 2017). Relative to states that suspend benefits only for the week of non-attendance, states that suspend benefits until the non-compliant claimant attends an REA meeting have been found to have higher attendance rates. However, research has not demonstrated whether or not these relationships are causal, meaning the differences in attendance rates cannot necessarily be attributed to the non-attendance policy.¹²

3. **Flexible scheduling.** States differ in their approach to scheduling RESEA meetings. Some states automatically schedule claimants for meetings at specific dates and times. Others allow claimants to self-schedule (within a provided time frame). Relative to automatic scheduling, a self-scheduling policy might be expected to have two opposing effects on attendance rates. On the one hand, some claimants might not self-schedule their appointment and ultimately fail to attend a meeting, which would lower overall attendance rates. On the other hand, those claimants who do self-schedule an appointment might select a time more convenient for them, which would make them more likely to attend the meetings and, in turn, raise overall attendance rates.

Though no study has used a rigorous impact evaluation design to analyze how scheduling strategies affect attendance rates, some evidence supports both of these hypothesized effects. REA claimants who self-schedule appeared more likely to attend the scheduled meeting, but states that allowed self-scheduling still had overall attendance rates similar to other states, suggesting that some claimants might never schedule their meetings when given the opportunity to self-schedule (Minzner et al., 2017).¹³

4. **Strategic timing.** How soon a claimant is scheduled for an in-person meeting might have important consequences for meeting attendance rates and other longer-term outcomes, such as claim duration

and employment or earnings; however, there are no rigorous impact analyses of scheduling policies. There is some evidence that attendance rates at initial meetings appear higher when scheduled closer to the start of the claim (Klerman et al., 2019). Among the four states included in this REA impact study, Indiana allowed for the most time (eight weeks at the median) between selection into the program and the date of the first meeting. The other three states scheduled initial REA meetings about four to six weeks after selection, and attendance rates were about 10-15 percentage points higher than in Indiana.

Gaps in the Evidence and Implications for Future Evaluations

The existing evidence base has a number of gaps regarding which approaches to selecting and scheduling UI claimants for RESEA are most effective. The list below briefly discusses several options for future research related to the topics covered in the previous sections. The list is not meant to be exhaustive of all possible evidence-building options. States could pursue a research agenda to address those gaps, replicate previous studies, or expand the evidence base in new directions.

- **Selection.** Provided that a given evaluation enrolls a sufficiently large sample of study participants, states can analyze whether program impacts vary with claimant characteristics, as was done in one REA impact study (Klerman et al., 2019). Though several studies have not found larger program impacts among claimants with higher profiling scores, future evaluations could continue to explore differential impact using alternative profiling models or other criteria (e.g., demographics, labor market conditions, or work history).
- **Communication.** Building on recent research on behavioral communication strategies to increase program participation, states might want to consider experimenting with different aspects of their communication plans, including modes (e.g., letter, text, and phone), timing, frequency, and content.
- **Non-compliance.** Comparisons of attendance rates across states suggest that rates vary with states' responses to non-attendance, but existing evidence is merely suggestive, not causal. Future research could directly test for impacts of different responses to non-attendance.
- **Timing.** Existing research suggests that claimants might attend meetings at higher rates when scheduled closer to the start of the claim, but no evaluation has considered the effects of the timing of scheduled meetings. In addition to effects on attendance rates, states could test for effects of varying the timing of meetings on UI duration and time to reemployment.
- **Scheduling.** As noted above, it is unclear from existing evidence whether allowing claimants to self-schedule affects meeting attendance, relative to other approaches to scheduling. States interested in self-scheduling could experimentally test for impacts on attendance. Self-scheduling might also affect the timing of scheduled meetings relative to the start of the claimant's UI claim.

The choice of which component(s) to evaluate will have methodological implications for the RESEA program evaluations conducted. Evaluations to identify which claimants to select for RESEA services would require relatively large sample sizes, which some states may struggle to achieve on their own.¹⁴ However, it would be relatively straightforward to implement random assignment evaluations to determine which interventions increase meeting attendance, and these evaluations would have manageable sample size requirements. Specifically, states might only need samples of fewer than a thousand claimants to identify impacts on attendance rates. In comparison, identifying impacts on UI duration and employment would likely require much, much larger samples.

If empirical studies are not feasible, states can also generate considerable insight from process studies to describe and analyze the service delivery activities and operations of their RESEA program. Though such studies do not produce conclusive evidence of effectiveness, they are less complex logistically and have shorter time frames than do random assignment impact studies. Findings from a process study could provide a

faster route to actionable evidence on how to adjust ongoing program activities, which could be rigorously tested for evidence of effectiveness via experimental impact analysis.

Notes

1. Readers can find more detail about each study discussed in this brief through CLEAR: <https://clear.dol.gov/reemployment-services-and-eligibility-assessments-resea>.
2. According to states' submissions of ETA9047 and 9128 data in 2019, about 2.8 million UI beneficiaries were not exempt from work search—a rough estimate of the population eligible for RESEA selection—and 1.2 million beneficiaries were scheduled for an RESEA meeting.
3. Though all RESEA programs include at least one mandatory meeting, states have the flexibility to mandate attendance at subsequent RESEA meetings. States are not limited in the number of subsequent RESEA meetings that they require.
4. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 amended Title III of the Social Security Act, adding a new Section 306 covering RESEA provisions. That legislation limits RESEA eligibility to those claimants considered most likely to exhaust benefits, but under recent annual appropriations acts, Congress has allowed states increased flexibility to target claimants according to other criteria, including local labor market trends or other available data. This flexibility, however, is not part of the permanent RESEA program authorization and is dependent on continued inclusion in annual appropriations legislation. Moreover, if a state chooses not to rely on a profiling model to select RESEA claimants, the state must operate a separate WPRS program, which is itself mandated under a standalone requirement.
5. See Sullivan et al. (2007, Appendix B) for one detailed comparison of profiling models.
6. See Black et al. (2003, Table 3) for a presentation of how impacts vary by profile score.
7. See Klerman et al. (2019, Exhibit 7-11) for a presentation of how impacts vary by profile score. There is no official profiling model used in Wisconsin, so that state was not included in the analysis.
8. If the goal is to cut UI benefits paid, the analysis is more subtle. For a given number of weeks not claimed, dollars saved will be larger for those claimants with a larger WBA. This effect appears to offset much of the differential impact of WBA on UI duration.
9. This discussion concerns differential impact on UI duration. A recent REA impact study (Klerman et al., 2019) also explored differential impact on employment and earnings. There were no clear patterns. This appears to be due to lack of statistical precision.
10. See Klerman et al. (2019, Exhibit 4-3); see Darling et al. (2017, Figure IV.3) for presentation of attendance rates at the initial REA meeting.
11. See Darling et al. (2017, Figure IV.3) for presentation of impacts on attendance rates.
12. See Minzner et al. (2017, Exhibit 4.10) for a comparison of attendance rates across Indiana, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin. See Exhibit 7.3 for discussion of responses to non-attendance at scheduled meetings. Note that Indiana, New York, and Wisconsin created pending issues and imposed multi-week suspensions of benefits on non-compliant claimants, whereas Washington did neither.
13. See Minzner et al. (2017, Exhibit 4.10) for a comparison of scheduling and attendance rates across states. Note that Wisconsin allowed for self-scheduling of REA appointments, whereas the other states did not.
14. See *REA Impact Study Briefs: Methodological Insights*, available at <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/REA%20Impact%20Study%20Briefs%20-%20Methodological%20Insights.pdf>.

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Selecting Claimants and Meeting Attendance

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Basic Career Services

State RESEA programs must include several components, some of which can be categorized as “basic career services” under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).¹ For the purposes of RESEA, basic career services include initial eligibility assessments, provision of labor market information, and self-directed job search assistance.

Relative to “individualized career services” (see Evidence Brief 3: Individualized Services), basic career services are typically less customized and require less staff time and involvement. Because basic services are less intensive, one might expect small impacts relative to a comparison group that does not receive the services.

The studies reviewed for this brief all estimated impacts on UI duration, and most (23 of 28) estimated impacts on employment or earnings.² Those evaluations that did examine employment and earnings rarely found statistically significant impacts, perhaps because detecting impacts of basic career services would require sample sizes several times larger than evaluations of whole RESEA programs, given their lower intensity.^{3,4}

About this Brief

This brief summarizes the state of the evidence for basic career services—a category of reemployment services—to help UI claimants return to work. The brief closes with a discussion of gaps in the current evidence base and implications of evaluating these kinds of RESEA program components. This brief is the second of three summarizing the current state of the evidence relevant to RESEA.

Challenges to Developing and Using Impact Evidence of Basic Career Services

Building evidence on the effectiveness of basic career services is complicated. Programs that include basic career services typically include other features or components that also potentially affect participant outcomes. Therefore, because services are often packaged together, it may be difficult to identify the separate contribution of basic career services above and beyond, for example, the requirement to attend a meeting, enforcement of ongoing eligibility requirements, and provision of individualized services.

About the RESEA Program

RESEA supports states’ activities to improve employment outcomes among persons receiving UI, strengthen UI program integrity, promote workforce program integration, and connect UI claimants with partner programs.

At a minimum, participants must meet with a service provider who completes a review of the claimant’s UI eligibility, delivers customized labor market information, enrolls the claimant in the Wagner-Peyser Act-funded Employment Service program, develops an individual reemployment plan, and refers the claimant to additional reemployment services.

The most recent program guidance is available at <https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/>.

This is one of several “State of the Evidence Briefs” prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office, under Contract 1605DC-18-A-0037, Evaluation to Advance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Program Evidence. Visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/completedstudies> for other briefs and reports. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of the same by the U.S. Government.

Though there are many studies of whole program models or interventions that included basic career services among a package of other components, these studies are less informative on the effects of basic career services specifically (and therefore we do not discuss them in this brief).

Given the goal of understanding the effectiveness of basic career services, this scan attempted to identify studies that compare outcomes under one approach to providing basic career services versus outcomes under another approach. The results of such a study can provide insights into the most effective way to implement basic career services. Unfortunately, our scan did not find any such study conducted to date. This type of evaluation would be feasible using random assignment methods, but it would require samples that are likely larger than what any state (other than the very largest states) could generate in two or three years. Large samples are needed because one can expect the differential impact of varying approaches to delivering basic career services to be small.

- Examples of Basic Career Services**
- Eligibility determinations
 - Orientation to services
 - Initial skill assessments
 - Self-directed or staff-assisted job search
 - Labor exchange services
 - Provision of information on programs and services
 - Referrals to other programs

There are, however, studies that have measured the impact of basic career services versus no services. We discuss them below. Specifically, the following sections of this brief describe evidence from two types of studies: 1) those that evaluate basic career services with a mandatory participation requirement and 2) those that evaluate just the basic career services alone (i.e., absent a participation requirement). We hypothesize that this distinction is important. It could be that the mandate to participate has an effect on outcomes that is separate from the impact of the services themselves. Therefore, states’ interest in existing evidence might depend on whether such evidence pertains to services that do or do not have a mandatory participation requirement.

Evidence on Mandatory Basic Career Services

This section considers evidence from studies that evaluate mandatory basic career services separately from more intensive, individualized career services. We highlight the extent to which findings are informative about the separate role of basic career services in the context of an RESEA-like program.

UI Demonstrations

Some of the earliest research on basic career services includes several randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that studied the effectiveness of UI reemployment demonstrations conducted in the 1980s and 1990s (Corson et al., 1985; Corson & Haimson, 1996; Johnson & Klepinger, 1994; Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor, and Human Relations [DILHR], 1984; Hanna & Turney, 1990; Klepinger et al., 2002). Basic career services included in these demonstrations typically consisted of an initial assessment of the claimant’s skills and needs, resources for self-directed job search, staff-assisted job search, and job referrals.

Two of these demonstrations analyzed the impact of mandatory basic career services independent of more intensive services. Wisconsin’s (1984) evaluation of a mandatory half-day job search workshop for UI claimants found reductions in UI duration of slightly more than half a week, but the authors do not appear to have estimated impacts on employment or earnings outcomes. Additionally, the Claimant Employment Program (CEP) implemented in Nevada primarily consisted of job referrals and staff-assisted job search comparable to that provided by the Employment Service (Hanna & Turney, 1990), discussed below.⁵ That study’s authors reported that CEP reduced UI claim durations by about two weeks; but, like the Wisconsin study, they do not appear to have estimated employment or earnings impacts.⁶

Although the studies do not isolate the effect of the mandatory nature of the services relative to the services themselves, it is likely that part of the reported impacts in Wisconsin and Nevada arose from the requirement to participate, not the content of the basic career services themselves. Klerman et al. (2019) provide evidence

suggesting that the requirement itself likely does contribute importantly to impacts. Nonetheless, these studies provide some evidence of positive impact of basic career services in reducing UI duration.

Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS)

Enacted in 1993, the WPRS program provides UI claimants with a combination of basic and individualized services—especially at a mandatory meeting with staff.⁷ Basic career services included an orientation, initial skills assessment, staff-assisted job search, labor market information, and referrals to job openings. Individualized career services included, for example, development of an individual employment plan, individualized counseling, and specialized assessments. Four evaluations have rigorously studied the effectiveness of the overall program (that is, basic plus individualized services) as implemented in the 1990s (Decker et al., 2000; Black et al., 2003; Dickinson et al., 1999) and the 2000s (Michaelides & Mueser, 2016). These studies found that the programs reduced duration of UI benefit receipt, but impacts on employment and earnings outcomes were inconsistent.

Only one of these studies offers insight into the impact of basic career services relative to individualized services. Decker et al. (2000) randomly assigned UI claimants either to an individualized WPRS model, a “structured” WPRS model (i.e., an orientation, assessment, and job search assistance that were not individualized to each participant), or a control group with access to standard services (i.e., services available under the Job Training Partnership Act). Again, both treatments also mandated program participation, and the authors did not identify how much of the reported impact was due to mandatory participation requirements rather than due to the services.

Decker et al. (2000) also reported that services available under the individualized and structured models were similar, but service delivery under the structured model was not customized to each claimant’s needs.⁸ Though not a direct test of basic career services versus individualized services—even claimants in the structured model could attend multiple one-on-one meetings with reemployment service staff—the study found that the two approaches to service delivery yielded comparable impacts. That is, both models reduced UI duration by about one-half to one week. These results could suggest that more-individualized approaches to service delivery may not drive impacts; instead, it might be some combination of the mandatory meeting and the basic approach to career services. Note, however, that though impacts on reducing UI weeks were found for both models, no impacts were found on employment or earnings.

Evaluations of Employment Service (ES) Job Referrals

The Employment Service, authorized by the Wagner-Peyser Act, supports provision of basic career services to any job seeker. Typically, ES services include skills assessments, job development, and job referrals. There are no experimental evaluations of the Employment Service. However, two non-experimental evaluations have attempted to estimate the program’s impact on UI claimant outcomes (Jacobson & Petta, 2000; Jacobson et al., 2004).

Though ES services are universally available to any job seeker who chooses to participate, the two available studies include some estimated impacts in the context of mandated participation specifically among UI claimants. Both found that labor exchange services, namely job matching and referrals, can reduce a claimant’s UI duration. Some evidence suggests that referrals to jobs can also increase a claimant’s earnings. However, due to methodological limitations in these studies, the findings should be considered merely suggestive, rather than causal.⁹

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Evidence on basic career services delivered through the cash welfare program TANF is very limited. The interventions studied in this literature do not emphasize basic career services as defined in this brief. However, one study suggests that impacts of similar basic services on employment, earnings, and benefit receipt are positive but small. Dyke et al. (2005) estimated—via fixed-effects regression analysis—the impact of two services: needs testing and development of a “self-sufficiency plan.” Relative to TANF participants who did

not engage in any welfare-to-work activities, those who took part in these two services experienced increased cumulative earnings of about \$600-\$800 over four years (i.e., an average of \$200 per year, or less).¹⁰

Note, however, that the relevance of evidence from TANF programs to RESEA might be limited, as both their participants and their participation requirements differ. Relative to TANF participants, UI claimants selected for RESEA have more extensive work histories. Additionally, the UI program is a contributory entitlement, whereas TANF is not an entitlement program. In addition, programs for TANF participants tend to impose stricter participation requirements and more severe penalties for non-compliance than programs for UI claimants.

Evidence on Basic Career Services Alone

This section considers evidence from studies that evaluate basic career services in the absence of a mandate to participate. In some cases, the evaluated programs did not mandate participation; in other cases, the evaluators designed the study so as to control for the effects of the participation mandate.

Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Basic Career Services

The REA program, the predecessor to RESEA, included both basic and individualized career services.¹¹ The basic services included an orientation to services, an initial assessment of UI claimants' skills and needs, provision of labor market information, referrals to job search workshops, and access to resources for self-directed job search (Minzner et al., 2017).¹² Though there have been several studies of the REA program, we do not discuss them further in this section because none of them tried to disentangle the impact of basic versus individualized career services.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Core Services

Among the services previously funded by WIA, the predecessor to WIOA, "core" services were similar to the basic career services discussed above. Core services typically included an initial orientation to available services, an assessment of the participant's needs, access to self-directed employment services, job search workshops, and light-touch staff-assisted services (D'Amico et al., 2015). Several studies have estimated the impact of WIA, but none has attempted to separately estimate the employment and earnings impacts of core services. The only random assignment evaluation of WIA-funded services did not attempt to isolate the impacts of core services on participant outcomes because denial of those services to study participants in a control group would have been practically and legally impossible (Fortson et al., 2017). We do not discuss those studies further here.

Gaps in the Evidence and Implications for Future Evaluations

Many basic career services discussed in this brief are established, often required, components of RESEA programs. Nevertheless, although some evidence exists to support the effectiveness of interventions that include these services, the available evidence base for the effects of the services is limited. As noted above, some studies have reported on the overall effects of basic career services, by comparing basic to no services. No studies have compared the relative effectiveness of different approaches to basic career services. The evidence typically has found that basic career services, with a mandate to participate, reduce UI durations. Most of these studies either have not analyzed or have not found impacts on earnings or employment, however. This could be due to insufficient sample sizes.

More evidence on which basic career services have the most impact and how to effectively deliver them would be valuable. To generate such evidence appears challenging, but not insurmountable. We consider two types of challenges.

The first concerns required sample sizes. Evaluations of basic services for UI claimants would require very large samples, because expected impacts are small.¹³ In general, basic career services are light touch, and lighter touch interventions might be expected to yield smaller impacts on UI duration and labor market

outcomes. Evaluations of the relative effectiveness of different basic services would require even larger samples.¹⁴

We offer two approaches to states seeking to address the sample size challenge:

- **Pool with other states.** Prior to the surge in UI claims during the COVID-19 pandemic, it appeared that only a few of the largest states could detect impacts of basic career services on weeks of UI and employment using an RCT.^{15,16} To overcome challenges with obtaining sufficiently large samples, states conducting sufficiently similar programs could consider partnering on a single evaluation, thereby allowing for the pooling of samples in a multi-state experimental study.¹⁷
- **Retrospective non-experimental study.** Non-experimental evaluation methods generally require even larger samples than experimental evaluations of the same intervention, but such methods allow states to evaluate their programs retrospectively, perhaps combining data from several years to meet sample size requirements. However, non-experimental designs are complex, and it can be challenging for evaluations using such designs to meet the standards established by DOL’s Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) for high or moderate ratings of causal evidence.¹⁸

Evaluating basic career services also poses logistical challenges. Typically, basic career services are universally available to any job seeker and can be required components of RESEA programs. This complicates any evaluation designs that require some form of service denial to a group of participants in order to identify an appropriate comparison.¹⁹ Also, evaluations of different service models might require states to administer two parallel but different basic career service packages at the same time, ideally in the same office.

States may consider different evaluation design options to address these logistical challenges. For example, using a clustered random assignment design, evaluators could assign American Job Centers, rather than individual claimants, to different study groups. Alternatively, if states are able to conduct a staggered rollout (i.e., implemented at different American Job Centers at different times) of a modified RESEA program model, evaluators might be able to estimate impacts of the modification using an Interrupted Time Series design. These approaches would avoid implementation of multiple service packages in the same office. Finally, a randomized encouragement design would randomly assign claimants to receive some kind of additional information or incentive that attempts to increase claimants’ use of basic services. Relative to a random assignment design, this approach avoids the legal and logistical concerns of randomly assigning claimants to either receive or not receive services.²⁰ We review these and other design options in depth in a separate report (Klerman, et al., 2022).

No matter how states choose to conduct future evaluations of basic career services, the services or strategies tested should be well documented to make study findings practically useful to others. If a state finds that a particular type of basic career service (e.g., provision of labor market information) is effective, program designers and administrators in other states would need to understand the design, logistics, cost, and operation of that service in detail in order to replicate it in their program. Such detail would similarly be needed for researchers interested in implementing and testing the impact of that service in a different state. Careful implementation analysis, when included with the impact analysis, could document the details of service delivery so as to allow for replication.²¹

When designing interventions to test, states could draw on existing impact evaluations and implementation studies and similar analyses that already define specific services, describe their objectives, and define the approach to implementation (e.g., methods, staffing, and other resources).

Notes

1. See the formal definition of basic career services in federal regulations at 20 CFR 678.430. Prior to WIOA, reemployment services were categorized as either “core” or “intensive” under the Workforce Investment Act. WIOA collapses those categories into “career services,” of which there are three

types: basic, individualized, and follow-up. WIOA’s basic career services are comparable to what were core services under WIA.

2. Readers can find more detail about studies cited in this brief through CLEAR: <https://clear.dol.gov/reemployment-services-and-eligibility-assessments-resea>.
3. Throughout this brief, we only discuss findings from studies for which the authors report impacts that were statistically significant at $p < 0.1$.
4. Some analysts estimate that sample sizes required to detect statistically significant impact estimates for tests of basic career services could be over 50,000 claimants. See *REA Impact Study Briefs: Methodological Insights*, available at <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/REA%20Impact%20Study%20Briefs%20-%20Methodological%20Insights.pdf>.
5. Though CEP participants were eligible for more intensive, individualized services (e.g., development of individual employment plans), less than 10 percent of participants received these kinds of services.
6. The study randomly assigned participants to either a treatment group (which received services) or a control group, but the Department of Labor’s Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) assigned the study a “Low” quality rating due to concerns related to potential differences between the two groups that affected measured impacts. See the CLEAR review here: <https://clear.dol.gov/study/economic-impact-nevada-claimant-employment-program-hanna-turney-1990.t>
7. Participation in WPRS also increases the likelihood of identifying a non-monetary eligibility issue that could result in the suspension or termination of the claimant’s benefits. Enforcement of UI eligibility rules through WPRS participation could affect UI durations.
8. The studied service package consisted of an orientation, assessment of needs and skills, aptitude and interest testing, a job search workshop, and individual counseling with potential follow-up (Decker et al., 2000).
9. Readers should interpret these findings with caution. One of the two Employment Service evaluations has not been reviewed by CLEAR, and the third was reviewed and assigned a “Low” causal evidence rating. Studies must receive a “High” or “Moderate” rating from CLEAR for their findings to meet the evidence standards set by DOL.
10. See Table 5 in Dyke et al. (2005).
11. Implementation studies of REA programs suggest that most REA services would be categorized as “basic career services” under WIOA guidelines. However, these studies cannot report on the amount of time devoted to each service. Further, because “individualized career services” are assumed to be more time intensive, it is unclear whether REA program participants spend most of their time in basic or individualized services. Moreover, states sometimes differ in their categorization of services as either basic or individualized (D’Amico et al., 2015).
12. Required REA components included a UI eligibility assessment, customized labor market information, registration with the state’s job bank, an orientation to AJC services, development of an individual reemployment plan, and a referral to reemployment services and/or training. These components are similar to RESEA’s minimum required components.

13. See *REA Impact Study Briefs: Methodological Insights*, available at <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/REA%20Impact%20Study%20Briefs%20-%20Methodological%20Insights.pdf>.
14. Rather than comparing the relative effectiveness of different basic career services, a state could elect to evaluate the impact of all basic career services relative to no services. If these larger service contrasts have bigger impacts, then required sample sizes would be smaller. However, the results of such an evaluation would not offer evidence of potential improvements to existing service delivery.
15. See *REA Impact Study Briefs: Methodological Insights*, available at <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/REA%20Impact%20Study%20Briefs%20-%20Methodological%20Insights.pdf>.
16. The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020. <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>
17. Though pooling samples in a multi-state non-experimental study is theoretically possible, the approach offers little to no advantage over a comparable multi-state experimental study. For more discussion, see the *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Evaluation Toolkit: Key Elements for State RESEA Programs*, available here: https://rc.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/07/30/17/32/RESEA_Evaluation_Evidence_Resources.
18. The RESEA context in particular makes it hard to find a non-experimental comparison group that would be credible (Mills De La Rosa et al., 2021). To demonstrate that an RESEA program is effective, states must rely on evidence available from studies that have received a high or moderate rating from CLEAR. See CLEAR's causal evidence guidelines here: https://clear.dol.gov/sites/default/files/CLEAR_EvidenceGuidelines_V2.1.pdf
19. In an experimental evaluation of WIA services, the design did not involve denying core services to study participants (Fortson et al., 2017). The RESEA program does not face the same universal service requirements as do WIA-funded programs, but denial of basic career services could be equally unpalatable.
20. Under a randomized encouragement design, all study participants are permitted to engage in services, but some participants (i.e., a treatment group) are randomly selected for extra encouragement to engage in services whereas other participants (i.e., a control group) receive no extra encouragement. This random encouragement is intended to generate a contrast in service receipt between the treatment and control groups that allows for estimation of impacts of the services. That encouraged contrast is expected to be smaller than that of a random assignment design, which assigns treatment group participants to treatment services and may bar control group members from those services. Encouragement designs are expected to require larger sample sizes, perhaps several times larger than assignment designs, depending on the extent to which encouraged treatment group members take up the intended treatment.
21. For more information about implementation studies, see the *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Evaluation Toolkit: Key Elements for State RESEA Programs*, available here: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/RESEA_Toolkit_February2021.pdf.

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Individualized Services

State RESEA programs must include several components, some of which can be categorized as “individualized career services” under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).^{1,2} Relative to “basic career services” (the topic of Evidence Brief 2: Basic Career Services), individualized services generally involve significantly more staff time and customization to an individual claimant’s needs. As such, individualized services are more intensive and should, therefore, be expected to yield impacts larger than basic and other less intensive kinds of services.

This brief draws on a range of currently available sources of evidence. The first section considers evaluations of programs that target or regularly serve UI claimants, including RESEA’s predecessor program, the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program; the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) program; and services funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the predecessor to WIOA. The second section considers evidence from programs that typically serve other populations yet could suggest options for RESEA programs.

About this Brief

This brief summarizes the state of the evidence for individualized career services—a category of reemployment services—to help UI claimants return to work. The brief closes with a discussion of gaps in the current evidence base and implications of evaluating these kinds of RESEA program components. This brief is the third of three summarizing the current state of the evidence relevant to RESEA.

Evidence on Individualized Services for UI Claimants

This section considers evidence on reemployment services provided to UI claimants through programs that predate RESEA and REA, from REA programs, and from WIA programs (which serve a broad set of job seekers, including UI claimants).

Pre-REA Individualized Services

The REA program began in 2005. Prior to that, many evaluations—most of which were randomized controlled trials (RCTs)—offered evidence that individualized services reduced claimants’ duration on

About the RESEA Program

RESEA supports states’ activities to improve employment outcomes among persons receiving UI, strengthen UI program integrity, promote workforce program integration, and connect UI claimants with partner programs.

At a minimum, participants must meet with a service provider who completes a review of the claimant’s UI eligibility, delivers customized labor market information, enrolls the claimant in the Wagner-Peyser Act-funded Employment Service program, develops an individual reemployment plan, and refers the claimant to additional reemployment services.

The most recent program guidance is available at <https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/>.

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UI. The earliest of these studies evaluated job search assistance demonstrations conducted in the 1980s (Corson et al., 1985; Corson & Haimson, 1996). Most pre-REA studies evaluated services offered through WPRS programs in several different states (Decker et al., 2000; Dickinson et al., 1999; Michaelides & Mueser, 2016). These studies consistently found that most of these interventions that included individualized services reduced UI average duration by between one-half of a week and three-quarters of a week.³ Evidence of impacts on employment rates and earnings was less consistent; across 11 different studies of WPRS, in only three studies did an intervention significantly improve employment or earnings for UI claimants. That the other eight studies did not find significant impacts is likely due, at least in part, to insufficient sample sizes.⁴

Based on the descriptions of the WPRS interventions in the above studies, the individualized services most common to these programs were (1) completion of comprehensive and specialized assessments, (2)

- Examples of Individualized Career Services**
- Comprehensive assessments
 - Development of an IEP
 - Group or individual counseling
 - Career planning
 - Short-term pre-vocational services
 - Internships and work experience
 - Workforce preparation activities
 - Financial literacy services
 - Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance
 - English language acquisition

development of an individual employment plan (IEP), and (3) intensive one-on-one counseling. In many cases, these were one-time services; for some claimants, ongoing case management followed. Some claimants were also expected to maintain regular communication with employment support staff. Importantly, the available evidence from these pre-REA studies cannot identify the extent to which reported impacts are attributable to specific intensive services delivered or to other program requirements.

REA Individualized Services

Random assignment evaluations have consistently shown that the REA program—as it was implemented in different states—significantly reduced UI claim durations. Further, they have often found that the program improved

employment or earnings outcomes, provided that these studies enrolled sufficient sample to detect impacts (Benus et al., 2008; Poe-Yamagata et al., 2011; Klerman et al., 2019; Michaelides and Mian, 2020). The evaluations did not directly estimate the impact of individualized services alone, but these programs consistently incorporated some level of individualized services, much of which appear comparable to those of other reemployment programs and suggest such services could be effective.⁵ Available descriptions of REA programs from the studies regularly include comprehensive assessments, development of an IEP, and individual counseling (Minzner et al., 2017).⁶

An implementation study of REA programs in four states—Indiana, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin—examined the extent to which participants received individualized services, reinforcing the impact analysis findings that selection for REA was associated with increased receipt of “staff-assisted services,” some of which were likely individualized, such as career guidance, assessments, and counseling (Minzner, et al., 2017). Authors did not find any increase in receipt of other individualized services, such as adult basic education activities (i.e., workforce preparation activities) and short-term pre-vocational services.⁷

With regard to the magnitude of REA impacts, these random assignment evaluations generally show that selection for REA programs, on average, decreased UI duration by about one week, increased the probability of employment in the second full quarter after the start of a claim by about 2 percentage points, and increased earnings by \$400-500 in the first year. One recent REA impact evaluation separately identifies the extent to which those overall program impacts can be attributed to reemployment assistance—which could include basic and individualized career services—versus the enforcement of work search and other program rules (Klerman et al., 2019). That study’s results suggest that together, all of the assistance components of REA programs are likely responsible for some, but less than half of the impact on UI duration (roughly one-half of a week) and a small increase in employment (slightly less than a week of employment in the first year following the initial UI

claim). However, the results do not separate the contribution in these assistance-driven impacts of each of the basic or individualized services offered.

States had the option of requiring that claimants attend a single or multiple REA meetings (the initial meeting and follow-up meetings). States might be interested in whether and to what extent requiring multiple REA meetings increases impact beyond that of a single REA meeting. Across states that participated in previous REA evaluations, some did not require any follow-up meetings; some allowed multiple meetings, but at the discretion of caseworkers—such that multiple meetings were rare; and some required that nearly everyone attend a follow-up REA meeting if still certifying for benefits after the initial meeting (Klerman, et al. 2019; Benus et al., 2008; Poe-Yamagata et al., 2011). Depending on the interaction between the staff person and the claimant, subsequent meetings can be viewed as a form of either basic or individualized services. Relative to a single meeting, subsequent meetings involve more staff time (Minzner et al., 2017), including providing ongoing services as needed.

In two states (New York and Washington), one recent REA impact study directly tested the impact of multiple meetings by randomly assigning UI claimants either to a treatment condition that required only one REA meeting or to a treatment condition that might require multiple REA meetings (Klerman et al., 2019). In New York, there was strong evidence of an incremental impact of the multiple meeting design above and beyond the impact of a single meeting—further reducing UI duration by about half a week. This result is consistent with the findings of the associated REA Implementation Study of more intensive service delivery under the multiple meeting design in New York (Minzner et al., 2017). In contrast, in Washington State there was no evidence of an incremental impact of multiple REA meetings. However, the service contrast between the two study groups in Washington was relatively small. For example, attendance at an initial REA meeting in Washington was relatively low for those assigned to the multiple REA group (56 percent), so few claimants could be required to attend a subsequent meeting. In addition, state policy allowed caseworkers to use their discretion in requiring a subsequent REA meeting. The intensity of the Washington State subsequent meetings in REA was also limited, with short sessions (10-15 minutes) conducted over the phone rather than in person.

WIA Individualized Services

A random assignment evaluation of the WIA Dislocated Worker program found that “intensive services” improved earnings by about \$750 in the first quarter of follow-up, but impacts were not significant in the second quarter (Rotz et al., 2017).^{8,9} One might expect a hypothetical UI claimant’s benefit year to coincide with those first two quarters. Also, though impacts over the first five quarters after random assignment were only marginally significant, average quarterly earnings were about \$1,000 higher for recipients of intensive services.¹⁰ Despite having a sample of more than 1,300 individuals, adequate for the first quarter estimates, it is possible that this study did not have sufficient sample size to detect all quarterly impacts.

These services are generally comparable to the individualized services covered in this brief. A companion implementation study (D’Amico et al., 2015) identified several such services received by the “intensive services” treatment group. Across all locations, these included:

- **Comprehensive assessments** of a participant’s work history, medical history, potential barriers to training or employment, performance on basic skills and aptitude tests, and career goals;
- **Development of an IEP** that documents career and training goals and identifies strategies and services required to meet the goal; and
- **Case management**, which included regular check-ins with participants and referrals to other service providers or agencies.¹¹

Some local programs also offered other intensive services, such as work experience (e.g., internships) or pre-vocational training opportunities.

Although the WIA intensive services evidence seems promising, it bears noting that evidence from WIA might not translate directly to RESEA. First, WIA services examined by the study were voluntary. If the intensive services provided through RESEA are mandatory, then we might expect the impacts of those mandatory services—particularly with respect to UI duration—to exceed those of voluntary WIA services. That said, to the extent that RESEA’s individualized services are provided indirectly, not as a part of the mandated RESEA meeting, then use of those services would be voluntary, as was the case in the WIA evaluation. For example, participants could pursue such indirect, voluntary services as a result of information provided in the RESEA’s American Job Center (AJC) orientation. Second, RESEA participants are usually in the early weeks of their UI claim. About 60 percent of WIA Dislocated Worker participants were active UI claimants, and some could have already had lengthy duration on UI and might have been seeking WIA intensive services after having first attempted self-directed job search. Finally, available research on WIA services does not offer any evidence of impact on UI duration, an outcome of considerable interest to the RESEA program (Fortson et al., 2017; Heinrich et al., 2008).

Evidence on Individualized Services from Other Programs

This section considers evidence of individualized services for participants in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) rather than UI claimants. Though the population is quite different from UI claimants, the research could provide useful insights.

A series of random assignment studies from the 1980s and 1990s (before TANF replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or AFDC, in 1996) showed that what the studies called “job search assistance” lowered months of cash welfare and increased earnings (Gueron & Pauly, 1991; Gueron & Rolston, 2013; Michalopoulos & Schwartz, 2000). Intensive strategies used in those studies included individual job search, group job search, and unpaid work experience.

Several studies have tested the effectiveness of the “job club process” on TANF participants. A well-defined intervention—job clubs—typically engage participants in supervised job search during group meetings and sessions with a trained counselor over the course of several weeks. Very early studies have found that the job club process significantly increases employment for welfare recipients (Azrin et al., 1980, 1981). Two recent random assignment studies analyzed the relative effectiveness of different approaches to the job club process. One study tested for impacts of requiring more meetings with program staff and participation in prescribed search activities, rather than independent job search (Martinson, Harvill et al., 2019). The second study tested a “standard” model against a “fast track” model that shortened the period of required group activity and reduced the frequency of interaction with program staff (Martinson, Meckstroth et al., 2019). Neither study detected any significant differences in employment or earnings outcomes between the tested models. Note, however, that study sample sizes were modest, so only large differences between the treatment and control groups could have been detected.

Taken together, these two recent studies suggest that substantial changes to existing individualized service delivery might not have large impacts on welfare recipient outcomes. However, as with the evidence from the WIA program discussed above, findings from studies of TANF participants might not be applicable to the RESEA context. Relative to TANF participants, UI claimants have more extensive work histories, and the UI program is a contributory insurance entitlement, whereas TANF is not an entitlement program. In addition, programs for TANF participants tend to impose stricter participation requirements and harsher penalties than those for UI claimants.

Gaps in the Evidence and Implications for Future Evaluations

As noted earlier, studies of reemployment programs that include individualized career services have found those interventions to be effective. But there is much less evidence on exactly what contribution, if any, the individualized services themselves make to claimants’ outcomes. Most of the available evidence does not attempt to identify the additional impact of assistive services on short-term employment and earnings, beyond

what impact is produced by the other elements of the program, such as mandates to attend in-person meetings or enforcement of continuing UI eligibility. The lone study that did estimate the marginal effect of assistive services found that reemployment services appeared to account for less than half of the programs' overall impact (Klerman et al., 2019). Further, the study could not isolate the effects of individualized services (separate from basic services) in particular.

More evidence could be helpful to understand the impact of individualized career services on UI claimants' outcomes. Generating new evidence appears feasible. Random assignment methods used in the past can be used in the future to evaluate such individualized services. Studies could evaluate the impact of a bundle of services, isolated impacts of separate components of the bundle, or relative impacts of different versions of a component. However, though feasible, such evaluations are challenging for two reasons:

The first concerns required sample sizes. Evaluations of individualized services would require larger sample sizes than would evaluations of whole RESEA programs.¹² Evaluations of the relative effectiveness of different individualized services would require even larger samples.¹³

We offer two approaches to states seeking to address the sample size challenge:

- **Pool with other states.** Prior to the surge in UI claims during the COVID-19 pandemic, it appeared that only a few of the largest states could muster samples large enough to detect impacts of individualized career services on weeks of UI and employment using an RCT.¹⁴ To overcome challenges with obtaining sufficiently large samples, states with sufficiently similar interventions could consider partnering together on a single evaluation to pool samples in a multi-state experimental study.^{15,16}
- **Retrospective non-experimental study.** Non-experimental evaluation methods generally require even larger samples than do experimental evaluations of the same intervention. Still, such methods allow states to evaluate their programs retrospectively, perhaps combining data from several years to meet sample size requirements. However, non-experimental designs are complex, and it can be challenging for evaluations using such designs to meet the standards established by DOL's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research for high or moderate causal evidence.¹⁷

Second, evaluating individualized career services poses logistical challenges. To the extent that any individualized career services are required components of RESEA programs, such requirements could complicate any evaluation designs that involve some form of service denial to a group of participants.¹⁸ Also, evaluations of different service models might require states to administer two parallel but different individualized career service packages at the same time, ideally in the same office.

States may consider different evaluation design options to address the logistical challenges. For example, using a clustered random assignment design, evaluators could assign American Job Centers, rather than individual claimants, to different study groups. Alternatively, if states are able to conduct a staggered rollout (i.e., implemented at different American Job Centers at different times) of a modified RESEA program model, evaluators might be able to estimate impacts of the modification using an Interrupted Time Series design. These approaches would avoid implementation of multiple service packages in the same office. Finally, a randomized encouragement design would randomly assign claimants to receive some kind of additional information or incentive that attempts to increase claimants' use of basic services. Relative to a random assignment design, this approach avoids the legal and logistical concerns of randomly assigning claimants to either receive or not receive services.¹⁹ We review these and other design options in depth in a separate report (Klerman, et al., 2022).

No matter how states choose to conduct future evaluations of individualized career services, the services or strategies tested should be well documented to make them practically useful to others. If a state finds that a particular type of individualized career service (e.g., group or individual counseling) is effective, program designers and administrators in other states would need to understand the design, logistics, cost, and operation

of that service in detail in order to replicate it in their program. Such detail would similarly be needed for researchers interested in testing the impact of that service in a different state. Careful implementation analysis, when included with the impact analysis, could document the details of service delivery so as to allow for replication.²⁰

When designing interventions to test, states could draw on existing implementation studies and similar analyses that already define specific services, describe their objectives, and define the approach to implementation (e.g., methods, staffing, and other resources).

Notes

1. Readers can find more detail about each study discussed in this brief through CLEAR: <https://clear.dol.gov/reemployment-services-and-eligibility-assessments-resea>.
2. See the formal definition of individualized career services in federal regulations at 20 CFR 678.430. Prior to WIOA, reemployment services under WIA were categorized as either “core” or “intensive.” WIOA collapses those categories into “career services,” of which there are three types: basic, individualized, and follow-up. WIOA’s individualized career services are comparable to intensive services under WIA.
3. Throughout this brief, we only discuss findings for which the authors report impacts that were statistically significant at $p < 0.1$.
4. These estimates are based on internal calculations by the authors. These studies report increases in employment rates of about 1 percentage point and increases in quarterly earnings of about \$200 (measured in 2017 dollars).
5. Implementation studies of REA programs suggest that most REA services would be categorized as “basic career services” under WIOA guidelines. However, these studies cannot report on the amount of time devoted to each service. Therefore, because individualized services are assumed to be more time intensive than other types, it is unclear whether REA program participants spent most of their *time* in “basic” or “individualized” services. Moreover, states sometimes differ in their categorization of services as either “basic” or “individualized” (D’Amico et al., 2015).
6. Required REA components included a UI eligibility assessment, customized labor market information, registration with the state’s job bank, an orientation to AJC services, development of an individual reemployment plan, and a referral to reemployment services and/or training. These components are similar RESEA’s minimum required components.
7. Note that the study was not able to identify what directly led to the client receiving each service—for example, an REA referral, self-service referral, etc.
8. The evaluation also reported impacts under the WIA Adult program, but the evidence for positive impacts for workers served by that program is much weaker. Regardless, we focus on the dislocated worker population in this brief because UI claimants make up a much larger share of such workers. In the WIA evaluation, roughly 60 percent of WIA Dislocated Worker program participants were UI claimants at the time of study enrollment.
9. WIA’s “intensive services” align closely with what are considered “individualized career services” under WIOA.
10. This impact is significant at the $p < 0.1$ level and is reported from survey data. Using administrative data from the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH), the study did not find any impacts from intensive services on earnings among dislocated workers. In a separate analysis, Mastri and colleagues

(2018) compared annual impact estimates from survey and NDNH data to administrative tax data. They found that in the first year following random assignment, the survey data impact estimates compared more favorably with the estimates using tax data (considered a more comprehensive source). The authors also reported several countervailing sources of differences between the evaluation's survey data and NDNH earnings data. First, NDNH administrative data tends to not capture 10-33 percent of jobs held by survey respondents. Second, for a given job, earnings reported from survey data tend to exceed the earnings recorded in administrative data. Third, survey respondents tend to report holding fewer jobs than are recorded in administrative data. The second and third differences are more pronounced when survey respondents are asked to recall information from further in the past. Readers should consider the potential for each difference when interpreting impact estimates.

11. About a third of participants in the “intensive services” study group also regularly participated in job clubs, but not at significantly higher rates than the study’s comparison group. Thus, any impacts attributed to the receipt of intensive services could not have been due to participation in job clubs.
12. See *REA Impact Study Briefs: Methodological Insights*, available at <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/REA%20Impact%20Study%20Briefs%20-%20Methodological%20Insights.pdf>.
13. Rather than comparing the relative effectiveness of different basic career services, a state could elect to evaluate the impact of all basic career services relative to no services. If these larger service contrasts have bigger impacts, then required sample sizes would be smaller. However, the results of such an evaluation would not offer evidence of potential improvements to existing service delivery.
14. The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020. <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>
15. See *REA Impact Study Briefs: Methodological Insights*, available at <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/REA%20Impact%20Study%20Briefs%20-%20Methodological%20Insights.pdf>.
16. Though pooling samples in a multi-state non-experimental study is theoretically possible, the approach offers little to no advantage over a comparable multi-state experimental study. For more discussion, see the *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Evaluation Toolkit: Key Elements for State RESEA Programs*, available here: https://rc.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/07/30/17/32/RESEA_Evaluation_Evidence_Resources.
17. The RESEA context in particular makes it hard to find a non-experimental comparison group that would be credible (Mills De La Rosa et al., 2021).
18. In an experimental evaluation of WIA services, the design did not involve denying core services to study participants. The RESEA program does not face the same universal service requirements as do WIA-funded programs, but denial of basic career services could be equally unpalatable.
19. Under a randomized encouragement design, all study participants are permitted to engage in services, but some participants (i.e., a treatment group) are randomly selected for extra encouragement to engage in services whereas other participants (i.e., a control group) receive no extra encouragement. This random encouragement is intended to generate a contrast in service receipt between the treatment and control groups that allows for estimation of impacts of the services. That encouraged contrast is expected to be smaller than that of a random assignment design, which assigns treatment group participants to treatment services and may bar control group members from those services.

Encouragement designs are expected to require larger sample sizes, perhaps several times larger than assignment designs, depending on the extent to which encouraged treatment group members take up the intended treatment.

20. For more information about implementation studies, see the *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Evaluation Toolkit: Key Elements for State RESEA Programs*, available here: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/RESEA_Toolkit_February2021.pdf.

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