CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AGENCY

For Immediate Release
September 19, 2020

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EDD STRIKE TEAM RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, CLAIMS PROCESSING AND REIMAGINE TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS AT THE EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Strike Team Report includes short-, medium- and long-term recommendations and solutions to transform the customer experience when applying for and receiving unemployment insurance benefits

SACRAMENTO – The Employment Development Department (EDD) Strike Team, tasked by Governor Gavin Newsom in July to establish a blueprint for improvements at EDD, including a reimagining of their technology systems to be customer-focused, released today the results of their 45-day review including findings and recommendations to speed claims processing at the EDD. The Strike Team was led by Government Operations Secretary Yolanda Richardson and Code for America founder and former U.S. Deputy Chief Technology Officer Jennifer Pahlka.

"This team did a true deep dive and worked intensively with EDD in the last 45 days to develop recommendations that can improve the lives of real people applying for unemployment insurance moving forward," Secretary Richardson said. "Serving Californians in the digital age requires data analysis, technology literacy, critical thinking and a lot of hard work. These recommendations will set them on a path to reform to better serve Californians in the future."

Jen Pahlka, who has helped lead similar efforts to improve service delivery in other states, said the Strike Team's work means that instead of growing every day, the backlog of claims will now shrink every day, and more Californians will begin getting the relief they need.

"With this roadmap, EDD is already on their way to meeting claimants' needs faster, and I'm confident that over time the department will continue to improve the experience people have filing for unemployment insurance," Pahlka said.

With a focus on finding ways to make legitimate claims move through the process quicker, the Strike Team observed teams at work at EDD offices in Sacramento and Rancho Cordova, extracted and analyzed data from EDD's

many IT systems, reviewed training materials and claimant communications, studied call center data, and interviewed hundreds of people for their feedback and suggestions including legislative members and staff.

The Strike Team findings and recommendations include short-, medium- and long-term recommendations and solutions to transform the customer experience applying for and receiving UI benefits.

- The Strike Team members made a series of recommendations, some of which are already being implemented, including: **Implement ID.me verification tool** - Integrate into UI-Online a commercially available tool to more accurately and efficiently validate a claimant's true identity using state of the art technology and best in class data sources and algorithms because the largest driver of backlogged claims is manual identity verification. Once this tool is operational beginning October 5th, more than 90 percent of claimants applying online will have their claims processed automatically -- resulting in quicker payment.

- **Reset to improve systems -**During this time, claimants are encouraged to complete an online form so that EDD staff can notify them when to submit their application. Under the improved system, claimants who submit their application after the reset period will get paid quicker due to system enhancements.

- **Establish clear metrics to track claims and target resource deployment -** measure every step of the claims process daily using a new dashboard developed by the Strike Team to identify and address bottlenecks in the unemployment insurance processing system through more strategic deployment of resources.

- **Use data to inform operations -** implement a plan to reduce the backlog based on data, including increased use of outbound calling to claimants to resolve issues.

- **Improve Transparency** - Publish a new dashboard updated weekly that clearly identifies the UI backlog and provides an estimate of the time it will take to process that backlog based on data.

- **Make it easier to use UI-Online –** enable UI-Online and associated tools to work better on mobile devices, for increased ease of use and decreased user errors in data entry, since errors can cause delays.

- **Modernize document upload -** enable claimants to upload documents to the EDD system using their mobile phones or computers, to speed claimants' ability to respond to requests for further validation of their claims and reduce the mail processing burden on EDD.

Mid-term recommendations include:

- **Use data to inform efforts to fight fraud** - The new ID.me tool will block many fraudulent claims at the door. New, data-driven efforts to prevent fraud should be employed, and older processes can be abandoned,

- **Revisit Benefits System Modernization (BSM) –** EDD should revisit the BSM project and reimagine it for the future in ways that prioritize claimants' needs and make their experience with EDD easy, fast and reliable.

Long-term recommendations include:

- **Explore Operation and Technology -** begin a bold, cross-disciplinary modernization project involving an overhaul of administrative rules and procedures, operations and technology, with a central focus on improving the experience of those filing for unemployment benefits. This project will also result in lower administrative costs to taxpayers in the delivery of these benefits.

Recommendations to Set Path for Reform at the Employment Development Department as well as *Strike Team Detailed Findings and Recommendations* were provided to EDD leadership.

Improving the accessibility and reliability of the state's vital services by focusing on business process reengineering and leveraging digital innovation is a priority for the Administration and a key focus of the California Government Operations Agency. To this end the Administration has established new procurement strategies included RFI2, established the Office of Digital Innovation and emboldened the California Department of Technology to use new approaches. The California Department of Technology and the ODI supported the work of the Strike Team and will continue to support the implementation of

the recommendations to modernize government and use technology to optimize the customer experience.

The Employment Development Department issued [this response](#) to the Strike Team's recommendations.

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