

[Home](#) / NJ Receives \$11M+ Federal Grant to Continue Unemployment System Improvements

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) has received a federal grant of more than \$11 million to continue its work on updating and strengthening its Unemployment Insurance systems.

The US Department of Labor has awarded NJDOL the maximum grant amount of \$11,250,000 in support of the Department's work. Funding will go towards advancing new features to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) systems, like the [check your claim status](#) page to help claimants receive their benefits faster by being able to view, manage, and resolve initial application, weekly certification, and identity verification issues online. These user-friendly features were designed in partnership with the New Jersey Office of Information Technology, whose cloud service allows for the rapid development and implementation of these new tools, and with the New Jersey Office of Innovation.

"Looking at the data, a majority of delayed claims get held up toward the beginning of the process," said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. "We identified the most common pieces keeping claims from moving forward, and we created tools to help claimants and our agents reach a resolution quicker so workers can get all the benefits they're due in a more timely manner."

While claimants will still receive email notifications regarding their claims, NJDOL intends for these new features to provide a more precise claim status and clear actions needed for resolution in an easily accessible, central location.

Resolve claims issues online

Questions answered on the initial application or weekly certification often necessitate more information to determine eligibility for benefits per federal regulations – a process called *adjudication*.

After logging in to their "Check your claim status" account, claimants can now see applicable notifications letting them know if their claim is in the adjudication process, including a brief description of what information NJDOL needs from them to determine if they are eligible for a payment.

There may also be a request for further information to be submitted to NJDOL. Information requests will still be provided through email, but claimants can now also view and fulfill these requests online, with a record of what information they have provided and when.

"We understand inboxes are often full and overflowing, and emails can be missed or inadvertently sent to the junk folder," added Gillian Gutierrez, Senior Advisor and Director of Unemployment Insurance Modernization. "By putting what a claimant needs to know in one, easy-to-use location, we're removing unnecessary obstacles to make the process as easy as possible so claimants can access their benefits."

Integrated identity verification

Per federal rules, a claimant must verify their identity before UI benefits can be distributed. NJDOL enlisted federally credentialed security vendor [ID.me](#) to perform this critical step.

Claimants can confirm if their identity verification was completed and cleared with NJDOL by logging into their account through "Check your claim status". If identity verification has not been done, claimants will see a notification on their claim status page along with a secure link to initiate the process. If there is an issue or delay after completing identity verification, the claim status page will provide instructions on what to do next.

USDOL grant means much more to come

NJDOL's [recent grant](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, will support NJDOL's ongoing efforts spanning enhancements in UI technology, experience, and security. As one of 19 grantees across the U.S. and its territories, NJDOL continues to be at the forefront of UI modernization.

New Jersey residents can expect continuous improvements to their experience over the coming months, with the release a completely new UI claim application later this month.

The first of many improvements in New Jersey's UI modernization efforts began with upgrading the weekly certification website to be mobile-friendly and meet 508c accessibility standards, with a design to make the process easier to complete. In April 2022, NJDOL announced the release of an [enhanced online application](#) that simplified and explained the questions in plain language, allowed workers to apply from a mobile

phone, as well as increased accessibility.

“Replacing a legacy system is a challenging process, especially one as complex as the Unemployment Insurance application,” said Sharon Pagano, Assistant Commissioner and Chief Information Officer of the NJDOL’s Office of Information Management, Services and Solutions. “It was important for us to evaluate how we could segment the task and provide small improvements with significant impact on the claimant experience, learning from the difficulties so many suffered throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.”

Because of New Jersey’s innovative solutions to paying benefits during a time of unprecedented demand, the state, along with Arkansas, was chosen by its federal partners at U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and U.S. Digital Service (USDS) in 2021 as a [pilot state](#) for [modernization and improvement of the federal unemployment insurance system](#). NJDOL has been sharing its progress with its fellow state workforce agencies through webinars and online open-source toolkits.

New Jersey UI claimants can access the improved claim experience only if they log into their account through the “Log in with email” option. For security reasons, these features are not available through the “Log in with Social Security Number” option. Claimants should [create an account](#) with their email address when they file a claim for UI benefits.

To learn more on the benefits available to New Jersey workers, visit [myunemployment.nj.gov](#) and [myleavebenefits.nj.gov](#).

[← Go back to all press releases](#)

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Home

File or Access Your Claim

Worker Protections

Career Support

Employer Services

Research & Information

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Statewide

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Lt. Governor Tahesha Way

NJ Home

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