KPMG

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program CAP Program Evaluation

Evaluation Design Report (EDR)

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Table of Acronyms

AJC	American Job Center
BBA	Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018
CLEAR	Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation Research
CWDS	Commonwealth Workforce Development System
CWIA	Center for Workforce Information and Analysis
DID	Difference-in-Difference
DLI	Department of Labor and Industry
DOL	United States Department of Labor
EB	Extended Benefits
EDR	Evaluation Design Report
ETA	Employment and Training Administration
EUC	Emergency Unemployment Compensation
FE	Fixed Effects
FY	Fiscal Year
IEP	Individual Employment Plan
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LMI	Labor Market Information
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PSM	Personalized Service Meeting
QED	Quasi-Experimental Design
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
REA	Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment
RES	Reemployment Services
RESEA	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
SSA	Social Security Act
SWA	State Workforce Agency
TEGL	Training and Employment Guidance Letters
UCX	Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service Members
UC	Unemployment Compensation
UI	Unemployment Insurance
UIPL	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WPRS	Workforce Profiling and Reemployment Services

Introduction

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's (Pennsylvania) Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) contracted KPMG to assist with the evaluation of the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program in FY2023. One of the activities for this contract included providing an evaluation design report (EDR). The overall goal of this effort is to capture the high-level plan for the initial assessment of the impact of the RESEA program on participants' reemployment rate, earnings, and duration of unemployment and to deliver this Evaluation Design Report, which lays out a plan for DLI to conduct a more thorough evaluation of the RESEA program that meets Department of Labor's (DOL) evidence requirements for RESEA.

Description of the RESEA Program

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) provided guidelines for the changes to the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants (RESEA) program created to replace the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) grants; 2015 was considered a transitional year to enable states to adjust the program to comply with the RESEA guidelines. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA) included a new amendment, Section 306 to the Social Security Act (SSA), which established a permanent authorization for the RESEA program.

The RESEA program continues the services included in the REA program and additional services to support claimants. The RESEA program is based on Nevada's experimental model of combining reemployment services with the Unemployment Insurance (UI) REA program. Like REA, RESEA is voluntary for states, and participation is mandatory for UI claimants selected for the program. However, unlike REA, RESEA requires submitting and approving an annual state plan and evaluations, institutes a formula-based funding requirement, and increases flexibility for states' selection of RESEA participants.

One of the main goals of the RESEA program is to help UI recipients find employment more quickly. By providing them with individualized job search assistance and skills training, the program aims to help them overcome barriers to employment and find a job that matches their skills and experience. Another goal of the program is to reduce the rate of improper payments in the UI system by assessing the eligibility of UI recipients and referring those no longer eligible to other support programs; RESEA helps ensure that UI benefits are paid only to those who meet the eligibility requirements. The RESEA program was established to fulfill the following statutory purposes:

- Improve employment outcomes of UI claimants and reduce the duration of UI benefits receipt;
- Reduce improper payments of UI to individuals who are ineligible for UI benefits;
- Promote alignment and integration with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); and
- Utilize RESEA as an entry point for UI claimants into other state workforce programs.

One of the major differences between REA and RESEA is the increased focus on reemployment services and aligning services with the WIOA's "career services" to create greater integration across programs. RESEAs must provide participants with the following:

- Orientation to available American Job Center (AJC) services;
- Development of an individual reemployment plan;

- Provision of customized career and labor market information;
- Registration with the state's job bank;
- Enrollment in the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service; and
- Provision of at least one additional career service, such as:
    - Referrals and coordination with other workforce activities;
    - Job search assistance;
    - Information about supportive services;
    - Information and assistance with financial aid resources;
    - Financial literacy services; and
    - Career readiness activities, including assistance with resume writing and interviewing techniques.

RESEA is not available to UI claimants who already have a definitive employment opportunity with a start date, claimants who secure work only through a union hiring hall, and claimants who are in approved training programs. RESEA also requires states to provide a plan of how the state program will use grant funds only for services and programs that will reduce UI claimant's duration in the benefits program and improve outcomes for claimants.

States were also encouraged to integrate RESEA with the provisions of the WIOA related to UI programs. WIOA was signed into law in 2014 to help adults aspiring to join (or re-join) the workforce and succeed in the labor market by providing access to employment, education, training, and support services. Integrating RESEA and WIOA services was intended to maximize the efficient use of funds and to provide the most comprehensive support and services available to impacted workers.

Specifically, this integration includes integrating data systems, streamlining case management and assessment, and ensuring needed job search or training services are provided. This process requires the involvement of state and local boards to develop strategies for transitioning states to an integrated technology-supported information system. To fulfill this requirement, states must establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish the roles of state partners in delivering services to claimants.

Under the RESEA program, UI recipients are selected for services based on various criteria, such as their work history, occupation, veteran status, geographic location, prevailing economic conditions, and length of unemployment. They must then meet with a RESEA counselor who provides information regarding various employment-related services, including job search assistance, resume writing, interviewing skills, and information about training and education opportunities. The counselor reassesses their eligibility for UI benefits and may refer them to other public or private support services. The claimant is then given a set period to complete one of the reemployment services discussed with their counselor to maintain their UI eligibility.

The RESEA program requires states to create a methodology for selecting UI claimants to be enrolled in RESEA. States can employ a profiling or statistical model to select and prioritize these claimants' eligibility for RESEA services. The Workforce Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) system, established in Section 303G of the SSA, provides a methodology to select UI claimants who are most likely to exhaust their benefits and would benefit from RESEA services to reenter the workforce. In 2019, the FY 2019 Department of Labor's Appropriation Act expanded the possible targets of the RESEA services to include recipients of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service Members (UCX) and regular UI benefits. According to UIPL 7-19, states will waive WPRS reporting requirements if RESEA services are provided statewide and WPRS profiling models are used to select claimants. If RESEA is implemented statewide, WPRS services must continue to be offered in areas where RESEA is unavailable.

RESEA and Associated Program Requirements

The DOL communicates the RESEA requirements with State Workforce Agencies (SWA) by creating Unemployment Insurance Program Letters (UIPL) and Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGL) that constitute direct guidance on state administration of RESEA and therefore provide key information and requirements for the evaluation. In addition to UIPL and TEGL letters, DOL has provided guidance for RESEA performance management through short desk references and the Employment & Training Administration (ETA) Unemployment Insurance 401 Handbook.

Initial guidance for RESEA was issued in UIPL 13-15, outlining the target population, eligibility review requirement, and service requirements for states participating in and receiving funding for RESEA.

- **Target population.** A primary purpose of RESEA is to reduce UI duration by improving the employment outcomes of recipients (Sec. 306(b)(1), Social Security Act). UIPL 13-15 thus instructed states providing RESEA services to target UI claimants who are most likely to exhaust their benefits and former U.S. military servicemembers.
- **Eligibility review.** Further, pursuant to another statutory purpose to strengthen UI program integrity (Sec. 306(b)(2)), the UIPL mandated that a one-on-one UC eligibility review, including a review of work search activities (if such activities have not been waived) and referral to adjudication (if necessary) is required before an initial RESEA session is considered completed.
- **Service requirements**. As restated in January 2021 (UIPL 13-21 and TEGL 12-20), the minimum core components for an initial RESEA completion are:
    - Customized labor market and career information based on an assessment of the claimant's needs;
    - Enrollment in the employment services program;
    - Support, to the extent needed, for the claimant in the development of an individual reemployment plan tailored to the claimant's needs; and
    - As appropriate, information and referral to additional reemployment services and other AJC services, resources, and training.

The implementation of RESEA also includes additional requirements (both program-specific and more general) that apply to the claimant interview element and to the local Career Links that administer the interview and other program services.

RESEA Evaluation Requirements

In October 2019, DOL ETA issued an advisory to state workforce agencies that set out guidelines and expectations for evaluating the RESEA program. This action was based on the 2018 Bipartisan Budget Act, which created a permanent authorization for RESEA at the federal level and specified a tiered evidence approach for demonstrating program effectiveness. This change aims to ensure that states are using federal funds effectively by employing RESEA delivery strategies based on rigorous causal evidence. Specifically, RESEA program delivery must be backed by high or moderate causal evaluations determined by the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation Research (CLEAR). It must demonstrate the program's impact on RESEA's two key goals: increasing reemployment rates and reducing UC duration.

CLEAR issues a high rating for individual studies if the study's estimated effects are "solely attributable to the intervention being examined" and a moderate rating if there is "some confidence that the estimated effects are

attributable to the intervention studied, but there might be other contributing factors that were not included in the analysis." Studies that do not meet the moderate threshold receive a low rating. Studies can evaluate any or all of the five intervention categories of the RESEA program: (1) the claimant selection mechanism, (2) the timing of claimant selection, (3) scheduling RESEA meetings, (4) reemployment service delivery, and (5) activities to support work search compliance. For an intervention to qualify as high causal evidence, DOL requires at least two impact studies approved as credible by CLEAR and have each found favorable impacts on employment and UC duration with a strong degree of statistical confidence (5% significance). For an intervention to meet the standard of possessing moderate causal evidence, the favorable impacts on employment and UC duration may come from two separate studies deemed credible by CLEAR and only require a modest degree of statistical confidence (10% significance).

The only type of evaluation design that can achieve a high or moderate rating is an impact evaluation. Impact evaluations measure the impact of a program or component intervention relative to a counterfactual situation. Impact evaluations can take either the form of a randomized control trial (RCT) or quasi-experimental design (QED); each approach has advantages and disadvantages, but only RCTs and interrupted time series (ITSs), a particular type of QED, can demonstrate high causal evidence based on CLEAR standards. However, DOL suggests that other types of evaluation designs, such as outcome or process evaluations, should be conducted prior to or in conjunction with an impact evaluation to maximize learning.

RESEA in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The RESEA program is designed to assist in securing reemployment for current UC claimants via staff-assisted services. The program's end goal is to reduce UC claim duration by targeting individuals who are most likely to exhaust their benefits and provide targeted reemployment assistance. The theory underpinning this approach is that the RESEA program services will affect several intermediate outcomes that increase the participant's probability of securing another job, reduce unemployment, and decrease the UC funding the individual will receive.

Following a successful pilot program in four PA CareerLink centers (Scranton et al.), the RESEA program was launched throughout the Commonwealth in 2019. This launch built off CareerLinks' previous experience administering the REA program by integrating reemployment services into the existing eligibility assessment framework.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, DLI did not conduct any RESEA program activities from March 2020 through January 2021. In order to continue service delivery, DLI developed the virtual process for RESEA, which allows participants to perform some of the requirements via their online portal in the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS). In CWDS, participants can complete modules for the RESEA orientation, including viewing the RESEA letter, completing a RESEA tour, and completing the RESEA orientation. Participants can also enter information on their job search requirements. In addition, participants are allowed to view all the available dates and time slots for the Personalized Service Meetings within the deadline for scheduling their initial meeting.

The program delivery is standardized statewide; all requirements for participants and Career Advisors are the same across the Commonwealth. However, there is some variation in aspects of the program delivery that does not affect statutory requirements. For example, all CareerLinks must provide an online and in-person option for

the Personalized Service Meeting (PSM); however, the decision to perform PSMs in-person or online can be made individually, case-by-case, to suit the participants' needs.

Pennsylvania has 63 CareerLink offices that provide RESEA services to participants. As of May 2023, the capacity for the local offices is based on staffing resources and ranges from 4 to 60 RESEA appointments per week. To determine the appropriate number of participants to be selected for each week for the program, DLI aggregates the capacity for each CareerLink based on staffing constraints. For most CareerLink offices, the Career Advisors, responsible for the RESEA appointments, share time between RESEA and other WIOA-related tasks and responsibilities. The central office uses the number of Career Advisors in each CareerLink and the expected time to be spent on RESEA activities to determine the potential number of participants, and adjustments are applied to determine weekly capacity.

Personalized Service Meetings (PSMs)

Once the initial letter is delivered, the participant must register on the CareerLink portal, complete the orientation video and required modules, update resumes and job searches, and schedule their PSM.

The PSMs range from about 30 minutes to an hour for each participant. The PSMs have the same general structure:

- Introduction: Gets to know the participant, their past employment, and their goals for future employment.
- Administrative forms: The EE-01 and the WDP-13 forms.
- Challenges/barriers to job searches: Staff helps individuals identify barriers to future employment, like childcare challenges.
- Individual Employment Plan (IEP): Career Advisors take the most time with this step to ensure that participants set reemployment goals. During this time, Career Advisors show participants the options to engage in workshops to fulfill the program's requirements and participate in resources that could assist with getting reemployed. RESEA participants can attend various programs within WIOA programming. Workshops cover topics including resume writing, interview skills, and computer classes.

In addition to the standard services provided, some Career Advisors also provided the following services:

- A walk-through of the CareerLink portals to show participants where to find resources like the job search function.
- Referrals to the local Goodwill, housing programs, and other community services.

After each PSM, the Career Advisors take about 30 minutes per participant to enter case notes and update tracking information. Career Advisors also follow up with participants if they fail to report to their mandatory workshop. Following the PSMs, Career Advisors are required to conduct a 30-day and 60-day follow-up to gather information about the employment outcomes of the participant. The follow-up activities usually take about 25 minutes each.

Participant Selection in Pennsylvania

The program uses a profiling algorithm to select UI recipients for participation in the program. Per DOL's guidelines, participation is mandatory for all selected recipients. Selected participants are required to take the following steps to maintain their UC eligibility:

- Complete registration on the CareerLink website, including a profile, resume check, two weeks of job search history, tutorial, and educational videos, and schedule a PSM

- Attend the scheduled virtual[1] PSM with a CareerLink employee to discuss the RESEA program requirements, the candidate's profile, and additional labor market and reemployment information
- Complete a mandatory follow-up activity, such as a resume workshop or interview training.

The profiling algorithm prioritizes Veterans on Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX) and then the candidates who are most likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits, considering attributes like age, chosen industry, and time on unemployment insurance. Certain industries are determined as more likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits, so individuals in those industries are ranked above others. Differences between counties, such as employment levels or the demographics of their populations, can impact selection across CareerLink offices. Finally, candidates are ineligible if they get jobs through a union hiring hall, are involved in an apprenticeship or training program, are involved in a labor dispute, or live out of state.

The Commonwealth's profiling methodology is described below, according to the 2022 state plan submitted to the Department of Labor.

> *[The] profiling model looks at several variables, including UC exhaustion rate, tenure with the most recent separating employer, education level, wage replacement ratio, number of benefit years claimant established without exhausting benefits in the three years prior to their current claim, number of times the claimant exhausted benefits in the three years prior to the current claim, and UC exhaustion rate by the month of their effective date. This model was updated when we went live with our new system in June 2021.*
>
> *In addition to the profile model, other rules are used to determine RESEA selection. Before the end of the fourth week of a claim, when the first payment is generated for a claimant who has yet to be screened out of RESEA, the claimant's name appears on the RESEA list. The list is used to select and refer individuals to RESEA. A PA-developed automated interface between the UI database system and the workforce development database system, Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS), provides a weekly list of claimants to workforce development for the RESEA program. Claimants who receive their first payment after the fifth week are excluded. During the initial UI application process, individuals are asked questions to identify those with a definite return-to-work date, those who secure work only through a union hiring hall, and those in approved training. These claimants are also excluded from the list.*

Since the state plan was submitted, DLI changed the requirement only to exclude claimants receiving their first UC payment after the 10th week.

RESEA Program Flow

This section provides state and local agencies' requirements to implement the program. For this implementation evaluation, it is critical to understand exactly how the requirements are translated into service delivery. This section briefly reviews the flow of RESEA services delivered to claimants. At the same time, specific details vary across regions (and how they vary will be a focus of the implementation study); the below summarizes our understanding of the general program flow common to Pennsylvania's regions.

[1] Pennsylvania moved to start offering a hybrid model after the pandemic in 2021.

From the pool of claimants who apply for UC, the state selects those most likely to exhaust benefits using the profiling methodology. This selection of RESEA claimants occurs weekly, and the list is sent to the Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA) on Mondays. CWIA staff conducted a mail merge to send the first letter to the selected RESEA participants. After initial contact by mail, claimants must complete modules online and schedule the PSM in person or online. This initial meeting is where labor market information is shared, the individual employment plan (IEP) is created, follow-up workshops to fulfill the mandatory state requirement are scheduled, and Advisors provide referrals to other services that could benefit the participant.

The logic model below displays the five elements of the RESEA program theory: the inputs and required RESEA reemployment services allow the participant to produce the expected outputs of PSM attendance, IEP creation, and completion of mandatory follow-up activity. These activities will, in turn, produce intermediate outcomes that improve the participants' capability to secure a new job. Ultimately, these effects will produce the long-term outcomes of reduced UC benefit duration, increased employment rates, and higher earnings for RESEA participants.

Logic Model

The RESEA program utilizes a comprehensive logic model to transform inputs into desired outcomes. Here is a summary of each component of the logic model.

Inputs:
Inputs are the vital resources that fuel the RESEA program. These include:

- Staff time: The time and effort put in by staff to administer and implement the RESEA program.
- RESEA funds: The financial resources dedicated to running the program.
- CareerLink facilities: The physical and technological infrastructures that facilitate program delivery.
- Labor market data: Data concerning job market trends and statistics that inform program strategies.
- Existing RESEA research: Previous studies and findings offer evidence-based insights to shape the program.
- Strategic partnerships: Collaboration with workforce agencies and stakeholders that augment the program's service delivery.

Activities:
Activities are the core actions or interventions performed by the program:

- Virtual orientation: An online session that introduces participants to the program.
- Eligibility review: An assessment to ensure participants meet the program's criteria.
- Labor market information (LMI): Sharing LMI data, trends, and job opportunities.
- Individual Employment Plan (IEP): Development of personalized job search and career development strategies for each participant.
- Enrollment in employment services: Registration of participants in requisite services or activities that enhance employability.
- Referrals to other services: Guidance provided to participants about additional resources or services based on their individual needs.

Expected Outcomes:
The immediate anticipated results include the following:

- PSM attendance: Active participation of attendees in PSMs.
- IEP creation: Development of an individualized employment plan for each participant.
- Mandatory follow-up activity enrollment and attendance: Participants' commitment to mandatory follow-up activities and services.

Intermediate Outcomes:
These are the mid-term benefits or changes resulting from the program:

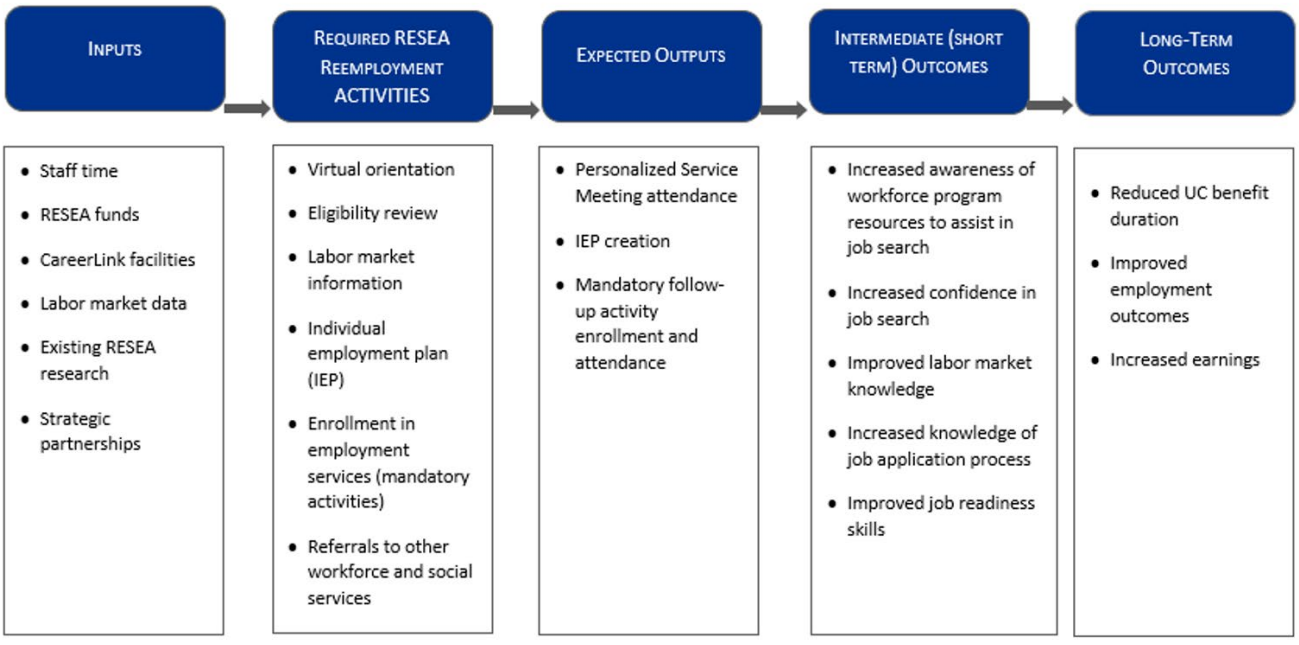
- Increased awareness of resources: Participants learn about resources available to support their job search.
- Increased confidence in job search: Participants feel more confident about their job search capabilities.
- Improved labor market knowledge: Participants better understand job market trends and opportunities.
- Increased knowledge of the job application process: Participants clearly understand job application procedures.
- Improved job readiness skills: Participants acquire and improve job-related skills.

Long-term Outcomes:
These are the ultimate changes or benefits that the program seeks to achieve:

- Reduced UC benefit duration: The program aims to reduce the length of UC benefits by minimizing periods of unemployment among participants.
- Improved employment outcomes: The program strives to achieve higher rates of job placement and stable employment among participants.
- Increased earnings: The ultimate goal is to boost participants' earnings through improved job readiness and successful employment outcomes.

The logic model outlines a systematic progression from inputs to long-term outcomes. It visualizes how the program uses its resources to deliver activities, leading to immediate, intermediate, and long-term positive outcomes for the participants.

Exhibit 1: RESEA Logic Model



In this logic model, staff may spend differing amounts of time on each activity depending on the participant's industry and other factors, such as their geographical location and prevailing economic conditions. This level of variation and discretion by CareerLink officials remains within the bounds of the logic model. The ability of an impact study to validate the logic model described above relies on certain assumptions and external factors that

affect the implementation of the RESEA program. These assumptions and how they would be validated during the study implementation are enumerated below.

Assumption #1: All required activities are conducted uniformly across the CareerLink offices. Differing implementation of the required RESEA reemployment activities would imply the existence of several logic models rather than the unified model described above. This assumption can be validated by conducting an implementation study in parallel with the impact study.

Assumption #2: Completing expected outputs is properly documented and tracked within the CWDS system. The validity of the underlying data limits the validity of the study results. If expected outcomes are not tracked accurately in CWDS, it is not possible to validate the logic model. This assumption can be validated by conducting an implementation study in parallel with the impact study.

Assumption #3: The RESEA profiling methodology and prevailing economic conditions provide a representative group to draw conclusions about the broader RESEA participant population. Extreme economic conditions or changes to the RESEA profiling methodology may affect the distribution of underlying participant characteristics in a way that is correlated with differences in short-term or long-term outcomes. For example, an impact assessment of employment outcomes for RESEA participants that completed the program around the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic may not allow researchers to confidently draw conclusions about the RESEA program in more normal times. This assumption can be validated by monitoring prevailing economic conditions during the impact study. In the case of a forward-looking study such as an RCT, this would involve ongoing monitoring and ensuring that the study period contains a mix of economic conditions. In the case of a backward-looking study such as a QED, this validation would occur by analyzing historical macroeconomic data during the study period.

Assumption #4: Program activities are not limited by funding. Implementation of the program occurs uniformly throughout the fiscal year and regardless of the total volume of participants in the RESEA program. In Pennsylvania, alternative funding sources are available when funds earmarked for RESEA program implementation run out, so this assumption is valid for the historical period. Forward-looking impact studies would require ongoing validation of this assumption throughout the study period.

Prior Research

Literature Review

Due to the recency of the RESEA program's implementation and the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little existing literature on the program of RESEA programs as they are currently designed. However, because the RESEA program is based on Nevada's experimental combination of the REA and RES programs, impact studies from Nevada may provide some insight into the effects of the combined RESEA program. Michaelides et al. (2012) aimed to determine if Nevada's combined REA and RES program reduced UI benefit duration or amount received or expedited re-employment for participants.

Michaelides and colleagues (2012) found overwhelmingly positive results, concluding that the program was very effective in assisting claimants exit the UI program earlier than they would have in the absence of the program. REA claimants were significantly less likely than their peers to exhaust regular UI benefits and start receiving Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) benefits. This was driven by substantially improved employment outcomes after exiting from the program. These impacts led to a significant reduction in claimant UI duration (3.13 weeks) and in total benefit amounts received ($873). The resulting savings of these reduced benefits paid exceeded the cost of administering the program, meaning that Nevada's REA program was a cost-effective investment for the federal government.

In another Nevada study, Manoli and colleagues (2018) investigated the effects of an experimental job search assistance program on earnings, UI usage, and employment. The study found that Nevada's RESEA program increased employment by 5.1% in the first year. Subsequent years saw increases ranging from 2.9% to 4.5%. Further, the program significantly increased earnings among participants by over $1,300 the first year and between $1,413 and $2,087 over the next five years. Given this study was a well-implemented randomized control trial, there is high confidence that the witnessed effects are due to the Nevada RESEA program.

However, Nevada's results may not be generalizable to all states. Beyond the general heterogeneity between state labor markets that always makes such comparisons potentially fraught, Nevada is particularly unique given the effect of Las Vegas on the state's workforce. According to the 2020 Census, Nevada had over 94% of its population in urban areas compared to Pennsylvania's 76.5% and the national average of 80%. Furthermore, Nevada's workforce is disproportionately concentrated in the leisure and hospitality industry, which may result in different outcomes of the RESEA program.

To broaden the scope beyond Nevada, states may look to impact studies of the REA program. While this is not directly comparable to the combined RESEA program, such studies may be informative of what types of effects evaluators can expect to find. For example, Poe-Yamagata et al. (2011) evaluated Florida, Idaho, Illinois, and Nevada from July to December 2009. They conducted a difference in means estimation for eight different UI outcomes and three categories of wage outcomes and used linear multivariate models to estimate the probability of exhausting regular UI benefits, probability of receiving EUC benefits, weeks on UI for Regular, EUC, and the same wage outcome variables as the difference in means. Overall, they found the strongest effects in Nevada (which combined RES and REA at the time), as well as statistically and economically significant reductions in duration of UI benefits and total benefits received in Florida and Idaho, but no evidence that the Illinois REA program led to changes in most outcome variables. Other studies have shown mixed, but overall positive, effects as well (Benus et al., 2008; Corson et al., 1989; Jacobson & Petta, 2000). For example, participants of the JSA program and reemployment bonus received fewer UI dollars and weeks paid than the control group (Benus, 2017). The enhanced reemployment services reduced UI receipt duration by an average of 1.6 weeks. Participants of the WPRS program also had a reduction in the duration of UI benefit receipt when

compared to control, and there were positive impacts on earnings in some regions (Dickinson et al., 2002). However, not all studies found statistically significant impacts (Corson et al., 1989; Needels et al., 2015). Some studies reported no significant differences between treatment and control groups in terms of UI benefits receipt, employment, or earnings (Kuka, 2020).

Furthermore, researchers have separately analyzed the effects of specific labor market interventions that may be used by program staff during the RESEA process. Lee and colleagues (2009) assessed the effectiveness of Washington State WorkSource job search services. WorkSource services included staff-assisted job matching, provision of labor market information, job search and placement assistance, and initial assessments. They found that WorkSource services were associated with a higher probability of employment and higher earnings growth for those who were intermittently (rather than continuously) employed in the baseline period. This suggests that similar RESEA interventions may have a differing effect based on the employment history of potential participants.

Several other studies have yielded important conclusions regarding various aspects of labor programs and UI benefits. For example, the effectiveness of RESEA programs depends on the strategies employed, such as meeting reminders and follow-up contacts, and states have expanded and increased funding for these programs (O'Leary et al., 2021). Further, disparities in UI benefit access exist, with lower socioeconomic and disadvantaged groups experiencing reduced access (Needels et al., 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has further brought operational changes and increased the use of technology, shaping the future provision of RESEA services (Bell et al., 2023; Mack et al., 2021).

Limitations

The reviewed studies have several limitations that should be considered in interpreting findings. One fundamental limitation in most of these studies is the lack of statistical adjustments (Eisenhauer, 1997; Jacobson & Petta, 2000; Kuka, 2020). Without these adjustments, the reported statistically significant findings may be overstated, and it becomes challenging to attribute the observed differences solely to the interventions being studied. Although several studies reported positive impacts in the treatment groups, such as increased employment rates and earnings compared to the control groups (Michaelides & Mian, 2020), it is important to acknowledge the limitations. Some studies did not consider factors like age differences and changes in the workforce composition over time, which could potentially influence the observed outcomes (Hock et al., 2016). Moreover, a notable limitation is the lack of sufficient statistical controls to account for pre-treatment differences between treatment and control groups (Hoffman, 1993; Jacobson & Petta, 2000). The differences observed between the groups in terms of previous employment, earnings, UI benefit receipt, and union membership were significant and difficult to adequately control for in the impact estimation models. This fact raises concerns about the comparability of the groups and the potential influence of confounding factors.

Another limitation is the low participation rates in the programs or services being evaluated in some of these studies (Lee et al., 2017). For example, in some cases, only a small percentage of claimants attended orientation, accessed counseling services, or attended workshops. This fact raises concerns about the interpretation of the results and the effectiveness of the programs, as low engagement may limit the impact on desired outcomes. Additionally, the studies highlight the possibility of self-selection bias due to the mere presence of the program. The authors suggest that some claimants may have chosen to cease their UI benefits to avoid participating in the program requirements (Lachowska et al., 2015). This introduces another layer of complexity in interpreting the results and understanding the actual effects of the interventions.

The context in which the studies were conducted is another important factor to consider when interpreting findings. Unemployment rates at the time of some reviewed studies were high, reaching 25% in some cases (Hock et al., 2016). This anomalous situation in the labor market at that time may have influenced the efficacy and types of effects observed in reemployment and UI efforts, making it challenging to generalize the findings to

other periods or labor market conditions. The high unemployment rates during some of the study periods triggered increased eligibility for UI benefits through regular programs. This influx of participants and changes in the UI program structure may have influenced the data and analysis, making it difficult to disentangle the effects of the interventions from other factors. Furthermore, the studies acknowledged that there were significant restrictions on participation in specific programs. For example, claimants had to possess high-demand skills based on their previous employment. This selective participation may have skewed the data and introduced bias in the analysis, limiting the generalizability of the results.

The abrupt halt and subsequently limited reintroduction of certain programs, such as the REA services (Michaelides et al., 2012), may have also affected their implementation and outcomes. These disruptions can impact the overall effectiveness and outcomes observed in the studies. The literature also highlighted the challenges in detecting statistically significant impacts due to the similarity between the existing services available to the control groups and the services offered to the treatment groups (Manoli et al., 2018). This similarity makes it difficult to differentiate the interventions' effects from those of the existing services.

Additionally, the low response rates in follow-up surveys limit the analysis of employment and earnings outcomes, potentially introducing bias and affecting the overall interpretation of the results. It is important to note that the studies were conducted in specific time periods, locations, and with particular demographic compositions (Hock et al., 2016). The results may not be generalizable to other labor markets, time periods, or populations. The unique circumstances and characteristics of the sample populations limit the external validity of the findings.

Overall, the reviewed studies have several limitations to be considered when interpreting their results. These limitations include the lack of statistical adjustments, low participation rates, incomplete data, inadequate control for pre-intervention differences, and challenges in attributing observed differences solely to the studied interventions. The specific context in which the studies were conducted, including high unemployment rates and program restrictions, further restricts the generalizability of the findings. These limitations call for state-specific evaluations of the RESEA program to determine the effectiveness in reducing UI duration and increasing positive employment outcomes.

Capacity Issues

The efficacy of the RESEA program is intricately tied to the capacity and staffing of its contracted entities, which predominantly consist of non-profit organizations functioning as program providers. This section briefly explores the critical challenges faced in these areas by such organizations, including insufficiently trained staff, high caseloads, staff burnout and turnover, limited training opportunities, and geographic distribution issues.

One of the primary challenges in the non-profit organizations that often provide services to RESEA is the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel experienced in employment services and eligibility assessments (de Hoyos & Green, 2011; Bowman et al., 2012). The process of finding and training staff members with the necessary expertise can take time and effort, leading to delays in program implementation (Preston, 2020). During periods of high demand, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, caseloads in the RESEA program providers can become overwhelming for available staff. Large caseloads limit the ability to provide participants with personalized assistance and comprehensive support (Combs, 2022). Dealing with job seekers facing significant challenges in their job search can take a toll on staff members, leading to burnout and high turnover rates. This not only disrupts the continuity of services but also results in the loss of institutional knowledge and experience (Barbeito, 2004). Continuous training and professional development are vital for staff members in the program providers to stay up to date on labor market trends, employment strategies, and eligibility assessment protocols. However, limited resources or a lack of emphasis on staff training can hinder their ability to deliver optimal services (Preston, 2020).

Rural or remote areas often face difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified staff members, leading to uneven distribution of program resources. The capacity and staffing challenges faced by the RESEA program providers are critical to its effectiveness. By addressing issues related to insufficiently trained staff, high caseloads, staff burnout and turnover, limited training opportunities, and geographic distribution, the RESEA program can enhance its ability to provide quality reemployment services and eligibility assessments to job seekers, fostering better employment outcomes for individuals and strengthening the overall labor market.

Impact Study Evaluation Design

Study Objective and Purpose

The objective of the proposed study is to design and conduct a rigorous impact evaluation of the RESEA program. The evaluation will focus on measuring the effectiveness of the program on the following outcomes: reducing UI receipt, promoting reemployment, and leading to higher reemployment earnings for UI claimants. To achieve the goals of the evaluation, we will address the following questions. The purpose of the evaluation is to answer high-level impact questions about the long-term results of RESEA program participation

Impact Evaluation Purpose and Research Questions

The research questions seek to understand how the intervention (the RESEA program) affects participants' outcomes.

> RQ #1: Unemployment Compensation Duration: Are RESEA participants' UC benefit durations less than those who were not selected for or did not participate in RESEA?
>
> RQ #2: Employment: Do RESEA participants have higher rates of employment two and four quarters after their exit from the program versus those who were not selected for or did not participate in RESEA?
>
> RQ #3: Earnings: Is there an impact on wages for participants of the RESEA program compared to those UC claimants who did not participate in or were not selected for the program?
>
> RQ #4: Demographic effect: Do RESEA impacts vary by claimant demographic characteristics and/or by economic conditions***?*** Another key objective of this study is to examine whether the RESEA program has differential impacts across key socioeconomic groups (e.g., gender, race, age, education, industry, occupation), location (e.g., urban vs. rural), and local economic conditions (e.g., unemployment rate, job turnover, business closings, and industry composition). Addressing these questions will help identify which groups of claimants and under which conditions REA is likely to be more effective – thus helping policymakers and program administrators improve RESEA targeting.

Several factors were considered when examining the appropriate evaluation design for the Commonwealth. The profiling mechanism is given a number of candidates based on CareerLink capacity and that number of the highest scoring candidates based on prioritization criteria. However, there are fundamental differences in the likelihood of particular employment outcomes between the population that is selected by the profiling algorithm and the population that is not. This is because the profiling algorithm is designed to select the individuals most likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits. Therefore, a direct comparison in employment

outcomes between the RESEA and non-RESEA populations is inappropriate, and a careful QED design would be required to counteract these limitations. RCTs solve this issue more completely by introducing a random assignment procedure between the control and treatment groups. This allows for a direct comparison between the two groups without generating additional bias, meeting the DOL's highest evidentiary standard.

However, RCTs have limitations as well and may not be appropriate for Pennsylvania. CareerLink officials revealed in interviews that, in many locations, there were not enough candidates being selected by the profiling mechanism to fill all available program spots as determined by staff availability. This means that if DLI implemented an RCT with no changes to the profiling methodology, it would not be possible to over-select RESEA-eligible claimants. In this case, any claimant that is randomly selected for the treatment group would not be "replaced" with a different eligible claimant; instead, there would be a net loss of RESEA service provision, which both presents ethical challenges and violates DOL's guidance that evaluations should not interfere with program delivery. If this situation persists, a QED may be more appropriate. See the Appendix for a description of how Pennsylvania could implement a QED in this scenario. Alternatively, it may be possible to solve this limitation by lowering the minimum score threshold in the profiling methodology. This would increase the number of individuals selected for RESEA and, depending on the distribution of profiling scores, could result in the abundance of eligible participants required for random sampling.

Outcome Measures

Three economic outcome measures will be used as the basis for assessing historical RESEA program performance: unemployment compensation duration, employment, and earnings. These variables will be used individually to investigate Research Questions #1, #2, and #3, respectively, and all three will be used for Research Question #4. All three outcome variables are confirmatory, as the goal of this study is to test and quantify the theoretical impact of the RESEA intervention on each outcome based on the logic model.

Unemployment compensation duration is the most straightforward outcome to measure; selection into the sample of interest is based on the date of a recipient's initial UC claim, and the BenMod data that includes the initial claim date will also include the number of weeks of continuing claims tied to that initial claim. For employment and earnings data, quarterly Data Mart data can be tied to the same unique identifier in BenMod. The evaluator will estimate the effects of the RESEA program on labor market outcomes by looking at RESEA participants' employment rate (expressed as a binary variable) two and four quarters following the quarter in which they submitted the initial UC claim and earnings (expressed as a percentage change from their earnings level prior to the initial UC claim).

Study Sample

The study sample will be drawn from the pool of all UI recipients in Pennsylvania who submitted their initial UI claim in a specified study period. The exact timeframe of interest will depend on external factors. For an RCT, the study period would occur over several years, while the more limited QED approach would select a particular historical period to study. We propose an RCT that covers a study period of at least two years, meaning that the pool of claimants would be those submitting an initial UI claim in one of eight consecutive quarters (e.g., Q3 2023 to Q2 2025). A study period shorter than one year would make it difficult to capture the seasonality of the labor market and would result in a low sample size that would limit the power of statistical testing. In contrast, a longer study period (of three to five years) would increase the robustness of the study and better account for labor market fluctuations over time. Extending the data collection period is one of the main recommendations provided by DOL to produce a robust evaluation.

However, logistical, statutory, or political limitations may require the UCX participants to retain their RESEA priority and be removed from the randomization procedure. This would alter the study sample to be the population of non-UCX UI recipients in Pennsylvania who submitted their initial UI claim in the specified study period.

Eligibility Requirements

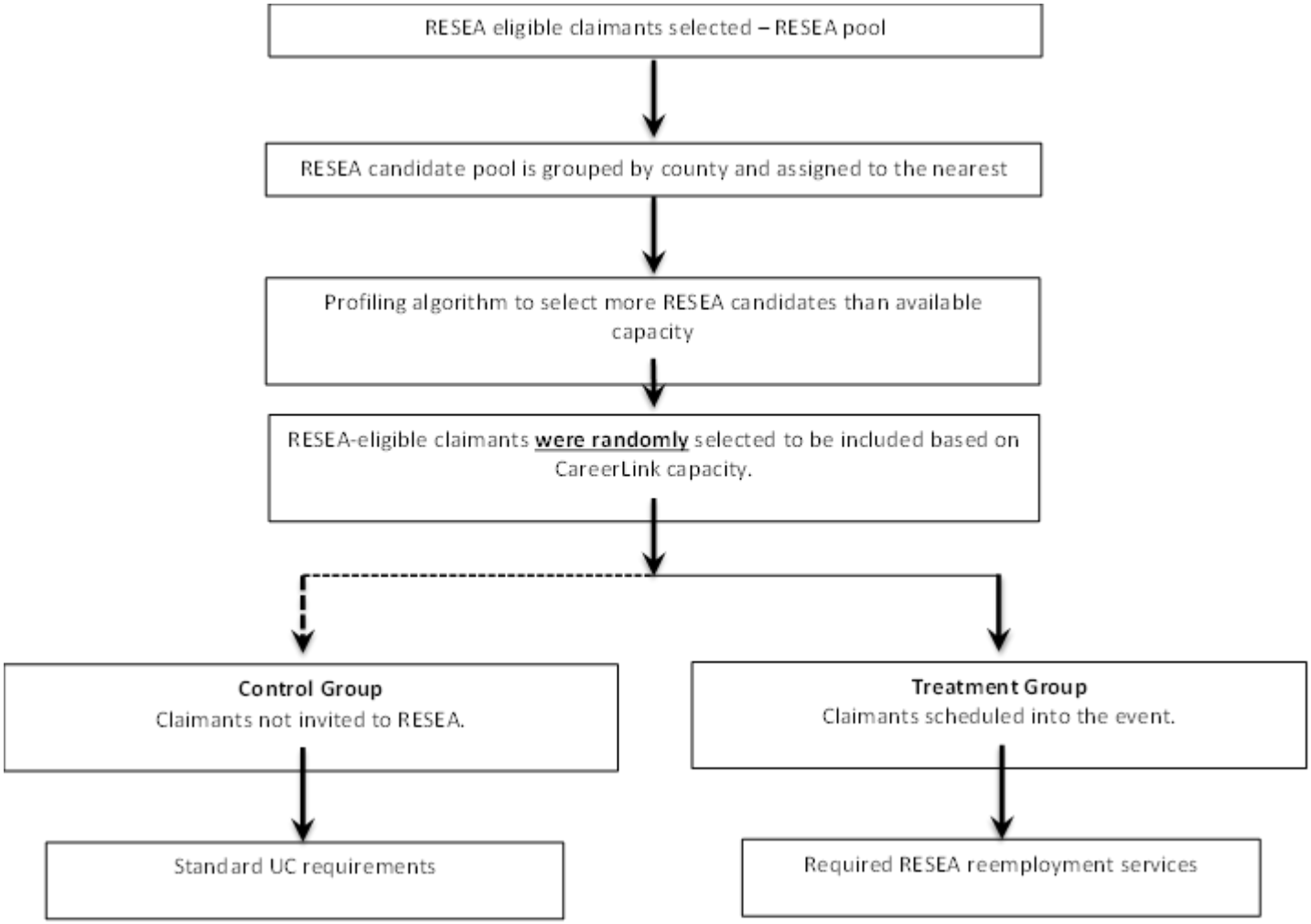
Unemployment Compensation (UC) uses several factors to determine eligibility for the RESEA program. First, candidates need to have been issued their first check to determine that they are financially eligible for UC. An individual must have collected a check from Unemployment Insurance (UI) in the last five weeks to be eligible for RESEA. In October 2022, that requirement was adjusted to ten weeks to increase the number of participants profiled. The minimum amount of time a candidate can be on UI is two weeks, given a one-week waiting period. Later in the process, candidates are removed from the pool if they get jobs through a union hiring hall, are involved in an apprenticeship or training program, are involved in a labor dispute, or live out of state.

UC staff apply a profiling algorithm to the population of eligible individuals to determine the RESEA candidate pool. The profiling algorithm prioritizes Veterans on Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX) and the candidates most likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits. For example, attributes like age, industry, and time on unemployment insurance are used as predictors for benefit exhaustion based on historical static weights and federal requirements. Certain industries are determined as more likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits, so individuals in those industries are ranked above others. Statistical differences between counties, such as current employment levels and the demographics of their populations, can impact selection across CareerLink offices.

Random Assignment Procedure

In this study, we will design and implement a random assignment evaluation design that will enable us to rigorously address all the key research questions discussed above. Our proposed design, depicted in Exhibit 1, begins with the determination of RESEA eligibility and placement of RESEA-eligible claimants into a selection pool based on criteria currently used by the state. The system would be set up so that the existing profiling algorithm is used to select more candidates than the current CareerLinks can provide RESEA services. Then staff would randomly select a subset of those profiled individuals equal to available capacity to be in the treatment group that receives RESEA services. The individuals selected by the algorithm but not by the randomization procedure would be the control group. These individuals would not be placed into the RESEA program and would be removed from the pool of claimants eligible for RESEA. Exhibit 2 below shows how the claimants flow through the program and how the random selection design will be implemented for this evaluation.

Exhibit 2: RESEA Program Evaluation Design



With this random assignment evaluation design, we will be able to answer all the questions identified above. Specifically, we will be able to estimate the impact of each RESEA component by comparing the post-random assignment outcomes of the different groups. For example, to measure the impact of receiving only RESEA services, we will compare the post-random assignment outcomes of the control group. In addition to measuring the program impacts of each of the treatment group, this design will also allow us to measure the marginal impacts of the treatments.

This system would allow DLI to deliver RESEA services to the same number of individuals but would provide a truly random control group in order to compare employment outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of the RESEA program. Certain groups may be excluded from the randomization process to adhere to RESEA policy requirements. For example, UCX recipients are automatically included in the RESEA candidate pool, so they would be excluded from this randomization procedure and removed from both the control and treatment groups.

Thus, this design will also allow us to identify the impact of each RESEA component. In addition, the proposed design will allow us to examine how targeting affects the effectiveness of each RESEA component. That is, by

comparing the program impacts for claimants who are most likely to exhaust benefits with impacts for other target groups, we can identify which targeting strategies are more effective. Our analysis will also identify which baseline factors and participant characteristic (e.g., local economic condition, age, race, gender, urban/rural, etc.) affect RESEA impact.

Data Sources and Collection

Data for this analysis will come from three administrative sources: the Commonwealth's Unemployment Compensation (UC) claims from the BenMod system, the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS), and the wage reports in CWIA. All data will be provided with a unique individual identifier that can be used to link the same individual across reports from the three systems.

UC Claims Data

UC claims data provide information on claimants' UI eligibility and receipt, socioeconomic characteristics, and prior work history for the entire population of UI claimants in a state. Specifically, the data provide the following: 1) program type (regular UI, Emergency Unemployment Compensation, and extended Benefits), 2) claim information (e.g., date of claim, claim start and end date, weeks of eligibility, and maximum benefit amounts allowed), 3) number of weeks and benefit amounts collected under each program, 4) socioeconomic characteristics of (e.g., gender, race, age, and education), 5) location (e.g., county/zip code of residence), 6) work history (tenure with prior employer, type of employment, industry and occupation, and 7) WPRS profiling score.

KPMG will request UC claims data for all RESEA-eligible claimants (i.e., all claimants in the control group and in treatment group) who started a UI claim from July 2023 through December 2023, for up to 18 months from the start of their claim. Using these data, we will construct a series of indicators as shown in Exhibit 3. These variables will be used to assess program impacts on participant outcomes. Additionally, socioeconomic characteristics, location, and prior work history reported in the UI claims data will be used to determine whether random assignment of RESEA-eligible claimants was implemented successfully, as control variables in the multivariate regression impact analyses, and to examine whether RESEA had differential impacts for different types of claimants.

Wage Records

Wage record data provide quarterly wage information on the vast majority of workers in the state, including: 1) year/quarter of employment, 2) wage amounts earned, and) 3 identifiers for matching to UI claims and other administrative data. KPMG will ask the state to provide wage records for the period starting July 2011, for all RESEA-eligible claimants who started a UI claim during the study period. These data will be merged with the UI claims data to construct employment and wage outcome measures of RESEA-eligible claimants for up to six quarters after program entry, including: 1) Earned wages – claimant earned positive wages in each quarter after program entry, 2) Quarterly wages – wage amounts earned by claimant in each quarter after program entry, and 3) Job retention – claimant had employment in subsequent quarters.

These measures will be used to examine the impact of the program on the reemployment outcomes of claimants. Wage records will also be used to construct employment outcomes for up to eight quarters prior to the start of an individual's UI claim. These outcomes will be used to test if random assignment of claimants was done correctly and as control variables in the multivariate regression impact models. For example, if the RCT studies participants who enter the program between Q3 2023 and Q2 2024, the data would span from Q3 2023 to Q1 2025. The three quarters beyond the study period are necessary for the evaluators to study two-quarter lagged outcome variables, given that participants may not exit the RESEA program until the quarter following

their initial claim. That is, a RESEA participant that filed their initial UI claim towards the end of Q2 2024 (near the end of the study period) would not complete the program until Q3 2024. This means that Q1 2025 outcome data is required to study the effect of the RESEA program on that individual's two-quarter lagged labor market outcomes.

RESEA Program Data

RESEA program data provide information on the experience of UI claimants with the RESEA program. These data report: 1) claimant treatment/control group assignment, 2) types of services received by claimants assigned in the treatment group, and 3) reason for exiting UI (disqualification due to not showing up for the RESEA meeting, disqualification for failing UI eligibility review, or reemployment). KPMG will request study states to provide these data for all REA-eligible claimants who started their UI claim from July to December 2023.

All data are accessible by DLI staff members and do not require the participation of a third party. The primary potential challenge for data acquisition is the negotiation of a data-sharing agreement between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the evaluator. Risks will be mitigated by using a unique identifier for each participant and removing personally identifiable details before the data is shared with the evaluators. Under these conditions, once a data-sharing agreement is reached, DLI will have the ability to provide all required data from their administrative system for the duration of the study period.

Exhibit 3: UI Receipt Indicators

Indicator	Condition/Measure
Exit UI after collecting X weeks of benefits	If the claimant exited UI after collecting a certain number of benefit weeks (1-26 weeks)
Receive EUC benefits	If the claimant exhausted regular UI and started collecting EUC benefits
Receive EB benefits	If the claimant exhausted EUC and started collecting EB benefits
UI spell duration	Total number of UI benefit weeks collected under regular UI, EUC, and EB
Benefit amounts collected	Amount of benefits collected (regular UI, EUC, EB, and total).

Analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive Analyses

Prior to conducting any impact analyses, we will use available data to produce descriptive analyses. These analyses will provide a comprehensive narrative of the characteristics of RESEA-eligible claimants during the study period and will include tabulations, means, standard deviations, and other distribution statistics of claimants, such as: 1) socioeconomic characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, age, education, etc.); 2) prior work history (tenure with prior employer, industry, occupation, etc.); 3) UI eligibility (UI weeks and maximum benefit amounts allowed on the claim); 4) WPRS profiling score; 5) prior wage outcomes (earned wages and wage amounts in the eight quarters prior to the start of the UI claim); and location characteristics reported in the UI claims data or obtained from DOL and U.S. Census Bureau statistics (e.g., urban/rural, unemployment rate, business closings).

These analyses will provide an overall characterization of RESEA-eligible claimants during the study period. In addition, we will implement tests to confirm that random assignment of RESEA-eligible claimants into the study group (control and Treatment) was accurately implemented. We will conduct the following specific analyses:

- Comparisons of observable characteristics – We will compare the means of all available claimant characteristics, as listed above, between the treatment groups and the control group. T-tests will be used to assess if there are any statistically significant differences between the treatment group and the control group. If randomization was done correctly, we will not detect any such differences.
- Multivariate regression models – We will create linear regression models to estimate the likelihood of being assigned to the treatment group relative to being assigned to the control group. For example, to examine if there are differences in characteristics between the treatment group and control group, we will estimate a model where the dependent variable is the likelihood of being assigned to the treatment group and the control group, including all available claimant characteristics. If randomization was done effectively, none of the estimated parameters will be statistically significant.

Model Specifications

KPMG will conduct regression analysis with a unique model specification and dependent variable for each research question. While the model type and dependent variable change for each research question, all three models have four independent terms in comment: treated, covariates, and FE. Here treated is an indicator variable that is equal to 1 for UI recipients that participated in the RESEA program (the treatment group) and 0 for UI recipients that were not included in RESEA (the control group). Covariates are a vector of individual-level characteristics such as age, gender, education, industry, and UI benefit amount. These are used only as controls in the models as these demographic and economic characteristics are unrelated to the research questions. Third, each equation includes an FE term, which represents office-month fixed effects. These fixed effects are added to the model to control for both geographic and temporal trends in the labor market in order to better isolate the effects of the RESEA program. Finally, each regression model includes an error term ε.

RQ #1 pertains to RESEA's effect on unemployment duration and is the simplest model. The dependent variable is duration, which is an integer-valued variable of the participant's total weeks of approved unemployment compensation claims. The model is given by the basic Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) equation with fixed effects:

$$duration = \beta_0 + \beta_1\, treated + \beta_2\, covariates + FE + \varepsilon$$

The parameter of interest is β1, which is interpreted as the marginal effect of RESEA participation on the number of weeks of unemployment, directly answering RQ#1.

For RQ#2, the dependent variable employed is an indicator variable that is equal to 1 if the individual is employed following their UI period and 0 otherwise. Because the dependent variable is binary, the model for employment outcomes will be a logistic regression (logit model) of the form:

$$\ln\left(\frac{employed}{1 - employed}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1\, treated + \beta_2\, covariates + FE + \varepsilon$$

The logistic regression is a non-linear transformation of the linear regression that has several attractive features for binary dependent features. Most notably, the fitted values of the employed variable are bounded between 0 and 1, allowing them to be interpreted as the probability of employment for a given individual. The probability of employment for an individual is given by the equation:

$$\mathrm{P}(employed) = (1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1\, treated + \beta_2\, covariates)})^{-1}$$

Similar to the unemployment duration model, the coefficient of interest is β1. However, the interpretation is not as straightforward with the logit transformation. Instead, the odds of an individual who went through RESEA being employed after their UI period will be e^{β_1} times the odds of an individual who did not complete RESEA. For example, if β1 = 0.13, then $e^{\beta_1} = e^{0.13} = 1.14$. This would mean that going through the RESEA program would result in 14% higher odds of being employed following the receipt of UI. This analysis will be conducted for employment in both two and four quarters following the initial UI claim in order to test the longevity of the employment effect of RESEA.

For RQ#3, the dependent variable, wages, is a continuous variable that comprises an individual's quarterly wage total both prior to and following their UI claim. The earnings analysis will compare the wage outcomes of the treatment group to those of the control group using a difference-in-difference (DID) regression model in order to account for variation in earnings prior to the initial UI claim. The model specifications will be:

$$wages = \beta_0 + \beta_1\, treated + \beta_2\, post + \beta_3\, (treated \times post) + \beta_4\, covariates + FE + \varepsilon$$

The dataset will include observations both before and after the UI period, with the post variable as an indicator that is equal to 1 if the wage is from the post-UI time period and 0 otherwise. Here, β1 is the time trend in the control group, which is the difference between pre- and post-UI period wages within the control group. B2 is the difference in wages between the control and treatment groups prior to the UI period. The variable of interest is β3, which is the difference in difference terms. This means that it is the difference between the pre- and post-UI period wages difference for the control group and the pre- and post-UI period wages difference for the treatment group. This is, therefore, the marginal effect of RESEA participation on expected wages after the UI period.

Baseline Equivalence Testing

Before conducting the primary analysis, baseline equivalence testing will be conducted to ensure that the treatment and control groups are similar in terms of observable characteristics. The baseline equivalence testing will compare the means of key covariates between the treatment and control groups using a t-test of a chi-square test, depending on the type of variable. If there are significant differences between the groups, the covariates will be included in the DID model and control variables.

Minimum Detectable Impacts

The expected power of the study depends on the sample size, effect size, and significance level. Based on previous studies, we are interested in detecting an effect size of 5% at a significance level of 0.05. Based on preliminary data analysis using 2019 RESEA participant data, such a study would require a sample size of 60,000 to achieve a power of 0.80 for the earnings change calculation. An RCT with a two-year study period would well exceed this sample size, so there would be no issue detecting an effect size of 5%. The true power will depend on the sample size, which is, in turn, dependent on the study period selected by the Commonwealth.

Multiple Comparisons Problem

To address the issues of multiple comparisons, we will adjust the significance level using the Bonferroni correction. This correction controls the familywise error rate by dividing the original significance level by the number of comparisons. In this study, we will conduct multiple hypothesis tests for four different outcomes (UC duration, employment rate at both 6 and 12 months post initial claim and wages). We will set the corrected significance level at 0.05/4 = 0.125 to maintain a familywise error rate of 0.05.

Implementation Study Evaluation Design

The implementation study is intended to assess how the RESEA program is being delivered to its participants across the state. The study focuses on the variations in how the program service delivery was intended, compared to how it is being delivered, as well as potential differences in service delivery across CareerLinks. This would include a review of the content, structure, process, and time spent on the services provided. While the implementation study will not measure outcomes for participants, it provides important context for interpreting the findings from the impact study described above.

Requirements for RESEA Interviews

According to UIPL 13-15, DOL mandates that states provide participants with a one-on-one interview in which the claimant and the advisor work on the development of an individual reemployment plan. In these interviews, the labor market information provided must be specific to the claimant's area of experience, and the reemployment plan must go over the training goals, assigned work search activities, and any necessary referrals. Further, if states offer subsequent RESEAs, they must report assessments of a claimant's unemployment compensation eligibility and whether the claimant needs further assistance with a work search.

At the same time, UIPL 13-15 provided states with flexibility in determining who is selected for RESEA (with some exceptions: claimants with a set return-to-work date and those seeking work only through a union hiring hall cannot be selected), in staffing RESEA services (as long as the staff is UI, Wagner-Peyser, or WIOA), and in choosing to provide subsequent RESEAs. This latitude has allowed for significant variation to arise in how states structure their RESEA interviews, and at least part of this variation is likely coming from decisions made by state agencies to reflect the state's unique needs. We expect this to be a particularly important area to examine in the implementation study.

CLEAR's Implementation Study Review Guidelines

The Department of Labor published some study guidelines that apply to implementation studies:

> *"CLEAR's implementation study guidelines apply to studies that examine the development and operation of a program, policy, or intervention. An implementation study may focus on documenting how services are being delivered on the ground and/or assessing whether a program or intervention is being implemented as planned. Similar to descriptive studies, CLEAR's review of implementation studies does not result in a rating of study quality. Rather, CLEAR assesses the implementation study's technical qualities to determine whether the findings reported are appropriate for the study design and to identify the study's strengths and limitations. Specifically, CLEAR's guidelines for implementation studies assess the appropriateness of the study design, sampling strategy, data sources, data collection, and analysis for addressing the research questions. CLEAR also reviews whether the implementation study findings are aligned with the research questions and appropriate in relation to the study design and data."* (CLEAR 2014).

Research Questions

The primary objectives of the implementation study are to: 1) develop an in-depth understanding of how the program was conceptualized and implemented, 2) explore its successes and challenges throughout the life of the program, and 3) explore potential variations in service delivery across CareerLinks. The findings from this

study can be used to develop recommendations for improving program implementation and to contextualize the results from the impact study.

From an initial review of Pennsylvania's local operating procedures, there were some variations in the following aspects across CareerLinks:

- Training: There is no standardized ongoing training that is provided statewide to advisors and supervisors. When there are major changes to the system or process, there are guides provided to the local offices; however, any further training for staff is the responsibility of the local offices.
- Feedback from participants: There is no formalized or statewide process for receiving feedback from RESEA participants. Some CareerLink offices have surveys and suggestion boxes available for participants, while others do not.
- Number of contacts with participants: There is a requirement for mandatory 30-day and 60-day follow-ups with participants; however, some advisors make additional contact with participants at key points of their participation in the program (e.g., before the meetings, after the mandatory workshop scheduled date, etc.).
- PSM format: All CareerLinks are required to offer both virtual and in-person options for service meetings; however, there are local offices that conduct a vast majority of their meetings online, while others have participants who prefer in-person appointments.

Sample research questions:

1) Is the RESEA program implemented as intended?
2) How is the intervention operating in practice?
3) Who are the RESEA program participants that are served across PA's CareerLinks?
4) Which mandatory follow-up activities do RESEA participants engage with the most and least?
5) What reemployment services and referrals do participants find helpful?
6) Are there variations in program service delivery for in-person vs. online individual meetings?
7) What activities are completed during PSMs, and do these activities vary by site?
8) What best practices do Career Advisors engage in for successful RESEA program service delivery?
9) How do variations in training approaches across different CareerLinks impact the effectiveness of the RESEA program?
10) Does the frequency of contact between advisors and participants affect the outcomes of the RESEA program? If so, how?
11) How does participant feedback (where it is available) inform the success or challenges of the RESEA program?
12) What are the challenges encountered by CareerLink offices in implementing the RESEA program, and how do these vary across different sites?
13) How do participants perceive the usefulness and effectiveness of the mandatory workshops?
14) Does the choice (virtual vs. in-person) of service meeting format impact participant engagement and program outcomes?
15) What are the implications of not having a standardized state-wide training or feedback process on the implementation and outcomes of the RESEA program?
16) How does the lack of standardized state-wide training impact the quality of service delivery by CareerLink offices?

Data Sources and Collection

This section presents the methodologies and procedures KPMG will employ to execute all data collection activities for the implementation study. These activities include site visits, reviews of program documents, and

focus groups with program participants. KPMG's data collection efforts for the implementation study will analyze research questions under major areas: program context; program components and service delivery strategy; program participation; partnerships; program management, funding, and sustainability; program outcomes; and program replicability and lessons learned.
KPMG will gather data for the implementation evaluation from a variety of sources:

1. **Interviews with Stakeholders:** KPMG will conduct stakeholder interviews that can offer invaluable insights into the program's operational realities and participant experiences. These interviews could be structured as one-on-one interviews for a detailed exploration or as focus groups for generating a diversity of perspectives and facilitating discussions. Stakeholders include program implementers, administrators, and the participants (claimants) themselves.
2. **Observations:** The team from KPMG will conduct observations to gain firsthand experience of the program's implementation. This process will involve navigating the program's online modules and self-guided portions as a participant would. Observations will also extend to several PSMs and workshops to fully understand the program's components, dynamics, and interactions.
3. **Review of Program Documents:** KPMG will review program-related documents to gain insights into how the program is conceptualized and intended to be delivered. This may include program manuals, policy documents, training guides, program schedules, and participant handbooks.
4. **Administrative Data:** KPMG will analyze administrative data to understand the characteristics of the populations served, local office characteristics, and services used by claimants. This data can provide valuable descriptive statistics and be instrumental in sampling CareerLink offices for the study. Administrative data may include attendance records, service usage logs, participant demographic data, and program performance metrics.

Collecting data from these diverse sources, KPMG will enable a comprehensive and multi-dimensional evaluation of the RESEA program's implementation across Pennsylvania's CareerLinks. Combining qualitative and quantitative data will ensure the study's findings are robust, accurate, and nuanced.

Planned Activities

Given that the Commonwealth has over 60 offices that provide RESEA services, it would be most efficient and cost-effective to use purposive sampling to identify the local offices that will be included in the study. Using this approach will help to increase the likelihood that the offices chosen are representative of the program statewide.
To complete the implementation study there are some fundamental tasks that will be completed to ensure the success of the study:

- Review program documentation
- Collect and analyze administrative data
- Create the sampling approach for choosing the local offices to be included in the study
- Identify the stakeholders of interest for the study (advisors, supervisors, executive staff, and claimants)
- Identify the optimal instrument to employ for data collection for the different stakeholders
- Work with DLI to ensure that the appropriate staff at each level are identified before conducting the state site visits.
- Create a pre-interview guide to gather information about topics of interest
- Create the interview guide for interviews and focus groups
- Create other data collection tools that would be used for stakeholders (e.g., survey for claimants)

In creating the data collection instrument, different interview formats should be considered to determine what would be most beneficial for gathering the needed information from the stakeholders. It is also important to

consider the timeline, cost of participation, and possible barriers to involvement. Below are some details to consider for data collection formats.

- Anonymous Responses vs. Identified Participants: There are pros and cons to anonymizing the responses that will have to be considered and factored into how the interviews are structured and responses recorded. Anonymous interviews may make it more likely for staff to freely express program shortcomings and grievances; however, by identifying participants, it becomes possible to follow up on the issues raised to determine if they have been adequately resolved. Anonymous responses may also result in responses that discuss issues that are not pertinent to the implementation study, or which reduce accountability. Regardless of the decision made, DLI should ensure that staff are aware of the purpose of the interview and ensure there is no fear of adverse consequences due to their honest participation in the interviews.
- One-on-One Interviews vs. Focus Groups: Conducting one-on-one interviews will enable staff to provide detailed responses to the questions asked and provided all staff interviewed with a chance to speak up. The drawback of one-on-one interviews is that they require more time to complete and, in particular, if conducted on-site, may require multiple visits across days or weeks, which will extend the length of the data collection process.

Planning and Conducting Site Visits

KPMG has developed and honed the processes for preparing for and conducting site visits over many implementation process evaluations. KPMG's site visit approach has three main parts: preparing for the visit, conducting the visit, analyzing data, and writing the site visit reports.

Preparing for the Visits. KPMG begins by creating a site visit protocol that standardizes high-quality data collection by providing an organized, detailed list of questions and topics to explore during each visit. To gain the insights needed to develop a comprehensive protocol, KPMG staff will review all relevant and available materials from DLI or the local offices. The team will then develop the protocol with attention to the specific research objectives and questions of the evaluation. KPMG will assign experienced staff members to the two-person teams that conduct each visit and will train them in using the protocol. KPMG anticipates conducting a half-day training session consisting of a program overview, general site visit guidelines, and a detailed review of the protocol.

Conducting the Visits. Prior to visiting the site, the site-visit team identifies the key stakeholders to interview. The first step is to reach out to the program administrator and manager at DLI or the local offices to identify key stakeholders and program partners. During the site visit, the team collects data using semi-structured interviews, observations of relevant program activities and training, and a review of program and policy materials. In the second and third site visits, the team also conducts focus groups with claimants enrolled in the RESEA program. Team members will use the protocols to guide discussions and interviews, with one member leading and the other taking detailed notes. With interviewee's permission, the team will record the interviews, which will be used for later reference as needed.

Analysis and Reporting

Following the site visits, KPMG will apply a systematic approach using content analysis to study the data from interviews and documents reviewed during the site visits (Thomas 2006). The site visitor who takes notes will transcribe them into electronic format as quickly as possible after the meeting to minimize recall error, using the interview recordings as needed. To analyze the site visit data, KPMG will apply an inductive data coding strategy,

in which the content of the data drives the identification of themes or coding. For example, when analyzing data from the semi-structured interviews, we will initially categorize the data at the question level. Based on response content, we will create secondary categories, using a hierarchical structure. As more data are reviewed, analysts will adjust the categories to ensure they are inclusive and exhaustive (see Exhibit 4). Using this approach, the team looks for key issues, challenges, best practices, and solutions to problems. The site visit team then collaborates to write a detailed report organized around the main research objectives, which describes the site visit and presents the site visit findings along with recommendations for program improvement.

Exhibit 4: Qualitative Data Analysis Methodology

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Read through text data	**Identify specific segments of information**	**Label segments to create categories**	**Reduce overlap and redundancy among categories**	**Create a framework with the most important categories**
Many pages of text	Many segments of text	Initial list of categories	Consolidated list of categories	Categories relevant to the research questions

Risks and Challenges

Threats to Validity and Implementation Challenges

There are several potential threats to the validity of the study results, in addition to institutional or technical challenges that may delay evaluation. Evaluators will need to account for each of these initially apparent threats during the evaluation process while simultaneously remaining cognizant of any additional threats that may arise. Below are three sample challenges: an internal threat to validity, an external threat to validity, and an implementation challenge.

(1) **Maintaining participant levels required for an RCT.** For an RCT procedure to maintain randomized assignment between the treatment and control groups without resulting in ethical challenges, the number of eligible potential RESEA participants for each geography must exceed that respective CareerLink's participant cap. If changes to the minimum profiling score or the expansion of the number of weeks of eligibility after the initial claim do not allow Pennsylvania to meet this requirement, it will result in the necessity of a QED, which is a lower evidentiary standard and would result in additional threats to validity. This is an internal threat to validity because it would affect how changes in outcome variables are attributable to RESEA participation.

(2) **Applicability to UCX recipients.** Statutory and political prioritization of UCX recipients and other veterans in the RESEA program may result in the exclusion of this population from the randomization procedure. If the evaluators are unable to randomly assign UCX participants to the control group, the study population would be shifted to only consider non-UCX participants. This would mean that the results would be more narrow as they would not apply to the entire population of RESEA participants. This is an external threat to validity because it affects the ability of evaluators to apply their results to the overall population.

(3) **Implementation of randomization.** Program administrators and political actors likely expect that the RESEA program will always prioritize the participants with the highest profiling scores. This runs counter to the randomization procedure as the implementation of an RCT would require that a lower-scoring individual (that is, one whom the profiling algorithm deems to be comparatively less likely to exhaust their benefits) would receive a seat in the RESEA program in place of a higher scoring individual. This may lead to pushback or technical implementation challenges. This is an implementation challenge because it affects the evaluators' ability to conduct the trial.

Human Subjects Protection and Data Security

The evaluation will be reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to any randomization or data collection activities. The evaluator will provide the IRB with detailed information regarding the study design, the information that will be collected, how that information will be used, and security protocols (such as only handling de-identified data) to protect the subjects' information.

Appendix A: Alternative QED Design

In the case of an impact study using historical data, no randomization occurred to create a statistically valid control group. Instead, we would recommend selecting a historical baseline period for observational analysis and using regression to estimate the effectiveness of the RESEA program. This is known as Quasi-Experimental Design (QED). Because no randomization occurred, we will look at the entire dataset and retroactively construct control groups for our treatment of interest. For this analysis, we have three populations of interest:

- The treatment group of UC recipients that were selected for and completed the RESEA program;
- The first control group of UC recipients who were not selected for the RESEA program; and
- The second control group of UC recipients who were selected for the RESEA program but failed to complete the program.

The lack of a randomized control group means that a comparison to any one of these groups does not produce an unbiased estimate of the effects of the RESEA program. This is because there are underlying variables related to the selection into these groups that may be correlated with employment outcomes. However, by defining membership in one of these groups as a categorical variable, we are able to use the population as a regressor in regressions with each of the economic outcome variables as the dependent variable, producing a crude estimate of the marginal effect of RESEA selection and program completion.

These estimates will be improved by applying propensity score matching to create a QED. Our dataset will include all of the underlying information used by the profiling algorithm to select RESEA participants, along with additional demographic and economic variables related to each individual. By using these additional variables, the evaluator can estimate the probability of a particular individual being selected for the RESEA program and match up actual RESEA participants with similar individuals who were not selected for the program. Then the evaluator will be able to estimate the effect of the RESEA program using the difference between the actual RESEA participants and this statistically-matched control group.

Propensity scoring matching relies on having treatment and control groups with overlapping observable characteristics. The effectiveness of this approach will hinge on the completeness of the demographic and economic data provided by DLI as well as how strongly these variables are already accounted for in the profiling algorithm. For example, if the profiling algorithm were to heavily weight variation in all of the variables for which data are available, it would not be feasible to construct a statistically-matched control due to a lack of similarity in these underlying characteristics between the RESEA participants and those not selected for the program.

For a comprehensive program evaluation, we would recommend avoiding the limitations posed by QED procedures by conducting the randomized control trial method outlined in Section 2. While QED methods and propensity score matching can mitigate the underlying bias produced by non-randomized sorting of the population, these biases are unlikely to be entirely eliminated. Only an RCT can effectively filter out the noise to produce unbiased estimates of the causative effect of the RESEA program on economic outcome variables and produce a high level of evidence according to DOL and CLEAR standards.

Appendix B: Bibliography

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