FOCUS AREA: Reemploying the Unemployed

COVID-19 devastated the U.S. labor market with unequal impacts across groups, regions, and industries. Given the sudden nature of the crisis, Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims shattered records. The weekly number of individuals receiving benefits rose exponentially from 2 million in early March to 30 million in June, putting extreme pressure on states’ UI trust funds. A significant number of these individuals have permanently lost their jobs and will require additional education and training to find new positions and succeed in the new economy. Thus, assisting the unemployed in returning to work is pivotal to manage UI duration and UI trust fund outflows.

It has become vital that state and local agencies use their data to address these reemployment challenges. Local workforce leaders require timely and relevant information on characteristics of UI claimants, dynamics of UI receipt, and employment opportunities within local industries. This information is useful in effectively counseling job seekers and strategically targeting scarce public training funds.

Through the Applied Data Analytics training program, states in the Midwest Collaborative began to harness the potential of their weekly UI claims data by creating a powerful, new reemployment tool, the Unemployment to Reemployment Dashboard. It visualizes data on new and continuing UI claims by week, geographical location, industry, and the characteristics of the UI claimants. The Dashboard encompasses data of labor markets spanning multiple states, thanks to the data sharing agreements between states. As the economic cycle progresses, states will add training providers, RESEA, TANF, and other data to derive insights from effective reemployment achieved through program participation.
How did the Applied Data Analytics training program help?

1. **Trained State Agency Staff**
   The Coleridge Initiative’s Applied Data Analytics program provided participants with **hands-on training in modern data analytics**. The curriculum covered data management, data analysis, machine learning, inference, privacy protection, and the ethical use of data. Participants used real-world data focused on a just-in-time policy concern: reemploying the unemployed. State teams included both technical and program staff, which helped bridge knowledge gaps across disciplines and strengthened relationships.

2. **Enabled States to Create New Products**
   The Applied Data Analytics classes are an “innovation sandbox.” Participants explored ideas and analytical techniques with colleagues from within their state as well as colleagues from across the country. This rich network of individuals and teams generated new research ideas with a common research focus. The result is the **Unemployment to Reemployment Dashboard**, an innovative, multi-state data product.

3. **Provided a Secure Place for States to Share Data**
   The Coleridge Initiative’s Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF) enabled state agencies to **share real-world data securely and safely**. During training, state agency staff learned how this federally-certified, secure platform applies a “five safes” framework – safe project, safe people, safe settings, safe data and safe output – to ensure data are protected.

   “This environment awakens you to all the datasets, especially those that can be linked across states. And because states have similar policy questions, we can reduce duplicative work. We can share code and methodologies and get to studies and outcomes faster.”

   - State LMI Director, March 2019

   Over 500 people from more than 100 state agencies successfully completed an Applied Data Analytics program over the past three years. Together they initiated over 100 exploratory research projects focusing on critical policy concerns.

   “The analytic possibilities presented by the ADRF have great potential to improve our understanding of fundamental issues facing our state. It could lead to policy decisions that are much more informed than has previously been possible.”

   - State LMI Director, August 2020

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** [coleridgeinitiative.org/training/](http://coleridgeinitiative.org/training/)