

## **Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefit Operations Self-Assessment Tool:**

### ***Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA) Under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program***

This self-assessment review of the state's Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA) program area will examine TRA initial claims processes as well as program performance. The reviewer will consult with appropriate staff regarding each operational element, as necessary, to ensure accurate and complete information is reported. This will include Unemployment Insurance (UI) administrators, IT managers, fiscal officers, office/call center managers, claims supervisors and coordinators or staff.

Upon completion of this review, the results should be shared with UI administrators, and appropriate program manager(s) and supervisors. The self-assessment findings can provide a good analysis of the state's TRA program operations and can be used to drive process and program-improvement initiatives.

A comments section is provided for each operational element, which the reviewer should use to document any observations regarding issues identified related to that specific operational element. This space may also be used to provide any additional information relating to a specific question in this self-assessment document. In doing so, the reviewer should reference the specific question by number and insert the additional information related to that question.

In addition, a concluding comments section is provided at the end of the self-assessment instrument to capture any strengths identified by the reviewer in this program area which could constitute a successful practice(s) to be shared with other states; any issues identified by the reviewer in the program area that adversely impacts the state's performance and to identify any possible corrective actions to address the issue; and general comments about the program area. The reviewer can provide information here that Federal reviewers and state UI administrators and managers can use to assess program operations and the state's effectiveness in providing quality services in this program area.

***Save your entries regularly as you complete the review and when you close the self-assessment to ensure your answers are saved.***

## SECTION 1: Procedures, Policies and Confidentiality

The purpose of this section is to review the policies and procedures provided by the agency for staff to use in operating the TRA program. These are the written (e.g., in hard-copy, electronically, or both formats) standards, instructions, and guidelines that staff regularly use in the operation of the program. The reviewer may utilize resources that include manuals, handbooks, desk aids, computer help screens, training guides, organized collections of procedures or policies, or other readily accessible instructions which can help staff do their work correctly. Instructions will normally include general information such as compilations of relevant laws and regulations, including the TAA regulations at [20 CFR 617](#), as well as detailed instructions for carrying out individual duties in the agency consistent with [20 CFR 618](#). The reviewer may need to examine all relevant instructions.

The reviewer will document whether the state has policies and procedures sufficient to provide guidance and instruction to staff involved with the TRA initial and continued claims process. Existing policies and procedures should be examined to determine whether they are up-to-date and address all law changes, organizational changes and technology changes that occurred during the review period.

### Helpful Info.

*Question 1:* The reviewer will verify that current TAA/TRA administrative guidance is readily accessible to TRA staff (e.g., 20 CFR 617 and other pertinent TAA/TRA program letters/guidance, such as Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGL) [05-15](#), [10-11](#), [22-08](#) and [11-02](#)).

*Question 8:* The reviewer will review the state's procedures to ensure that the claimant's eligibility for regular UI is determined before their TRA entitlement is established.

*Question 9:* The reviewer will verify that the state's policies and procedures ensure the state is adhering to the definition of "adversely affected workers" as eligible TRA claimants as provided in [20 CFR 617.3\(c\)](#).

*Question 13:* The reviewer will determine whether the state's policies and procedures provide a method to identify individuals covered by a USDOL TAA certification to inform them of potential benefits consistent with the requirements of [20 CFR 617.4](#).

*Question 14:* The reviewer will determine if the state has policies and procedures for *contacting* covered individuals. The previous question (Question 13) asked about whether there are policies and procedures for *identifying* covered individuals.

*Comment:* The reviewer should verify that *Question 26, Section 1 (about the filing methods used for TRA claims) in the Intake-Initial Claims functional area set of questions has been answered correctly.*

## SECTION 2: Training

Managers/employees should possess and maintain a level of expertise which enables them to accomplish their assigned duties. Training systems should be sufficient to ensure that personnel understand and perform their duties properly. When reviewing training systems, the reviewer should consult with the state's training unit/staff and the office/call center managers and examine formal training procedures (e.g., the training is conducted using an established schedule and using set guidelines to make judgments about the quality of work being produced). The state should have procedures for identifying general and specific training needs, for developing a training curriculum and training materials and for delivering training as needs are identified.

### Helpful Info.

Question 5: The reviewer should document all technology or operational changes that were implemented during the review period that affected TRA claimstaking processes.

Question 6: The reviewer will assess the types of technology used by staff in taking and processing TRA claims and indicate whether the state provides training to staff for the technology they will use to take TRA claims (e.g., cell/satellite phones, tablets, laptops, etc.).

## SECTION 3: Workload Analysis / Management Controls

The reviewer will examine state's ability to respond and handle TRA claims workloads, particularly through periods of unforeseen increases in TRA claims. The reviewer will also review the methods used by the state to manage TRA workloads to ensure the state's ability to provide timely benefit payments. The reviewer will interview office/call center managers, performance management staff and program coordinators to document the state's practices for managing its TRA claims.

### Helpful Info.

Question 2: The reviewer will identify how often the state generates reports on TRA claims/backlogs, if applicable.

## SECTION 4: Performance Management

The reviewer will examine the state's practices for monitoring program performance and compliance with Federal and state law and regulations. If the state has a performance management unit, the reviewer should consult with performance management staff in addition to UI administrators, office/call center managers and initial claims supervisors when completing this section.

### Helpful Info.

Question 2a: If the answer to Question 2 is yes, the reviewer will document the areas of the state's TRA program activity and performance that are monitored and the methods used.

## SECTION 5: Information Technology (IT)

When completing this section of the self-assessment the reviewer should consult with UI and IT administrators and office/call center managers. IT projects relating to TRA claims that were completed during the review period and any identified unmet IT needs will be detailed. The reviewer will assess the IT department's delivery of programming and technical support to the TRA claims program area. The state's disaster recovery plan and its contingency planning for implementation of emergency UI programs with a short lead time will be documented here.

### Helpful Info.

Question 1b: The reviewer should describe any major IT projects that impacted TRA claims that were conducted during the review period and provide information regarding the project status and, if completed, the success of the project.

Question 4a: If the state had unmet IT needs related to the TRA initial claims system, the reviewer should document the needs that were not met and the impact it had on program performance, if any.

## SECTION 6: Claimant / Employer Access & Communication

The reviewer will examine the state's filing methods for TRA initial claims. Methods used must comply with requirements set forth in Federal law, including regulations and guidance regarding accessibility. The reviewer will consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers and initial claims supervisors when completing this section of the self-assessment.

### Helpful Info.

Question 3: The reviewer will document the methods used by the state to publicize options available for filing TRA claims. If a listed filing method is not used, the reviewer should select the "N/A" response.

Question 8: The reviewer will identify the methods used to obtain forms (for information or fact-finding) from claimants for each initial claim filing method listed.

## SECTION 7: Operational Efficiency / Resource Allocation

Through interviews with UI administrators and office/call center managers the reviewer will determine whether the state has allocated sufficient resources to training, facilities, staff, etc. to support program operations. The reviewer will identify efficiencies and automation the state has used to improve performance and provide better service to the public.

### Helpful Info.

Question 3b: Document any process improvements the state implemented for the TRA program during the review period that were the result of customer surveys or focus group recommendations.

Question 4a: The reviewer will report any business process improvements for the TRA program that are planned for implementation, including the date they are expected to be implemented.

## SECTION 8: Staffing

The reviewer will examine organizational changes that occurred during the review period, if any, and their effect on the state's ability to manage its TRA claims and benefit payments. The reviewer should consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers and the state agency's human resource manager when completing this section of the self-assessment.

### Helpful Info.

Question 1c: If the state has no TRA coordinator, the reviewer will document the state's plans for managing the coordinator's responsibilities, or otherwise explain why there is no state TRA coordinator (e.g., no TAA/TRA activities).

## SECTION 9: Fiscal Management

The reviewer should consult with UI administrators, office/call center managers and the state agency's fiscal officer to determine whether the state's practices for managing its grants are in compliance with Federal and state law and regulations.

### Helpful Info.

Question 1: The reviewer will describe the methods used by the state to ensure that TRA administrative funds remain within the total funding obligation from USDOL.

Question 2: The reviewer should review [OMB Circular A-102](#) to determine whether fiscal reporting for TRA claims activity is in place and current in accordance with the Circular.

Question 3: The reviewer should review [20 CFR 617.57](#) to determine whether statistical reporting for TRA claims activity is in place and current in accordance with the law.

## **SECTION 10: Concluding Summary Comments**

The reviewer will use the Concluding Summary Comments section to highlight the state's strengths and weaknesses that impact the Trade Readjustment Allowances program area and to identify issues that have not been addressed in any other section of the self-assessment. These comments are intended to provide Federal reviewers and the state's UI administrators with additional insight into these program areas, focusing on methods that have proven to be successful and can be capitalized upon or areas where corrective measures may be needed.

The first comment area provides the reviewer an opportunity to share any examples of good and/or exemplary operations in this program area after reviewing each operational element. The reviewer can use this space to identify any policy, procedure or operation that would constitute a successful practice that can be shared with other states.

The second comment area provides the reviewer an opportunity to document issues detected during the review that are having an adverse impact on the program area, affecting the state's performance, ability to meet performance standards or customer service. It is also a place to recommend corrective actions for the agency's leadership to consider implementing.

The final comment area in this section provides the reviewer space to share any additional comments, concerns or observations regarding the state's operations in this program area.