

Dept. of Workforce Development: Receives \$3 million unemployment insurance navigator grant

Posted on Thursday, Jun 16, 2022

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MADISON - The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) are partnering to increase equitable access to Wisconsin's unemployment insurance (UI) program after DWD received \$3 million in competitive grant funding from the federal government.

Through the UI Navigator program, DWD and UMOS will support improved access for those shown to face barriers to UI benefit receipt, including migrant and seasonal farmworkers workers, individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals living in rural areas as well as urban areas such as Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha, the Fox Valley area, and Green Bay who have been historically underserved. This includes people adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality, including workers who are low paid, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indians, and other persons of color. Additionally, UMOS will station staff in the rural Northwestern part of Wisconsin.

"Wisconsin's UI program supports stability in our labor market that benefits employers, local economies, and people who have lost jobs through no fault of their own as they seek new employment," DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek said. "Through this grant, DWD will partner with a proven winner in UMOS and increase equitable access to much-needed UI benefits for individuals with limited English proficiency, as well as those facing challenges with computer and internet access, disabilities, and other barriers to obtaining UI benefits."

The UI Navigator program is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). DWD chose to partner with UMOS thanks to the organization's experience with

populations that have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty. UMOS will use proven practices including bilingual and multicultural staff to address Spanish language needs among the migrant and seasonal farmworker population. Hiring and employing staff that represent the individuals being served fosters trust and enhances communication and understanding of complex social programs and systems.

“We are excited about the opportunity to partner with DWD as this UI Navigator Program fits well with the UMOS mission of helping others help themselves move forward with their lives,” said Lupe Martinez, UMOS president and CEO. “UMOS will provide historically underserved, eligible workers, including migrant and seasonal farmworkers, tribal members and other communities of color, as well as limited English speakers, with information and assistance in accessing, applying, and navigating the UI benefits process.”

More information on the UI Navigator grants can be found on the [Department of Labor's website](#).