



**Request for Proposal
Behavioral Insights Contractor Support
for Projects
with State Unemployment Insurance Agencies**

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**Behavioral Insights RFP Webinar
February 2, 2022**

**Proposal Submission Date
March 1, 2022**

http://itsc.org/Pages/RFP_2022_01_24_behavioral_insights.aspx

Introduction and Purpose

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Integrity Center (Center) was established to develop “innovative UI program integrity strategies to reduce improper payments, prevent and detect fraud, and recover any improper payments made”.¹ The efforts of the Center are managed by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL).

One of the Center’s key tasks is the Behavioral Insights project. The purpose of this project is:

- (1) To introduce UI agencies to behavioral insights as a framework for addressing program problems driven by behaviors, and
- (2) To support states in using behavioral insights principles, methods, and strategies to improve UI program integrity.

The Center’s Behavioral Insights project is approaching a post-pandemic phase in which we anticipate more opportunities for direct engagement with states on behavioral projects. The Center is interested in identifying potential partners to work with and augment the Center project team in supporting states with these projects. Prospective partners should have deep expertise in applying behavioral science to improve outcomes in government programs.

Background

In the fall of 2018, USDOL asked the Center to take on a special project called “State Intensive Services” (SIS), which had the goal of reducing the national UI improper payment rate by providing concentrated support and guidance to ten states with high rates.² The Center’s Behavioral Insights project initially rolled out as a sub-project under SIS. Through the SIS effort, the Center team, which included subject matter experts and subcontracted behavioral insights consultants, conducted comprehensive on-site assessments to examine the states’ operational, administrative, technological, policy, and messaging practices. The Center team also developed recommendations to address the factors contributing to the root causes of UI improper payments in each state. The state would choose which recommendations they deemed feasible to implement, with robust implementation and evaluation support from the Center team. Included among each state’s recommendations were customized behavioral strategies.³ Most of the work towards the SIS states’ behavioral strategies was in progress in March 2020, when the COVID-19 Pandemic

¹ http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/UIPL/UIPL_28_12_Acc.pdf

² The statutory definition of an improper payment is “any payment that should not have been made or that was made in an incorrect amount under statutory, contractual, administrative, or other legally applicable requirements.” https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/improp_pay.asp

³ Although evaluated behavioral trials were recommended for all states, nearly all states chose to implement between one and three interventions as evaluated behavioral trials and a few as “consultations,” which were non-evaluated behavioral strategies based upon the behavioral science literature and best practices. One state (among the ten the Center worked with) implemented seven behavioral consultations, but no evaluated trials. One other state had not decided which recommendations to implement at the time the SIS project suspended work due to the pandemic.

interrupted business-as-usual throughout the United States. All direct work with states on SIS was suspended at that time, due to the Pandemic's impacts on UI programs.

The effort of the Center's Behavioral Insights project then shifted to developing the [Behavioral Insights Toolkit](#), a collection of resources within NASWA's [Knowledge Exchange Library](#). With the contracted assistance of behavioral consultant partners, the Center developed the Toolkit to help UI agencies apply the learnings of behavioral insights to their own states. The Toolkit, which launched in late October 2021, contains bespoke and curated articles, templates, and how-to information on foundational behavioral insights concepts and how to use them in a UI program.

To further advance states' understanding of behavioral insights, the Center is currently at work developing a Behavioral Insights Curriculum. This self-paced training will introduce learners to fundamental Behavioral Insights concepts and will also help to orient and support UI staff in using the Behavioral Insights Toolkit. The first module of the curriculum is expected to be released in early 2022, with four additional modules released on a rolling basis over the course of the year.

The Center recently announced that it is available to work with UI agencies that are interested in using Behavioral Insights. These services would be delivered by Center staff, possibly with the assistance of behavioral consultants contracted following this RFP. The Center proposed four supportive service options for UI agencies:

- 1) **Behavioral Insights Messaging Assessment** will provide up to 40 hours of review of agencies' UI communication materials. At the conclusion, the Center will provide a written report for the state, with recommendations for how the state could improve its communications using Behavioral Insights best practices.
- 2) **Behavioral Insights Messaging Support** will provide revisions to a defined scope of the agency's communication materials using Behavioral Insights best practices. This will include actual redesigns of communications, website documents, or other materials.
- 3) **Behavioral Insights Targeted Analysis** will examine UI agencies' program challenges from the behavioral perspective and would include a written report with recommendations for strategies that target claimant, employer, and/or staff behaviors contributing to program problems.
- 4) **Behavioral Insights Implementation Support** will supplement the Behavioral Insights Targeted Analysis with the development of material versions of behavioral strategies that the state could use with the target audience, along with implementation and evaluation support. This could include testing the effectiveness of the strategy, monitoring its roll-out, and developing a final evaluation report on the intervention outcomes. The final evaluation report also will provide guidance on considerations for scaling the implementation more broadly in the UI program.

In addition to the Center's four Behavioral Service options mentioned above, there are additional opportunities to provide behavioral support to states. The Center may opt to partner with behavioral consultants on these projects.

Equity Grants

[Unemployment Insurance Program Letter \(UIPL\) 23-21](#), entitled “Grant Opportunity for Promoting Equitable Access to Unemployment Compensation (UC) Programs”, provides state UI agencies with a non-competitive opportunity to receive federal funding to implement strategies that seek to promote equitable access to UI. As the UIPL explains, permissible uses of the grant funds may include (but are not limited to):

- Improving claimant communications;
- Improving claimant outreach;
- Measuring delivery of benefits and claimant experience;
- Improving customer service;
- Reducing backlogs;
- Facilitating entitlement to benefits;
- Business Process Analysis (BPA) for equity;
- BPA for first payment and/or first level appeal promptness;
- Expanding and improving collection of demographic data; and/or
- Hiring merit staff and/or securing contract support.

In the process of developing their grant applications (which were due to USDOL by December 31, 2021), some states reached out to the Center for information and assistance with how they might use behavioral insights in their proposed equity projects. As grants are awarded, individual states may seek to procure the Center’s help with implementation of their funded solutions. The Center, in turn, may sub-contract with behavioral consultants for assistance with these projects.

Tiger Team projects

USDOL also has made another federal funding opportunity⁴ available to states to participate in consultative assessments of UI systems and processes conducted by DOL-funded and -assembled Tiger Teams. The assessments seek to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Preventing, detecting, and recovering funds from fraud;
- 2) Promoting equitable access; and
- 3) Ensuring the timely payment of benefits, as well as activities to reduce workload backlogs, for all UC programs.

⁴ See UIPL 2-22, “Grant Opportunity to Support States Following a Consultative Assessment for Fraud Detection and Prevention, Promoting Equitable Access, and Ensuring the Timely Payment of Benefits, including Backlog Reduction, for all Unemployment Compensation (UC) Programs” at https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=6683.

At the conclusion of UI system and process assessments, Tiger Teams provide the participating state with recommendations for improvements, some of which may pertain to Behavioral Insights.⁵ USDOL then works with the state to determine which recommendations they will implement, and the state will use the funding provided by the UIPL 2-22 grant to implement the selected recommendations. Individual states may seek to procure the Center's help with implementation, and the Center, in turn, may opt to sub-contract with behavioral consultants for assistance with these projects.

Scope of Work: Behavioral Support Services

The contractor(s) selected in response to this RFP will support the development and execution of behavioral projects in states, as a collaborative partner with the Center. The contractor(s) will participate in meetings with the Center and state project teams, which may be conducted virtually or in-person. It is expected that the contractor(s) will review state documentation and data, and may be required to develop questionnaires and/or lead or participate in discussions to gather additional information relevant to behavioral analysis. The contractor(s) will provide subject matter expertise in the analysis of behavioral problems in UI integrity and in the design of behavioral interventions in state UI agencies. Following review and approval by the state and the Center, the contractor(s) may provide implementation and evaluation assistance, if required.

The exact course of work with individual states may vary, but may include:

- Researching and reviewing relevant behavioral science literature;
- Behavioral analysis and diagnosis;
- Developing proposed behavioral intervention(s) to address target issue(s);
- Developing intervention proposals or reports;
- Carrying out implementation of behavioral interventions or assisting the Center and/or state UI agency with implementation;
- Overseeing the evaluation and/or monitoring the impacts of the intervention(s) on targeted behavior changes, and recommending and executing or assisting with adjustments to the interventions, if/when needed;
- Producing a Final Evaluation Report for the behavioral intervention(s), including a written narrative of the outcomes and analysis of trial results; and/or
- Developing an article or other appropriate resource to be added to the [Behavioral Insights Toolkit](#) that provides an overview of the state context, intervention design, outcomes, lessons learned, and step-by-step guidance to assist with scaling the interventions to other states.

For some projects, Center staff also may participate in a secondary role to the contractor in the behavioral research, analysis, diagnosis, intervention and/or trial development, evaluation, and/or monitoring. The purpose of this type of collaboration would be to provide Center staff with

⁵ USDOL Tiger Teams include subcontractors with expertise in behavioral insights, who review states' UI systems and processes from a behavioral lens and make behaviorally-informed recommendations for improvements.

development opportunities that permit direct, hands-on experience with behavioral methods and trials, under the guidance of seasoned behavioral subject matter experts.

Contract Structure

Behavioral Support Services– Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) - (Multiple Awards)

The Center anticipates making multiple Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) awards to the offerors that represent the best value to the Center. The Center will then request Task Order Responses from the offerors awarded these IDIQ contracts to support specific efforts, as they become available. The Center will award a Task Order (TO) based upon the project approach outlined in the Task Order Response that represents a best fit for the Center and the project. Each TO awarded shall include a Statement of Work, estimated labor hours and pricing, total TO funding authorized, and a timeline for completion/deliverables, as appropriate; as well as any additional information needed. Each TO may be awarded using Firm Fixed-Price (FFP) or Time and Materials (T&M) pricing. A sample Task Order Response is included as Attachment (1).

The Center anticipates multiple awards in the base year, dependent on demand and available funding, as well as possible awards in each option year. If you intend to respond and are interested in receiving additional information on NASWA’s standard contractual Terms and Conditions, please submit a request to shallphillips@naswa.org.

Timeline

Project Activity	Timeline
Behavioral Insights RFP Webinar*	February 2, 2022
Final Clarification Questions	February 10, 2022
Questions and Responses Posted	February 15, 2022
Proposals Due	March 1, 2022
Offeror Presentations**	Week of March 14, 2022
Best and Final Offer Pricing (optional)	March 23, 2022
Award (anticipated)	March 31, 2022

* The Webinar is designed to afford the opportunity for offerors to formulate additional questions and provide their input/comments. Webinar registration, a PDF copy of this RFP, and RFP questions and answers will be posted at http://itsc.org/Pages/RFP_2022_01_24_behavioral_insights.aspx.

** Offeror presentations will be conducted remotely via Zoom with selected bidders determined to be within the competitive range for awards and may not include all bidders.

The Center reserves the right to invite offerors to participate in detailed discussions, clarifications to responses, and presentations/demonstrations after the proposal due date.

Proposal Submission Elements

Respondents are requested to address each of the items noted below.

1) Company Overview

Provide a brief description of your company, services, business size (revenue, employees, customers), and points of contact, including name, address, phone numbers, and email addresses.

Limit response to 1 page.

2) Project Summary Citations

Include up to three (3) project summary citations that outline your organization's experience in behavioral insights subject matter expertise, analysis, design, and/or trial support for public sector projects. For each project summary citation, please include the following: project summary, project size/scope, project budget, agency/organization, agency/organization point of contact, and email address. Cited organizations may be contacted as references for the purposes of this RFP.

Limit response to 3 pages for each citation, up to 3 citations.

3) Project Management Approach

Please provide information on your project management approach by addressing the points listed below:

- a) Please describe your organization's approach to the development and execution of behavioral insights projects.
- b) Outline your planned process for ongoing communications with the Center project manager and project team.
- c) How would your organization manage the approach to interacting with state UI agencies or stakeholders?
- d) How would personnel from your organization be selected to provide behavioral support services?
- e) How would your organization ensure the availability of key staff?

Limit response to no more than 5 pages.

4) Sample Task

Please complete Attachment (1) and Attachment (2).

Attachment (2) provides a Sample Task Order Request of the type that the Center might issue to the selected contractors for a response. Please note that the Task Order is hypothetical; RFP respondents are asked to review and respond thoughtfully, with what would be the organization’s actual response, if it were a true Task Order.

Please use the Attachment (1), Sample Task Order Response, to prepare your response to the Sample Task Order Request.

5) Key Personnel Resumes

Please provide up to five resumes (three pages maximum per resume) for key personnel to be assigned to the project. Resumes should include: name of staff likely to be assigned to projects if organization is awarded this RFP, labor category, and relevant work experience.

6) Pricing

Complete Attachment (3) Pricing Detail.

7) Additional information

Any additional information the contractor deems appropriate.

8) Minority and Women-Owned Business (MWBEs)

If your organization is an MWBE, or is partnering with an MWBE, please include documentation certification your/their status as such to receive up to five (5) bonus points.

Evaluation Criteria

The NASWA project team will evaluate all proposals using the following evaluation criteria and award base contracts to the contractor(s) that represents the best value for NASWA.

Criteria	Weight
Corporate Experience	25%
Project Management Approach	20%
Sample Task Order Response	20%
Key Personnel	20%
Pricing	15%
Bonus: Minority and Women-owned Businesses	Up to 5 bonus points

Proposal Description and Process

Participation in this RFP process is voluntary. All costs incurred in responding to, or in participating in this RFP, will be the responsibility of the vendors, or other third-party organizations participating in the RFP, and not that of the Center.

Confidentiality

Any document submitted in response to this RFP that contains confidential information must include a “Confidential” watermark on the appropriate pages. The confidential information must be clearly identifiable to the reader as confidential. All other information will not be treated as confidential. Note: All confidential information is for the Center’s use in evaluating proposals in response to this RFP.

Instruction and Response Guidelines

Responses to this RFP shall adhere to the page limits specified in the Proposal Structure above and must be in narrative form and provide details on contractor capabilities. Responses must be viewable with Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat and printable on 8.5” x 11” paper, must use 12-point font, the margins of each page should be at least ½ inch, and each page should contain a page number in the footer.

Submit responses electronically to shallphillips@naswa.org. Responses must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 1, 2022. Responses will be sent to the email address of the sender, along with any additional email addresses included in the submittal.

Telephone calls regarding this RFP will not be accepted. Questions may be submitted by email up to 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, February 10, 2022. The Center will post questions and answers to the RFP website.

ATTACHMENT 1: SAMPLE TASK ORDER RESPONSE

TASK ORDER 001 RESPONSE

Project Name

Scope:

Describe what you understand to be the scope of your organization’s effort on the project.

Describe proposed approach to project:

Describe how your organization proposes to carry out the effort.

Deliverables

List deliverables project requires.

Period of Performance:

List period of performance identified in project request.

Timeline

Outline estimated project timeline, in accordance with your organization’s proposed project approach.

Firm Fixed Price or Time & Materials: *(please circle one)*

Firm Fixed Price

Time & Materials

Proposed Staff Team

List the names and positions of staff to be assigned to the project if it is awarded to your organization.

Estimated Hours and Rate Table:

Complete table with estimates.

Labor Costs			
Labor Category	Hours	Labor Rate	Price

Indirect Costs			
TOTAL			

ATTACHMENT 2: SAMPLE TASK ORDER REQUEST

Behavioral Insights Task Order Request 001

Request

NASWA's Unemployment Insurance (UI) Integrity Center (Center) is seeking behavioral insights contractor support to assist the State of X Department of Labor (XDOL) with the implementation of an equity grant project.⁶ The grant awarded for this project was \$415,000, but subcontractors should anticipate that the amount of available funding for behavioral consultant support may be lower than the amount of the award to the state.

The Center will provide subject matter expertise in UI and project planning and oversight support. The Center also will obtain contract support for and manage the contract of one of our approved behavioral insights contractors to work on this effort. If you are interested in being considered for Work on this project, please send your completed Task Order Response (*Attachment 1*) to shallphillips@naswa.org by [date].

Project Description: Equity in Instruction Text

This project will assess instructional text included in XDOL's initial and continued unemployment claims applications and benefits correspondence (approximately 30 documents) to determine how well claimants understand what they are being asked to do. This information then would be used to revise the instruction language, if and where needed, with the goals of:

- a. Improving claimant communications, including by incorporating more plain language to improve readability
- b. Improving claimant outreach
- c. Improving customer service
- d. Improving timeliness of first payments and/or resolving nonmonetary issues

XDOL wants to conduct usability testing to assess how well claimants currently understand the instruction text included throughout the initial and continued claims applications and benefits correspondence. The testing sample should be representative of all demographics in State of X, including (but not limited to) women, individuals with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and individuals in rural, suburban, and urban locations. Usability testing may be supplemented by related research methods such as contextual or individual interviews, focus groups, surveys, and/or Mechanical Turk (MTurk), if deemed necessary.

Information from usability testing should be used to redesign the instructional language to improve readability and accessibility. Redesigned language should be evaluated in as rigorous a trial as the state is willing and able to accommodate. If trial outcomes demonstrate a positive effect, provide guidance to XDOL to assist in scaling the redesigned language.

⁶ Funding for these projects is provided by UI Equity Grant Funding 2021. Information on these grants can be accessed here: https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=7400.

Scope of Work

- Participate in regular virtual meetings with the Center and state project teams throughout duration of project. Project kick-off will include four four-hour meetings over 1 – 2 weeks. Weekly meetings of about an hour (longer, if/when needed) will be held thereafter.
- Gather and review state administrative data, system data, and operational information from meetings with XDOL staff.
- Develop written report describing plan for claimant usability testing and subsequent behavioral trial. Center staff should have the opportunity to review and provide feedback before the report is presented to XDOL. XDOL will have opportunity to weigh in on the workability of plan and may request changes to approach.
- Conduct claimant usability testing and implement behavioral trial, in accordance with plan approved by XDOL. (Travel to state may be permitted to facilitate).
- Throughout the project, submit monthly reports to Center and XDOL outlining:
 - Accomplishments
 - Planned tasks
 - Project challenges and risk mitigation efforts
 - Best practices, promising new strategies, and success stories
 - Outcome information (if available)
- Final evaluation report.

Period of Performance

June 6, 2022 – September 30, 2023

ATTACHMENT 3: PRICING DETAIL

Behavioral Insights Services – Time & Materials

Provide T&M hourly rates for the following labor categories for base period and all option periods. Please use a 3% escalation.

The labor category definitions describe the functional responsibilities and education and experience requirements for each labor category. These requirements are a guide to the types of experience and educational background of typical personnel in each labor category.

Education and experience may be substituted for each other. Each year of relevant experience may be substituted for 1 year of education, and vice versa. In addition, certifications, professional licenses, and vocational technical training may be substituted for experience or education with the written approval of the Center Project Manager.

Labor Category	Education & Experience	Labor Rate: Base Year	Labor Rate: Option Year 1	Labor Rate: Option Year 2	Labor Rate: Option Year 3	Labor Rate: Option Year 4	Labor Rate: Option Year 5

