

Customer Experience Principles

By: Sylvie Williams - June 30, 2023

In December 2021, President Biden's [Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government](#) directed federal agencies to use human-centered design (HCD) to improve customer experience, including for federal services administered at a State or local level and for services provided online. HCD emphasizes designing with a focus on the actual experience of the people who access those services. The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) [circular A11, Section 280, Managing Customer Experience and Improving Service Delivery](#), expands on the EO and establishes guidance for a more consistent, comprehensive, robust and deliberate government-wide approach to Customer Experience (CX). The guidance addresses how agencies should identify CX factors, including ease, efficiency, equity, and effectiveness, and establish and measure success criteria.

CX in Unemployment Insurance (UI)

CX is a critical issue in state unemployment insurance programs. Effective CX in the digital context occurs when unemployed workers can file an online UI application quickly, accurately and with minimal staff intervention. Strong CX uses self-service features to minimize frustration and delays for unemployed workers applying for benefits, and reduce the need for additional assistance in person or by phone. Good CX results in a well-informed claimant, a higher number of accurate and complete filings, and increased trust in the UI program, while also reducing administrative burden and waste for the state.

When people enter the unemployment insurance ecosystem, it is during a difficult time in their lives. Claimants need thoughtful and compassionate support in navigating this system so that they can continue to provide for themselves and the people around them. In the process of accessing their benefits, claimants often engage with their state UI office multiple times, and across different touchpoints, such as the state UI website, telephone calls, and in person visits. Good CX facilitates effective self-service, promotes efficient use of resources, and is critical to the ability of the unemployment insurance program to scale up in response to increases in demands during economic downturns. CX can also promote payment accuracy, as clearer instructions reduce claimant and employer mistakes and can reduce overpayments.

The US Department of Labor (The Department) is identifying the most relevant CX factors for Unemployment Insurance systems and developing goals and success metrics to help state agencies to improve and measure claimant interactions. These interactions could span multiple channels, including websites, chatbot, inter-active voice response (IVR) or in-office interactions. The length of time it takes to complete an application, how easy the instructions were perceived to be, how informed the claimant felt throughout the process or across these interactions, are all part of CX.

CX Principles

State UI programs are already incorporating aspects of CX principles into their digital UI systems. The Department is building a framework for these principles, and plan to provide states support, in the form of models to use as well as potential grants, to expand on that CX work. Our initial focus is on claimant portals, including application intake and claims status.

The following CX principles serve as a starting point for building usable and inclusive interfaces that enable increased self-service.

Improve mobile usability

More individuals rely on a variety of mobile devices, rather than desktop or laptops, to apply for their benefits online. It is important that digital experiences adjust to the varying screen sizes to ensure that claimants can easily navigate the websites needed to understand and apply for their benefits.

- Use our [Reference Guide for Mobile Usability](#) to learn best practices for designing your site to work on smaller screens.
- Use our [Approaching Mobile Usability Guidelines](#) to help make your site more functional on mobile.
- Use [Cascading Style Sheets \(CSS\) to help create better mobile experiences](#).

Meet existing industry-standard accessibility thresholds (508/WCAG)

State UI agencies should work to ensure websites are accessible for people with disabilities, limited mobility, or limited access, consistent with federal law and guidance, including the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#), Americans with Disabilities Act ([ADA, 29 CFR § 38.15](#)), Section 508 of the [Rehabilitation Act \(Section 508\)](#), and [Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 02-16](#). Building for accessibility means ensuring that the greatest number of people can view and interact with your website to accomplish their end goal.

- Resources to help build accessible systems and informational materials include the [18F Accessibility Guide](#) and [the U.S. Web Design System Accessibility Guide](#).

Offer non-digital support when needed

Building multiple pathways to support is essential to ensuring equitable access for all claimants and to ensuring that every user can apply or contact staff for assistance. This can mean offering mail in or in-person filing options as well as the option to call customer help or visit an office in person during points of significant user drop off. Identity verification is an example of a point in the filing process where not all claimants are capable of or comfortable using digital channels. Claimants with limited high speed internet access and those without mobile devices may have no other option than to visit a state workforce office in-person. Lack of digital literacy and lack of trust in the system to protect their personal data are other barriers to online identity verification.

To ensure these populations can access their benefits, the DOL has partnered with the United States Postal Service (USPS) to offer a public, non-digital option for claimants to verify their identity. The USPS has ID verification services available at over 17,000 retail locations across the United States and its territories. The USPS estimates that 99% of the US population lives within 10 miles of a USPS retail location. US DOL is fully funding integration costs with existing state workforce agency systems and transaction costs to the USPS to make this solution available to all 53 state workforce agencies. This non-digital solution complements the US DOL funded Login.gov digital solution offered in partnership with the General Services Administration as a public option for online, mobile friendly identity verification.

- [Read and watch a video about the USPS in-person identity verification process](#)
- [Read a white paper on the role of USPS in identity verification](#)

Provide instructions and information in plain language

Unemployment insurance is a complex program, with federal and state eligibility requirements to qualify and maintain benefits. Using clear language and structuring the information helps users navigate the system, can improve the claimant experience, and reduce the burden on staff to explain the system.

- Resources to support states in plain language efforts are viewable through our [Language Portfolio](#).
- Good CX includes providing the information, instructions and the application in multiple languages to assist Limited English Proficiency (LEP) claimants, consistent with federal requirements. A multilingual customer experience goes beyond translation services, and includes LEP claimants in the design and testing process to help to ensure it is providing equitable access.

Promote effective navigation & wayfinding

Most calls and inquiries to state workforce agencies are from claimants seeking application or payment status updates. Proactively and accurately answering these questions is key to managing claimant satisfaction and contact center volume.

- Our Claims Status Playbook can help state workforce agencies better communicate statuses to claimants with recommendations for holistically approaching developing a claims status project, examples of an effective claim status experience and practical, adaptable strategies. [View the Claims Status Playbook](#).

How the Department is helping states achieve these Principles

Understanding pain points in your system

Understanding specific points that hinder user progress or cause them to drop off from an online experience and instead call or visit an office can identify pain points within the system and help prioritize which areas to address. Quantitative data, like Google Analytics or App Dynamics, or qualitative data, like user research or surveys, can help.

Creating continuous feedback loops

Developing feedback mechanisms to identify the most impactful pain points in your system is important, as is establishing a feedback loop, so the work continues after changes are made based on the data collected. Collecting additional feedback and metrics ensures the changes address the pain points.

- [Read Evaluating CX with Survey Design](#) to learn more about our collaborative work with a state to understand pain points and building feedback loops.

Defining and measuring CX metrics

States need to define and measure core CX metrics to understand whether changes made to digital UI systems solved the identified pain points. Common metrics across benefits programs include time to complete an application, percentage of applications that require agent intervention, and percentage of incomplete applications.

- [View our recommended metrics](#) to evaluate and improve customer experiences.

What's next?

The Department of Labor is making additional funds and resources available to states to help them achieve these goals.

We will also publish materials to guide states to create digital UI systems that meet these basic CX principles. We will expand on these principles on an iterative basis.

In the meantime, please feel free to [email the UI Modernization Team](#) and copy your Regional Office Representatives.

Related posts

- [Customer experience metrics](#)
- [Improving mobile usability for claimants](#)
- [UI Claims Status Playbook](#)
- [Office of UI Modernization Language Portfolio](#)
- [White paper on the role of USPS in identity verification](#)

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