



Actus Policy Research



Evaluation of the Wisconsin Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program

Third Annual Evaluation Report

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About Actus

Actus Policy Research (Actus) is an independent research organization dedicated to delivering high-quality research and program evaluation services to U.S. Federal and state government agencies, non-profit and community-based organizations, educational institutions, and Federal grantees. At Actus, we specialize in developing state-of-the-art research designs to conduct randomized controlled trial (RCT) and quasi-experimental impact evaluations, cost-benefit analysis, implementation studies, evaluability assessments, and outcome studies. Our team of experts possesses subject matter expertise in an array of policy areas, including labor market, education, food security, welfare, youth, and criminal justice.

To support data collection and analysis for this evaluation, Actus contracted the **American Institutes for Research (AIR)**, a non-partisan non-profit research organization that specializes in behavioral and social science research.

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1. Introduction

Since its establishment in 2015, the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program has become the largest job-search assistance intervention targeting Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants in the United States. The program requires new UI claimants to undergo an eligibility review to confirm their compliance with UI work search requirements and to receive services intended to help them connect to available jobs. These requirements are intended to encourage claimants to actively search for work while collecting benefits and to provide services that would help them find suitable jobs and exit UI quickly. Over the past few years, with Federal funding appropriated under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have been operating RESEA programs that include eligibility review and service requirements.

Wisconsin was among the first states to adopt an RESEA program that featured eligibility review and service requirements. The Wisconsin RESEA program, administered by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), requires services-eligible UI claimants to complete an online job readiness assessment.¹ Using the results of the assessment, DWD identifies claimants facing reemployment barriers, who were deemed more likely to benefit from reemployment services. These claimants are required to participate in an initial RESEA session within 21 days of completing the assessment. During this first session, conducted virtually via web-based video conferencing, claimants meet with an RESEA counselor (or “presenter”) to undergo an eligibility review and develop an individual employment plan. Following the initial session, claimants are required to participate in a follow-up RESEA session within 21 days, in which they undergo a review to confirm that they completed the activities outlined in their employment plan and received additional services, as needed.

In July 2021, DWD contracted with Actus Policy Research and its partner, the American Institutes for Research, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Wisconsin RESEA program. The objective of the evaluation is to determine if the program is effective in helping UI claimants obtain employment and improve their earnings,

¹ Services-eligible UI claimants are claimants who: 1) are required to search for work (excludes claimants on temporary layoff and those conducting their search through union hiring halls); 2) are registered for work on the Wisconsin job exchange system; and 3) collected their first UI payment. All services-eligible claimants are eligible for RESEA participation; hereafter, the terms “services-eligible” and “RESEA-eligible” will be used interchangeably.

thereby reducing both the number of UI weeks claimed and the UI benefit amounts collected. Of particular interest is to identify the relative efficacy of requiring claimants to participate in a single RESEA session versus participating in both an initial and a follow-up session.

The evaluation features two studies:

- 1) a **randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact study** to estimate the impacts of the program on claimants' UI receipt and employment outcomes; and
- 2) a **process evaluation study** to assess program implementation and provide context for interpreting the findings of the RCT impact study.

Under the RCT impact study design, RESEA-eligible UI claimants are randomly assigned into one of three groups:

- *RESEA group* – Required to schedule and participate in the initial RESEA session within 21 days of completing the online assessment. These individuals have no requirements to schedule or complete a subsequent session.
- *RESEA+ group* – Required to schedule and participate in the initial RESEA session within 21 days of completing the online assessment. They are also required to schedule and participate in a subsequent RESEA session within 21 days of completing the initial session.
- *Control group* – No requirement to schedule or participate in an RESEA session.

The 18-month RCT intake period began in April 2022 and was concluded in September 2023, a period characterized by a historically strong labor market. During this period, the Wisconsin unemployment rate averaged 2.9%, the lowest rate since at least 2005. In the course of the RCT intake period, 48,110 UI claimants were randomly assigned among the three study groups: the RESEA group (29.4%), the RESEA+ group (29.5%), and the control group (41.1%).

Statistical tests presented in this annual evaluation report show that random assignment successfully created three balanced study groups in terms of claimant characteristics, benefit entitlements, and prior earnings. Thus, we can produce robust estimates of the overall impacts of the RESEA program by comparing the post-program outcomes of the combined RESEA and RESEA+ groups with the outcomes of the control group. Additionally, we can identify the impact of the follow-up RESEA session by comparing outcomes between the RESEA+ group and

the RESEA group.

In this report, we present interim evaluation results using claimant outcomes measured using Wisconsin administrative data through March 2024. Key findings from these interim analyses include:

➤ ***The program was successful in increasing take-up of job counseling services.***

Approximately 70% of claimants assigned in the RESEA and RESEA+ groups completed the initial RESEA meeting. Moreover, the majority of RESEA+ claimants who completed the initial meeting also attended the follow-up session, as required. As a result, about 65% of claimants assigned to these two groups received job counseling services, compared to only about 4% of claimants assigned to the control group.

➤ ***The program caused significant reductions in UI receipt, leading to substantial savings for the UI program.***

The program reduced UI duration by an average of 0.55 weeks, a 4% reduction relative to the mean UI duration for the control group. As a result, the program reduced benefit amounts collected by an average of \$171 per participant. Moreover, the program reduced the likelihood that claimants would exhaust their benefit entitlements before exiting UI by more than 8%.

➤ ***There is no evidence at this time that the program improved participant employment and earnings.***

Our analysis finds no statistically significant impacts on participants' employment and earnings in the first three quarters after UI entry. However, it is important to note that the analysis use available UI wage records for only a subset of the study population. Final impact estimates using UI wage records for the entire study sample will be available at the end of the evaluation in August 2025.

➤ ***There is ambiguous evidence about the effects of the follow-up RESEA session.***

Comparing the impacts of RESEA+ (initial plus follow-up meetings) with the impacts of RESEA (single meeting, no follow-up) estimates the additional effect caused by the follow-up meeting. While the estimated RESEA+ impacts on UI duration and benefit amount collected were 0.18 weeks and \$62 higher than the estimated RESEA impacts, differences are not statistically different from zero. Thus, at this interim stage, we cannot reject the possibility that the follow-up session caused no additional impacts.

➤ ***The average UI savings caused by the RESEA program cover the estimated program cost per participant.***

It is estimated that the average program cost is \$128 per RESEA participant (single meeting) and \$192 per RESEA+ participant (initial plus follow-up meeting). Comparing these with the average UI savings caused by each version of the RESEA program indicates that the average UI savings exceeded the average cost per participant by \$12 for RESEA and \$8 for RESEA+. These results indicate that the UI savings caused by each version of the program are sufficient to cover the monetary cost of serving participants.

➤ ***The assessment score is a strong predictor of claimant outcomes.***

The assessment score used by DWD to identify claimants facing reemployment barriers is a strong tool for predicting claimant outcomes. In particular, high assessment scores, indicating that claimants face significant barriers, are associated with: 1) longer UI durations and higher benefit amounts collected, and 2) lower employment rates and earnings. Low assessment scores, indicating that claimants do not face any barriers, are associated with lower UI receipt and better reemployment outcomes.

➤ ***Program impacts vary significantly based on claimant assessment score.***

Additional analysis shows that the program significantly reduced UI benefit receipt for claimants with moderate or high assessment scores but had no impacts for claimants at the bottom of the assessment score distribution. In contrast, program impacts on employment and earnings do not vary based on the assessment score.

These interim findings provide promising evidence about the effectiveness of the Wisconsin RESEA program in the context of a strong labor market. The program was successful in connecting claimants with counselors and increasing take-up of reemployment services. As a result, the program caused RESEA participants to spend less time collecting benefits, thereby leading to savings for the UI program. However, due perhaps to the robust economic conditions prevalent during the study period, we find no significant impacts on participants' reemployment outcomes. Finally, interim findings indicate that using the skills assessment score to target services to claimants who face moderate or substantial reemployment barriers may be an effective strategy for improving the overall effectiveness of the program.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the Wisconsin RESEA program and outlines the objectives of the evaluation. Section 3 presents the research design and implementation of the RCT impact study, data sources used for the analysis, and interim findings based on analysis of data collected through March 2024. Section 4 presents the research design for the process study and the study's findings. Section 5 summarizes the interim findings and outlines future evaluation activities.

2. Background

2.1. A Brief History of the RESEA Program

Unemployed workers who collect UI benefits are required to actively search for work and to be able and available to accept suitable job offers. To ensure that claimants complied with these requirements, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) established the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program in 2005. The program required services-eligible UI claimants to visit a local employment office to undergo an eligibility review to confirm that they were actively searching for work and to obtain information about available services they could use to aid their job search. The objective was to yield UI savings by eliminating benefit payments to claimants who were not compliant with UI work search requirements and by increasing claimants' search efforts. The program was initially operated by nine states and expanded to 42 states by 2011 ([U.S. Department of Labor, 2012](#)).

A DOL-funded RCT study of REA programs implemented during the Great Recession in Florida, Idaho, Illinois, and Nevada showed that the programs were effective in reducing UI spells and yielding UI savings that exceeded program costs ([Poe-Yamagata et al., 2012](#)). The same study showed that the Nevada REA program was the most effective, yielding much higher UI savings than programs in the other states. Moreover, Nevada REA was the only program that increased participants' employment and earnings over 18 months following program entry. The study speculated that the higher effects of the Nevada program may have occurred because the Nevada program required participants to receive job counseling services following the eligibility review, while programs in the other states did not mandate service receipt.

Subsequent research showed that, while part of the Nevada program's effects were

due to voluntary claimant exits prior to the review and disqualifications of those deemed ineligible during the review, the largest portion of the effects were attributed to participants receiving job counseling that directly aided their job search efforts (Michaelides and Mueser, 2018; Michaelides and Mueser, 2020). This research concluded that programs that combine an eligibility review with mandatory job counseling are more effective than programs that require claimants to only undergo an eligibility review or programs that refer claimants to services but do not mandate participation in job counseling. Additional work showed that the Nevada REA program yielded long-term effects for participants, their families, and the government (Manoli *et al.*, 2018), was at least as effective in periods of low unemployment (Michaelides and Mueser, 2024), and was more effective than other state programs in aiding youth UI claimants (Michaelides *et al.*, 2021).

In 2015, DOL relied on these findings to encourage states to replace their existing REA programs with interventions that required UI claimants to both undergo an eligibility review and participate in reemployment services (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). To emphasize the services requirement, the REA program was renamed RESEA (Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment). The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 permanently authorized the nationwide implementation of RESEA and awarded more than \$150 million to support the implementation of the program in all 50 states and the District of Columbia (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). DOL's commitment to the RESEA program was reinforced by allocating \$375 to support the program in FY 2023 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

2.2. The Wisconsin RESEA Program

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, Wisconsin operated the RESEA program statewide. Each week, new services-eligible UI claimants were required to enroll in the Job Center of Wisconsin (JCW) online services system and complete an online job readiness assessment. This assessment asked claimants to answer questions related to their job search skills and potential barriers they faced in finding employment. Claimant responses were used to calculate an assessment score, with low scores indicating that the claimant faced no or few limited reemployment barriers and high scores indicating significant reemployment barriers.²

Based on the scores of the assessment, those deemed most likely to face

² Section 3.4.6 provides a more detailed description of the skills assessment.

reemployment barriers were required to participate in the RESEA program. In particular, claimants were required to report to a local Job Center and participate in a three-hour session that included: 1) a group orientation in which they received information about available services and resources at local Job Centers; and 2) a one-on-one meeting with an RESEA counselor (or “presenter”) to undergo an eligibility review and develop an individual employment plan.³ In addition, claimants were required to participate in a follow-up session, where program staff determined if claimants executed their employment plan and provided claimants with additional services.

During the pandemic, work search requirements were suspended and Job Centers provided services virtually, so the Wisconsin RESEA program was restructured accordingly. The group orientation was replaced by a PowerPoint presentation sent to claimants through e-mail, which presented information on available services and resources. The in-person RESEA session was replaced by a one-on-one telephone call to discuss the claimant’s employment plan. The requirement for a subsequent RESEA session was discontinued.

As the restrictions imposed by the pandemic eased and work search requirements were reinstated in May 2021,⁴ the original requirements of the Wisconsin RESEA program were also reinstated. Though the meeting could be conducted in person if the RESEA participant preferred to do so, at that time DWD elected to continue conducting most RESEA meetings virtually via web-based video conferencing.

Under the current format of the program, RESEA-eligible claimants receive a letter requiring them to complete the online readiness assessment on the JCW website. Upon completing the online assessment, claimants selected for participation in the RESEA program are asked to: 1) watch an online video providing information on available services and resources at local Job Centers, and 2) use an online platform to schedule a one-on-one RESEA session within 21 days. Claimants may choose between a virtual and an in-person session. Those who fail to complete the online assessment and those who fail to schedule and attend the RESEA session (if

³ RESEA counselors (or “presenters”) are Job Center staff with expertise in skills training, case management, mentoring, job search assistance, placement, career development, retention, and career advancement for underemployed and unemployed job seekers and career-changing workers. This staff applies their expertise when conducting RESEA interviews, including reviewing UI eligibility, providing labor market information, developing an employment plan and assigning RESEA follow-up activities.

⁴ See: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/press/2021/210519-work-search.htm>.

required) see their UI benefits suspended until they comply with requirements.

During the RESEA session, program staff conduct an eligibility review to confirm the claimants' benefit entitlements and continued UI eligibility, work with claimants to develop an individual employment plan, and provide claimants with relevant labor market information. Claimants are instructed to complete activities as outlined in their employment plan including, for example, completing skills assessments, meeting with career counselors, and participating in job-search workshops.

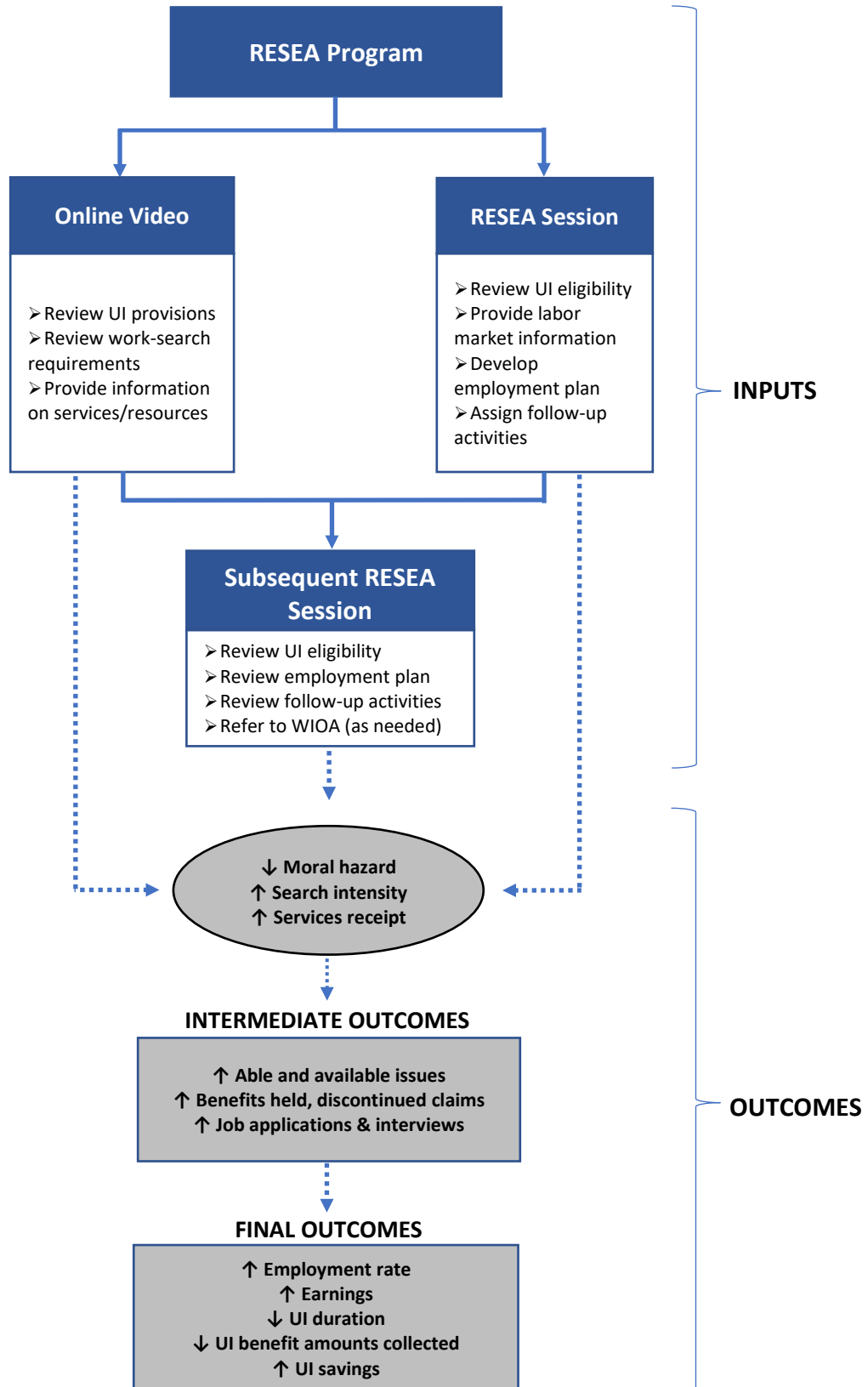
At the end of the meeting, participants are required to schedule a follow-up RESEA meeting to be held within 21 days using the online scheduling platform. During the subsequent session, the RESEA counselor determines if claimants have complied with the requirements of their employment plan and provides additional services, as needed. Participants who fail to show up for the subsequent session and those who do not execute their employment plan have their UI benefits suspended.

Figure 1 presents the theory of change (TOC) for the current Wisconsin RESEA program, which is the program model that DWD expects to maintain during the evaluation period and beyond.

The program may identify eligibility issues, such as claimants who are not able and available for work or who are not actively searching for work as required by UI regulations. Through this mechanism, the program is expected to reduce moral hazard by suspending benefits for those who are not searching for work and by motivating claimants to boost their job-search intensity.⁵ The program provides similar incentives through suspensions of benefits for claimants who fail to show up and complete the required RESEA sessions. By mitigating moral hazard, the program is expected to reduce UI duration and the benefit amounts collected by claimants before exiting UI, thereby leading to savings for the UI program.

⁵ Moral hazard in this context means that UI claimants are not actively searching for work as required by state and federal laws.

Figure 1: Theory of Change, Wisconsin RESEA Program



The TOC also posits that during the one-on-one session with an RESEA counselor, claimants receive information about available services, which could motivate them to seek services on their own and/or increase the intensity of their job search. Similarly, the one-on-one meetings are expected both to increase service referrals and to push participants to receive services that they would not have accessed on their own. Through these mechanisms, the program is expected to improve participants' search efforts, thereby helping them to find jobs and achieve higher earnings than they would in the program's absence. Thus, the program is expected to reduce the amount of time participants spend collecting UI and the benefit amounts collected, leading to savings for the UI program.

2.3. Evaluation Objectives

This evaluation aims to examine the impacts of the Wisconsin RESEA program on the outcomes of UI claimants and provide policy recommendations to improve program targeting and effectiveness. Using the program's TOC (Figure 1) as a baseline, the evaluation will address the following research questions:

- 1) Does the program increase service participation?** The evaluation examines if the program led to higher take-up of reemployment services. This is key to confirming the program TOC and demonstrating that effects on employment, earnings, and UI receipt may result from participants receiving services that they would not have accessed in the absence of the program.
- 2) Does the program reduce the duration of UI receipt and the amount of benefits collected?** Increased take-up of services and enforcement of work-search requirements may increase employment, thereby reducing the duration and amounts of UI benefits collected. This evaluation examines the overall program impacts on UI duration and benefit amounts collected and provides a rough estimate of the program's cost-effectiveness by comparing average UI savings with average cost per participant.
- 3) Does the program increase participants' employment rates and earnings?** The program TOC suggests that the program may improve the quality and quantity of participants' job search by enforcing work-search requirements and by increasing participation in reemployment services. If so, we would expect the program to help participants return to work sooner and to increase their earnings. A key evaluation objective is to examine the overall impacts of the

program on participants' employment rates and earnings.

4) Does the follow-up RESEA session enhance program impacts? A key program component is that participants are required to participate in a follow-up RESEA session to help them update their employment plans and to receive additional services. This evaluation examines the effects of the follow-up RESEA session on employment, earnings, UI benefits, and service outcomes.

5) Do RESEA assessment scores correlate with outcomes? Under normal operations, the Wisconsin RESEA program uses scores from the online assessment to target program services. This evaluation examines whether online assessment scores correlate with key outcomes, such as UI duration, employment, and earnings. The evaluation also examines if program effects vary based on claimant assessment scores. This analysis will provide policy recommendations about the potential to use responses to the online assessment to target program services in a way that maximizes program impacts.

To address these research questions, the evaluation consists of an **RCT impact study** that uses Wisconsin administrative data to estimate program effects on participant outcomes. In addition, the evaluation includes a **process evaluation study** that uses program observations, document reviews, and program staff interviews to examine program implementation and provide additional context for interpreting the findings of the RCT study.

The evaluation is designed to satisfy DOL's requirement that states produce evidence about the effectiveness of their RESEA programs in increasing employment and reducing UI receipt among UI claimants. This report presents interim findings based on data collected through March 2024. The final results, based on data collected through June 2025, will be presented in the Final Evaluation Report, to be prepared in August 2025.

3. RCT Impact Study

3.1. Research Design

To estimate program impacts on participants' UI receipt, employment, and earnings

outcomes, this evaluation includes an RCT design that is implemented without affecting the extent or character of services provided to participants or the interactions of RESEA counselors with participants. Key for the success of the design is the use of random assignment procedures to assign services-eligible UI claimants into one of three groups:

- *RESEA group* – Required to schedule and participate in the initial RESEA session within 21 days of completing the online assessment. These individuals have no requirements to schedule or complete a follow-up session.
- *RESEA+ group* – Required to schedule and participate in the initial RESEA session within 21 days of completing the online assessment. They are also required to schedule and participate in a follow-up RESEA session within 21 days of completing the initial session.
- *Control group* – No requirement to schedule or participate in an RESEA session.

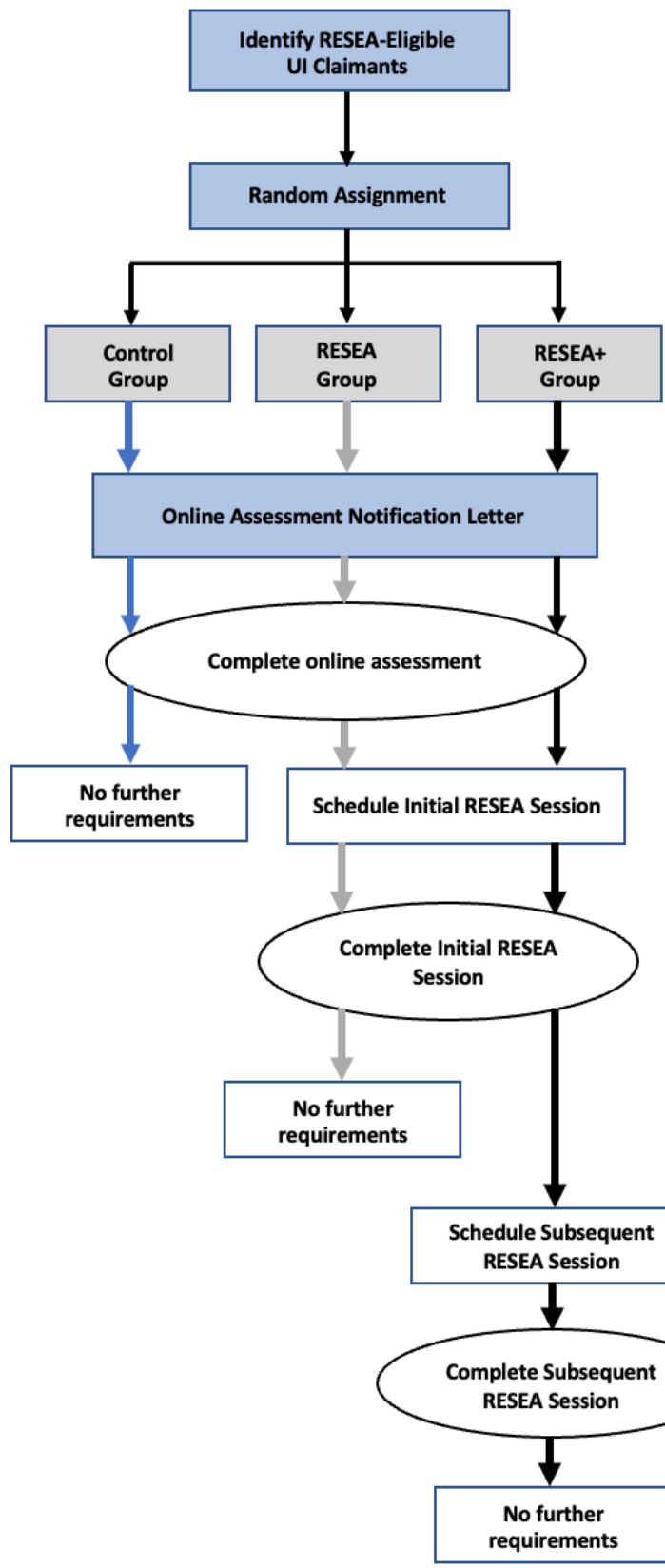
To facilitate random assignment, DWD made two modifications to its RESEA selection process. First, the RESEA selection system was modified so that, in lieu of using online assessment scores to allocate claimants to the RESEA program, UI claimants were randomly assigned to each study group (RESEA, RESEA+, control). Claimants randomly selected for the RESEA and RESEA+ groups were then asked to watch an online orientation video and use the online scheduling platform to schedule an initial RESEA session. Second, claimants selected for the RESEA+ group were also required to schedule and complete a follow-up RESEA session. Claimants in the RESEA group were exempted from this requirement. Claimants assigned to the control group were automatically exempted from any RESEA requirements.

Figure 2 illustrates the random assignment procedure used to select claimants for program participation based on the experimental design. The selection process consists of the following steps:

Step 1: Each week, the state compiles a list that includes all new services-eligible UI claimants; these claimants are eligible to receive the notification letter directing them to complete the online assessment.

Step 2: Claimants are randomly assigned to one of the three study groups (RESEA, RESEA+, and control) using a random number algorithm. Claimants are not informed at this point about their assignment.

Figure 2: Random Assignment Procedure



Step 1: State identifies new UI claimants eligible for online assessment. List is uploaded to the online system.

Step 2: Individuals are randomly assigned using a selection number (from 0.000 to 1.000), generated randomly based on the uniform distribution.

The system generates a flag indicating the group in which each individual is assigned to.

Step 3: The state sends online assessment notification letters to all individuals.

Step 4: All individuals are required to complete the online assessment. At the completion of the assessment, the system requires RESEA and RESEA+ individuals to schedule the initial RESEA session (in-person or virtual) within 21 days. Control individuals do not have the same (or any other) requirement.

Step 5: RESEA and RESEA+ individuals complete the initial RESEA session (in-person or virtual).

At the end of the initial session, RESEA+ individuals are required to schedule the subsequent RESEA session (in-person or virtual) within 21 days.

RESEA individuals do not have a similar (or any other) requirement.

Step 6: RESEA+ individuals complete the subsequent RESEA session (in-person or virtual). Once they complete the session, they have no further requirements.

Step 3: All eligible UI claimants (identified in Step 1) are notified by mail that they are required to complete the online assessment, as usual.

Step 4: All eligible claimants are required to complete the online assessment. Upon completing the assessment, the assessment score is calculated automatically. At that point, RESEA and RESEA+ claimants learn that they were selected to participate in the RESEA program. The system requires these claimants to use the online scheduling platform to schedule their initial RESEA session. Individuals assigned to the control group do not receive any RESEA-related communication and are not required to schedule an RESEA session.

Step 5: All RESEA and RESEA+ claimants are required to attend the initial RESEA session within 21 days of completing the online assessment. Upon completing the initial session, claimants in the RESEA+ group are required to schedule the subsequent RESEA session to occur within 21 days. Claimants in the RESEA group are not required to schedule a subsequent session and have no further program requirements. Individuals assigned to the control group do not receive any communications and have no requirements under the RESEA program.

Step 6: Claimants assigned to the RESEA+ group are required to complete the subsequent RESEA session unless they stop claiming UI benefits by the time the session is scheduled to occur. Once they complete the session, they have no further requirements.

For the purposes of the study, DWD implemented the above process for a 78-week period, from April 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023. Based on program capacity, it was determined that about 35% of RESEA-eligible claimants would be assigned to the RESEA group, 35% to the RESEA+ group, and 30% to the control group. This allocation was maintained for the first 40 weeks of random assignment (from April 1, 2022, through December 30, 2022). To accommodate unforeseen program capacity issues, starting in week 41 (January 6, 2023), these proportions were adjusted to 25% RESEA, 25% RESEA+, and 50% control group. Note that, to account for this shift in the assignment proportions, all analyses below control for the week of random assignment.

3.2. Data Sources

The study relies on Wisconsin administrative data sources that provide information

on all RESEA-eligible UI claimants in the study sample. Below is a description of each data source that will be used by end of the evaluation period (August 2025) and the available data at this interim stage.

UI claims data. These data provide baseline UI claims information, including claimant characteristics and benefit entitlements, as well as UI payment information for benefits collected under the claim associated with random assignment. UI claims data are used to characterize the RESEA-eligible UI population during the RCT intake period, measure UI receipt outcomes, and estimate the impacts of the program on UI spells and benefit amounts collected.

UI wage records. These data report the quarterly employment records of claimants in the study sample beginning with quarter 1 (Q1), 2020 through Q1, 2025. UI wage records are used to characterize the employment history of RESEA-eligible claimants in the eight quarters prior to UI entry and to estimate program impacts on employment rates and earnings for 3–8 quarters after entry.

RESEA program data. These data provide information on RESEA-related activities for claimants in the RESEA and RESEA+ groups, including meeting scheduling, completion, and both disqualifications and their associated reasons. RESEA program data are used to identify if RESEA and RESEA+ participants complied with program requirements and whether they had their UI payments suspended due to failure to comply with requirements.

Employment service data. These data provide information on the services received by UI claimants in the RESEA, RESEA+, and control groups within a year after their initial claims. Employment service data are used to identify services received by RESEA, RESEA+, and control claimants and to estimate program impacts on services receipt.

Online assessment responses. These data report claimant responses to the online assessment, used by DWD to construct the assessment score for each claimant.

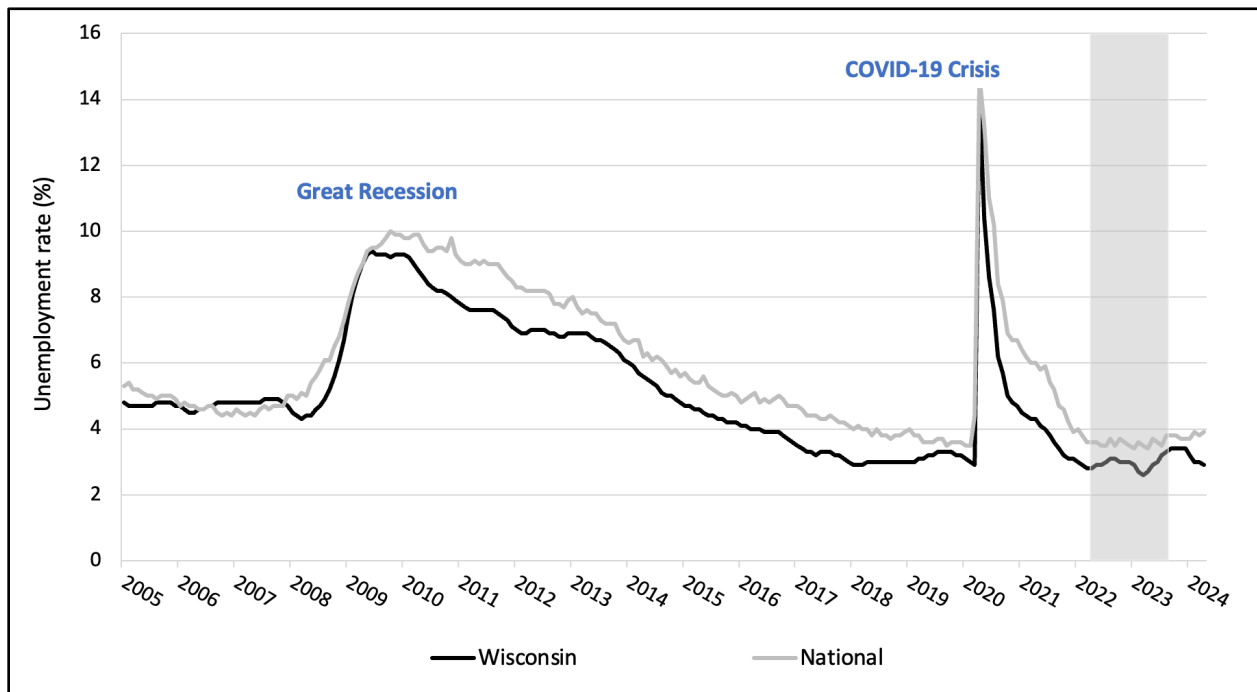
To date, the evaluation team has obtained the above data for all RESEA-eligible UI claimants assigned to the three study samples during the RCT period. In particular, the evaluation team has obtained: 1) UI baseline and UI payments data through March 31, 2024; 2) UI wage records from Q1, 2020 through Q4, 2023; 3) RESEA program data through March 31, 2024; 4) employment service data through March 31, 2024; and 5) online assessment responses.

3.3. Characteristics of RESEA-Eligible Claimants

3.3.1. Operational Context

When RCT intake began in April 2022, the Wisconsin economy was thriving. Figure 3 shows that following the spike in unemployment during the pandemic, the state unemployment rate declined rapidly. During the RCT intake period, from April 2022 through September 2023 (shaded area), the Wisconsin unemployment rate averaged 3.0 percent. This is the lowest unemployment in Wisconsin for any similar period since at least 2005.

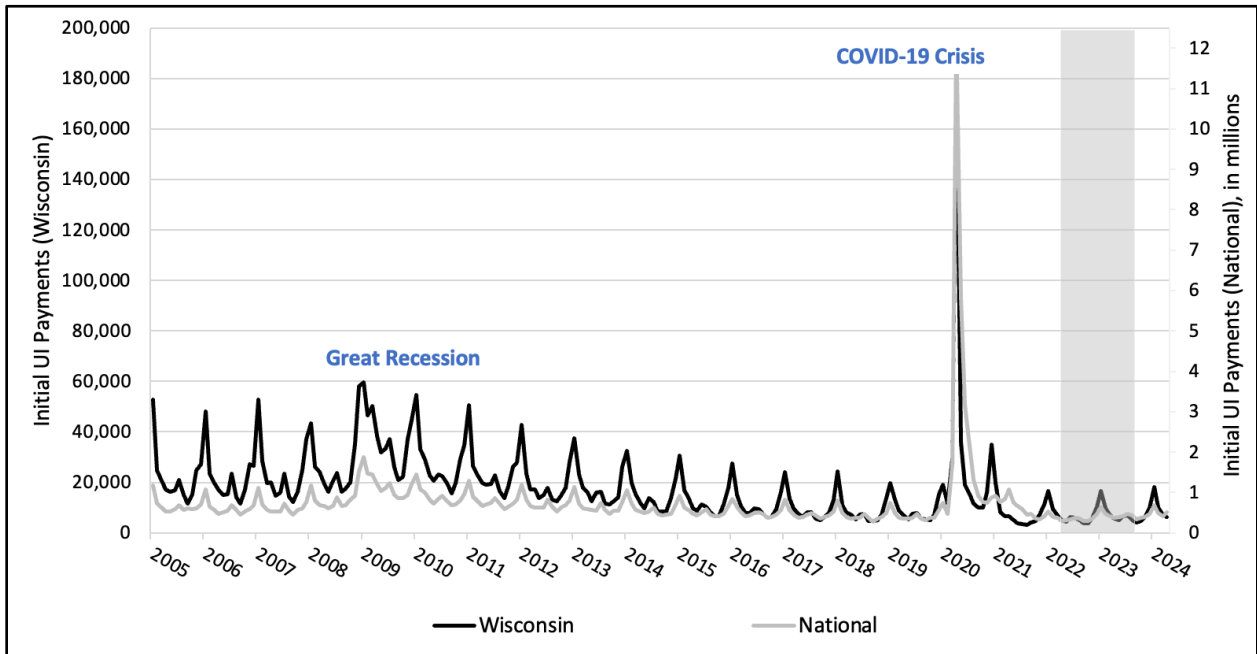
Figure 3: Wisconsin Unemployment Rate



Note: Seasonally-adjusted monthly unemployment rate. Source: Current Population Survey, retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/data/>. Shaded area marks the RCT intake period.

This period is also characterized by a rapid decline in the number of new UI claims with a first payment. Figure 4 shows that, following the spike in new UI claims during the pandemic, the number of new claims with a first payment fell to its pre-pandemic levels. During the RCT intake period, there was a monthly average of 6,496 new UI claims with a first payment, which is similar to the monthly figures prior to the pandemic.

Figure 4: Wisconsin New UI Claims with a First Payment



Note: Number of initial UI payments. Source: U.S. Department of Labor, retrieved from <https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/claimssum.asp>. Shaded area marks the RCT intake period.

3.3.2. Claimant Characteristics

During the RCT intake period, 48,110 RESEA-eligible UI claimants were randomly assigned as follows: 29% to the RESEA group, 30% to the RESEA+ group, and 41% to the control group.

Table 1: Random Assignment of RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants

	RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants
Total	48,110 (100%)
RESEA group	14,134 (29.4%)
RESEA+ group	14,194 (29.5%)
Control group	19,782 (41.1%)

Note: Reported are frequencies with sample proportions in parentheses.
Source: Wisconsin baseline UI claims data.

Figure 5 presents the characteristics of the study sample. Fifty-one percent of claimants were men and 48% were women; 1% did not report their gender. Most

claimants self-identified as white (64%), black (16%), or Hispanic (7%); race/ethnicity was not reported for about 9% of cases. About 40% of claimants had no more than a high school diploma, 28% had some college education or an associate degree, and 29% had a college degree or a post-graduate (advanced) degree.

During the study period, UI claimants who lost their jobs through no fault of their own were deemed eligible for benefits if they: 1) had earnings in at least two calendar quarters during the base period (defined as the first four of the five quarters before the UI claim); 2) earned at least \$1,890 in covered UI employment during the base period; and 3) earned at least \$1,350 in covered UI employment during the base period quarter with the highest earnings. Claimants who satisfied these requirements were entitled to collect 14–26 weekly UI payments for a pre-determined weekly benefit amount (WBA) during the claim’s benefit year.⁶

Table 2 presents information on UI benefit entitlements and the time elapsed between the initial claim filing date and claim approval. The majority of claimants (79%) were entitled to the maximum 26 weeks of benefits. The average weekly benefit amount was \$333 and the average maximum benefit amount (the product of weeks of eligibility times the weekly benefit amount) was \$8,253. Claimants can collect their entitlements within the claim’s benefit year, which lasts 52 weeks after the start of the UI claim.

Table 2 also shows that about 60% of claimants saw their claims approved and collected their first UI payment less than four weeks after filing. However, some claimants had to wait longer. These delays occurred as a result of state reviews of claimant eligibility issues, for example, confirming that claimants had sufficient prior employment and earnings to qualify for benefits and that they lost their jobs through no fault of their own. This review process was affected by the claims backlog related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While most cases were resolved within eight weeks, about 10% of claimants had to wait at least nine weeks before their claims were approved.

⁶ The WBA equals 4% of earnings in the quarter with the highest earnings during the base period, with a \$54 minimum and a \$370 maximum. Weeks of eligibility equal 20% of the base period earnings divided by the WBA, with a 14-week minimum and a 26-week maximum. In a few cases, claimants with significant interest in family partnerships, LLCs, and corporations may be limited to fewer than 14 weeks of benefits. The benefit year lasts 52 weeks from the week the UI claim is filed.

Figure 5: Characteristics of RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants

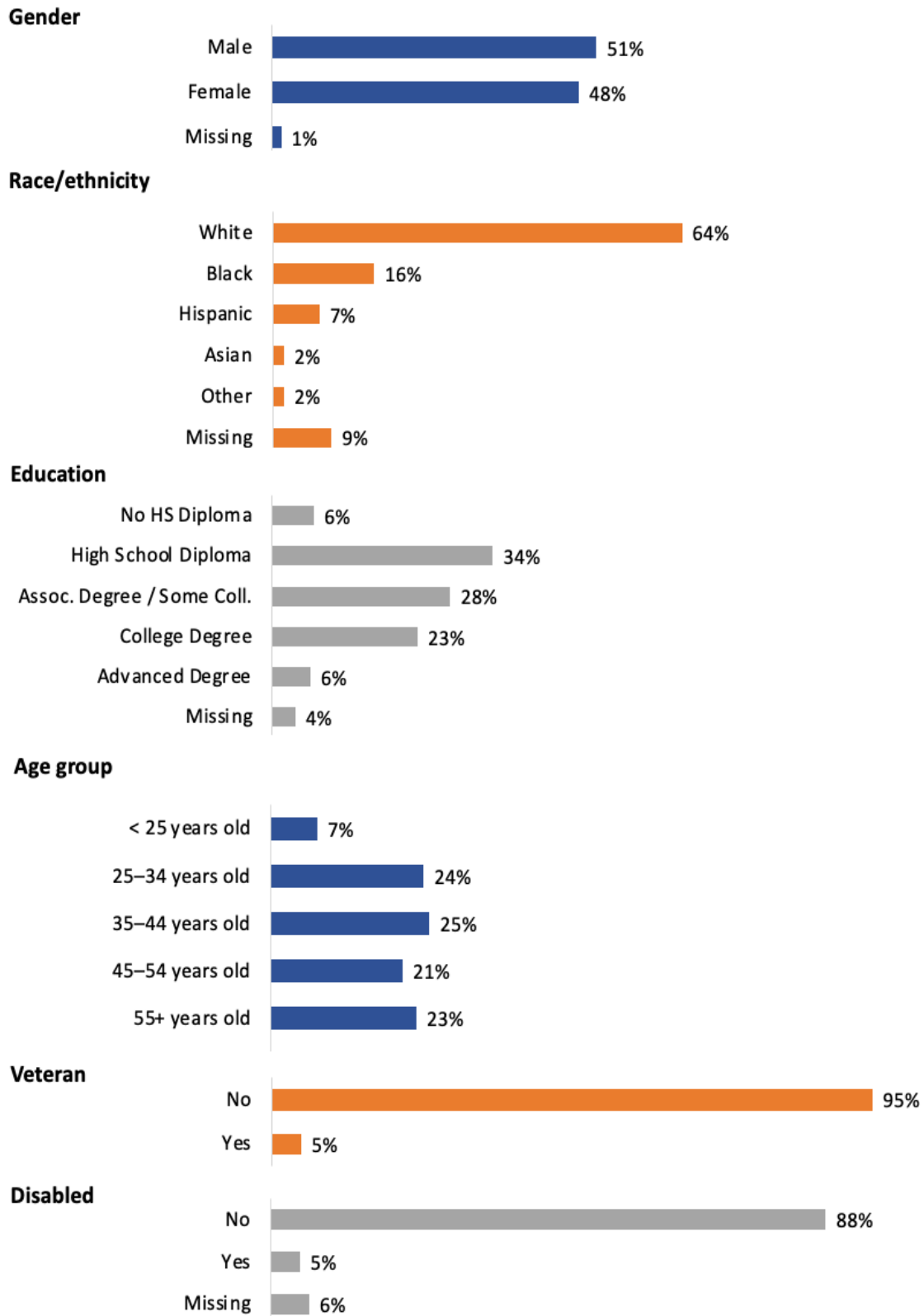


Table 2: Benefit Entitlements of RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants

	RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants
Total	48,110
Weekly Benefit Amount (\$)†	337 (66)
Maximum Benefit Amount (\$)†	8,453 (2,108)
Weeks of Eligibility	
Missing	0.017
< 14 weeks	0.008
14–17 weeks	0.049
18–21 weeks	0.069
22–25 weeks	0.061
26 weeks	0.796
Weeks Elapsed since Claim Date	
<4 weeks	0.599
4–8 weeks	0.300
9–26 weeks	0.074
27+ weeks	0.027

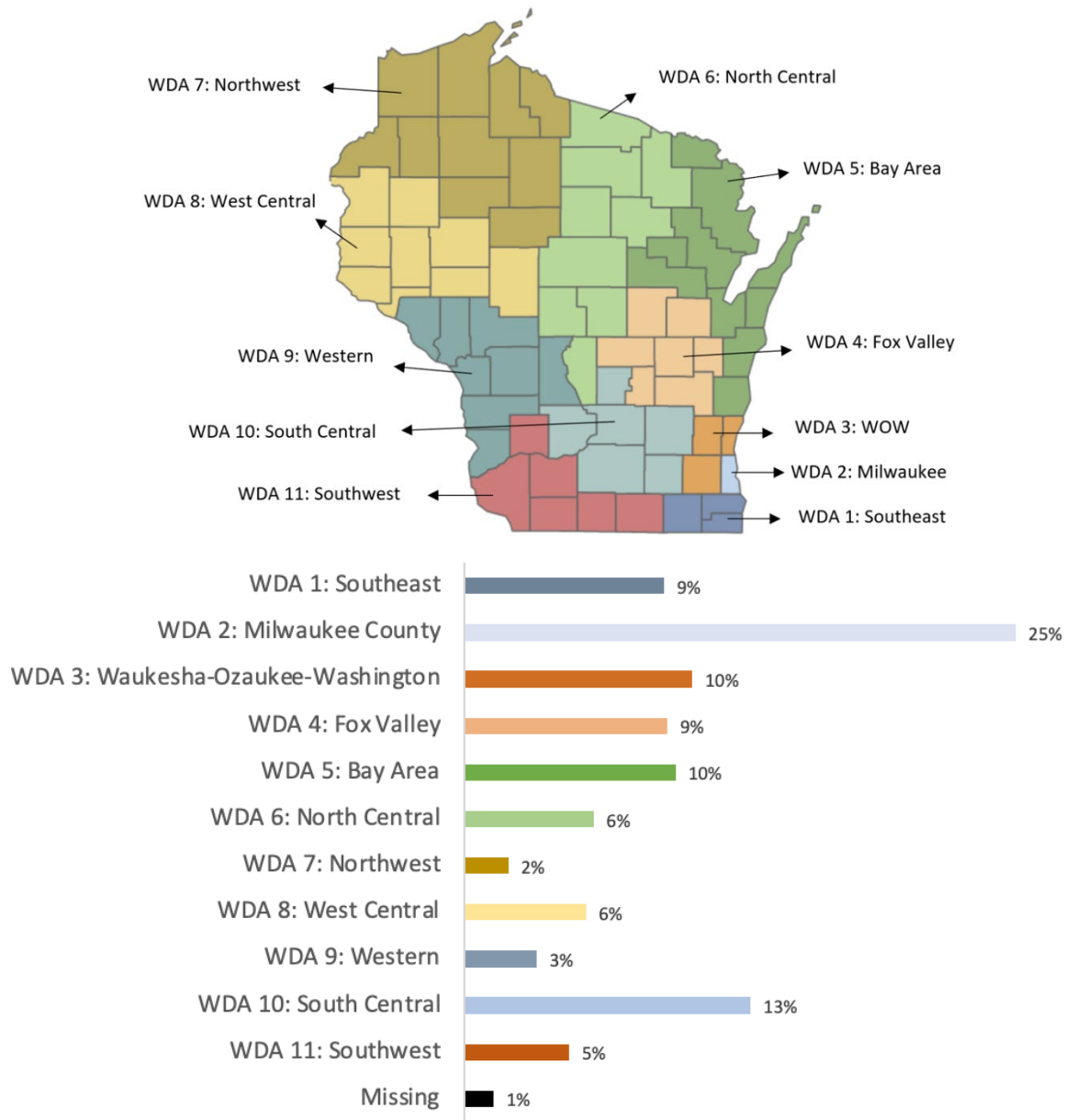
Note: For weekly benefit amount and maximum benefit, sample means are reported, with standard deviations in parentheses. For weeks of eligibility and weeks elapsed since claim date, sample proportions are reported. †Benefit entitlements are missing for 828 (1.7%) of claimants.

Source: Wisconsin baseline UI claims data.

Wisconsin has 11 Workforce Development Areas (WDAs), each administering local Job Centers that serve jobseekers within their geographic jurisdiction. Figure 6 presents a map with the WDA geographic jurisdictions and the distribution of claimants across WDAs.⁷ The WDA with the most claimants is WDA 2 in Milwaukee County, which served nearly a quarter of claimants in the state. Large WDAs include South Central, Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington, Fox Valley, and Bay Area.

⁷ For more information, including counties of coverage of each WDA, see the official Job Center of Wisconsin website: <http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory/default.htm>.

Figure 6: Distribution of Claimants Across Wisconsin Workforce Development Areas



Using UI wage records from Q1, 2020 through Q2, 2023, Table 3 presents the prior earnings of RESEA-eligible UI claimants in the eight-quarter period before UI entry.⁸ Claimants experienced an increasing trend in average earnings leading up to their

⁸ For example, for claimants who entered from October to December 2022 (Q4, 2022), the first quarter prior to entry is Q3, 2022 and the eighth quarter prior to entry is Q4, 2020. For claimants who entered from January to March 2023 (Q1, 2023), the first quarter prior to entry is Q4, 2022 and the eighth quarter prior to entry is Q1, 2021.

UI claim, which most likely stems from the economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. Average earnings in the first quarter prior to UI entry was \$12,380.

Table 3: Prior Earnings of RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants

	RESEA-Eligible UI Claimants
Total	48,810
Earnings (\$)	
In quarter 1 prior to entry	12,380 (13,351)
In quarter 2 prior to entry	12,726 (12,812)
In quarter 3 prior to entry	11,927 (12,072)
In quarter 4 prior to entry	11,098 (12,896)
In quarter 5 prior to entry	10,760 (14,772)
In quarter 6 prior to entry	10,331 (15,179)
In quarter 7 prior to entry	9,686 (11,843)
In quarter 8 prior to entry	8,870 (11,257)

Note: Reported are sample means with standard deviations in parentheses.

Source: Wisconsin UI wage records.

3.3.3. Random Assignment and Baseline Equivalence Tests

Because selection was done randomly, we expect that, on average, claimants in the RESEA, RESEA+, and control groups would have similar characteristics, UI entitlements, and geographic distribution. We use formal statistical tests to examine if random assignment was successful in balancing the three groups. In particular, we use regression models to estimate differences in the likelihood of assignment across the three groups. To estimate differences between the RESEA group and the control group, we estimate:

$$RESEA_i = X_i \cdot b + Earn_i \cdot c + WDA_i \cdot d + Week_i \cdot e + v_i \quad [1a]$$

This model is estimated using RESEA and control group cases only. The dependent variable ($RESEA_i$) is an indicator that equals 1 if individual i was assigned to the RESEA group, and 0 otherwise. Control variables include:

- X_i – a constant term, claimant characteristics, and UI entitlements;
- $Earn_i$ – a vector with the earnings amount in each of the eight quarters prior

to UI entry;

- WDA_i – a vector of fixed effects for WDA; and
- $Week_i$ – a vector of fixed effects for the week when the claimant collected their first weekly payment.

In addition to the control variables, the right-hand side of the equation includes v_i , a zero-mean error term. The week fixed effects are included to account for changes in the randomization proportions over time, namely the shift from a 35/35/30% allocation for RESEA/RESEA+/control over the first 40 weeks of intake to a 25/25/50% allocation in week 41 and later. If random assignment was successful, none of the estimated parameters associated with characteristics (b), prior earnings (c), or region (d) should have any statistical power to predict RESEA assignment.

Similarly, to examine differences between the RESEA+ group and the control group, we estimate the following model:

$$RESEA_Plus_i = X_i \cdot b + Earn_i \cdot c + WDA_i \cdot d + Week_i \cdot e + v_i \quad [1b]$$

This model is estimated using RESEA+ and control group cases only. The dependent variable ($RESEA_Plus_i$) is an indicator that equals 1 if individual i was assigned to the RESEA+ group, and 0 otherwise. Control variables are as defined for model 1a. If random assignment was successful, none of the estimated parameters associated with claimant characteristics (b), prior earnings (c), and region (d) should have any statistical power to predict RESEA+ assignment.

We also fit a third model that estimates differences between the combined *treatment group* (includes both RESEA and RESEA+ claimants) versus the control group, as follows:

$$Treat_i = X_i \cdot b + Earn_i \cdot c + WDA_i \cdot d + Week_i \cdot e + v_i \quad [1c]$$

The dependent variable ($Treat_i$) is an indicator that equals 1 if individual i was assigned to the RESEA or RESEA+ group, and 0 otherwise. Control variables are as defined for models 1a and 1b. This model is estimated using the entire sample.

Table 4 presents the regression results for the three models, indicating that random assignment yielded balanced RESEA, RESEA+ and control groups.

Table 4: Regression Results, Likelihood of RESEA Assignment

	RESEA vs. Control [1a]	RESEA+ vs. Control [1b]	RESEA & RESEA+ vs. Control [1c]
Gender			
Male [†]	--	--	--
Female	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.005)
Race/ethnicity			
White [†]	--	--	--
Black	-0.003 (0.009)	0.002 (0.009)	-0.001 (0.007)
Hispanic	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.007 (0.011)	-0.001 (0.009)
Asian	-0.004 (0.020)	-0.009 (0.020)	-0.006 (0.017)
Other	0.029 (0.020)	-0.011 (0.020)	-0.009 (0.017)
Missing	0.011 (0.011)	0.009 (0.011)	0.010 (0.009)
Age			
<25 years old	-0.001 (0.011)	0.007 (0.011)	0.003 (0.009)
25–34 years old [†]	--	--	--
35–44 years old	0.001 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.009)
45–54 years old	0.002 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.006)
55+ years old	0.007 (0.008)	0.000 (0.008)	0.004 (0.007)
Missing	-0.026 (0.056)	-0.048 (0.056)	-0.037 (0.047)
Educational Attainment			
No High School Diploma [†]	0.007 (0.011)	0.018 (0.011)	0.014 (0.010)
High School Diploma	--	--	--
Ass. Degree / Some College	0.007 (0.007)	0.015 (0.007)**	0.012 (0.006)**
College Degree	0.004 (0.008)	0.004 (0.008)	0.004 (0.006)
Advanced Degree	-0.024 (0.013)*	0.005 (0.012)	-0.010 (0.011)
Missing	0.007 (0.020)	0.030 (0.020)	0.018 (0.016)
Veteran			
Yes	0.011 (0.013)	0.002 (0.013)	0.006 (0.011)
No [†]	--	--	--
Disabled			
Yes	0.013 (0.011)	0.005 (0.011)	0.010 (0.009)
No [†]	--	--	--
Missing	0.005 (0.017)	-0.026 (0.017)	-0.009 (0.017)

(Table 4 continues on next page)

(Table 4, continued from previous page)

	[1a] RESEA vs. Control	[1b] RESEA+ vs. Control	[1c] RESEA & RESEA+ vs. Control
WBA (in \$000s)	-0.062 (0.047)	-0.048 (0.047)	-0.053 (0.040)
Weeks of Eligibility			
<14 weeks [†]	--	--	--
14–17 weeks	-0.006 (0.031)	-0.005 (0.032)	-0.006 (0.026)
18–21 weeks	0.018 (0.031)	-0.006 (0.029)	0.0011 (0.026)
22–25 weeks	0.019 (0.031)	-0.005 (0.031)	0.006 (0.026)
26 weeks	-0.001 (0.029)	-0.006 (0.029)	-0.003 (0.024)
UI entitlements missing	-0.053 (0.042)	-0.071 (0.042)*	-0.058 (0.035)*
Earnings (\$)			
In quarter 1 prior to entry	0.0002 (0.0003)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0001 (0.0002)
In quarter 2 prior to entry	0.0003 (0.0004)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0002 (0.0003)
In quarter 3 prior to entry	-0.0003 (0.0004)	0.0000 (0.0004)	-0.0001 (0.0003)
In quarter 4 prior to entry	-0.0002 (0.0003)	-0.0003 (0.0003)	-0.0002 (0.0003)
In quarter 5 prior to entry	-0.0004 (0.0003)	-0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0002)
In quarter 6 prior to entry	0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0003 (0.0002)
In quarter 7 prior to entry	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.0007 (0.0004)	0.0005 (0.0004)
In quarter 8 prior to entry	0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.0007 (0.0004)	-0.0003 (0.0003)
Controls for WDA	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls for week of assignment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.560 (0.045)***	0.541 (0.045)***	0.710 (0.037)***
Observations	33,916	33,976	48,110
R-Squared	0.0459	0.0404	0.0384

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses. [†]Denotes omitted category for categorical variables. *, **, *** = statistically significant at the 10%, 5%, 1% level.

Results show that none of the estimated parameters in the RESEA vs. control group specification (model 1a), including controls for WDA (which are not reported), are statistically significant at the 5% level, indicating that random assignment yielded similar RESEA and control groups. Similarly, only one parameter is statistically significant at the 5% level in the RESEA+ vs. control group specification (model 1b) and only one parameter is statistically significant in the treatment vs. control specification (model 1c).

Together, the results of the statistical tests provide convincing evidence that random assignment created three balanced study groups. Based on these results, we can: 1) estimate the overall impacts of the RESEA program by comparing differences in outcomes between the pooled treatment sample (RESEA and RESEA+) and the control group, and 2) estimate the additional impacts caused by the follow-up RESEA session by comparing differences in outcomes between the RESEA and the RESEA+ groups.

3.4. Interim Impact Results

Using available data collected to date, we present interim findings about the effectiveness of the program in increasing service take-up (research question 1), reducing UI duration and benefit amounts collected (research question 2), and increasing participants' employment and earnings (research question 3). We also examine the relative effects of requiring claimants to attend the follow-up RESEA session (research question 4). Further, we examine the association of the assessment score with claimant outcomes and whether the score can be used to identify claimants most likely to benefit from the program (research question 5).

3.4.1. Program Compliance and Services Received

The program's TOC posits that the program facilitates meetings between claimants and counselors, thereby increasing take-up of counseling services. It is thus important to assess the degree to which claimants assigned to the RESEA and RESEA+ groups complied with program requirements. Table 5 shows that 70% of RESEA and 69% of RESEA+ group claimants completed the initial RESEA meeting, whereas about 22% of claimants in each group were exempted for various reasons.⁹ About 9% of RESEA and RESEA+ claimants were not exempted from the requirement to attend the initial RESEA meeting but failed to attend the meeting.

The majority of RESEA+ claimants who attended the initial RESEA meeting, also attended the required follow-up meeting. In particular, 7,615 (77%) of the 9,828 RESEA+ claimants who attended the initial meeting also attended the follow-up

⁹ RESEA and RESEA+ claimants were exempted from attending the RESEA meeting for various reasons, including because they found a job, received services on their own, voluntarily exited UI, or enrolled in approved training prior to the meeting. A few claimants were also exempted because limited staff availability did not allow them to schedule the initial RESEA meeting within the 21-day deadline. The data do not allow us to identify the reasons for particular exemptions.

meeting. Overall, 54% of RESEA+ claimants attended both meetings.

Table 5: Program Compliance, RESEA and RESEA+ Group

	RESEA	RESEA+
Number of Claimants	14,134	14,194
[1] Attended initial RESEA meeting	9,891 (70.0%)	9,828 (69.2%)
<i>Attended initial and follow-up meeting</i>	--	7,615 (53.7%)
<i>Attended initial but not the follow-up meeting</i>	--	2,213 (15.6%)
[2] Exempted	3,046 (21.6%)	3,121 (22.0%)
[3] Not Exempted, did not attend	1,197 (8.5%)	1,245 (8.8%)

Note: Reported is the number of claimants with the sample proportion in parentheses.

Source: Wisconsin RESEA program data.

Table 6 compares service take-up across the three groups, including RESEA-related and other services. About 65% of RESEA and 64% of RESEA+ claimants received individualized job-counseling services, compared to fewer than 4% of control claimants. Similarly, 64% of RESEA and 63% of RESEA+ claimants underwent a UI eligibility review; none of the control cases had to undergo a review. RESEA and RESEA+ claimants were also more likely to receive basic services. Differences between the two treatment groups in receipt of services were small, except that RESEA+ claimants were more likely to attend workshops.

Overall, these results reveal two key findings. First, the majority of claimants assigned to the RESEA and RESEA+ programs complied with requirements, attending at least one session and receiving job counseling and eligibility reviews during those sessions. Second, the program was very effective in increasing the take-up of job counseling services by claimants, which is a key program mechanism for producing impacts on UI and employment outcomes.

Table 6: Service Take-up Rates by Study Group

	RESEA	RESEA+	Control
Number of Claimants	14,134	14,194	19,782
RESEA Services			
Job counseling†	65.0%	64.0%	3.5%
Eligibility review	64.2%	63.1%	--
Other Services			
Job-search workshops	1.5%	4.8%	1.2%
Referrals to additional services	9.7%	11.1%	0.9%
Basic services††	9.2%	10.6%	2.7%
Job referrals	0.8%	1.0%	0.5%

Note: Reported are sample proportions. †= Includes skills assessment, individualized employment plan (IEP) development, IEP review, resume development, and career guidance services. ††= Includes enrollment in job exchange system, orientation services, provision of labor market information (LMI), supportive services, and online self-assisted services.

Source: Wisconsin employment service data.

3.4.2. UI Receipt Outcomes

One of the key objectives of the program is to reduce claimants’ UI duration and amount of UI benefits collected. Using available UI payment data, we construct three key UI outcomes:

- *Number of benefit weeks collected* – Equals the number of weekly UI payments collected by the claimant.
- *Benefit amount collected* – Equals the total benefit amount collected by the claimant, which is the sum of all weekly UI benefit amounts collected.
- *Exhausted benefits* – Indicates if the claimant exhausted their maximum benefit entitlement, that is, if the benefit amount collected is equal to the maximum benefit amount.

These outcomes are measured using available data through March 31, 2024, covering the entire benefit year for claimants who started their claims from April 2022 through March 2023. However, these data may not cover all the UI payments collected by claimants assigned from April 2023 through September 2023. Thus, at this interim stage, our measures may slightly underestimate overall benefit receipt. Table 7 presents the UI receipt outcomes for each study group. Control group

claimants collected an average of 13.1 weeks of benefits for \$3,866 in total benefits. Compared with RESEA and RESEA+ claimants, control claimants collected more weeks of benefits and higher benefit amounts. The likelihood of exhausting benefits was roughly the same across the three groups.

Table 7: UI Receipt Outcomes by Study Group

	RESEA	RESEA+	Control
Number of Claimants	14,134	14,194	19,782
Benefit Weeks Collected	12.5 (9.1)	12.3 (9.1)	13.1 (9.3)
Benefit Amount Collected (\$)	3,665 (2,908)	3,605 (2,902)	3,866 (2,975)
Exhausted Benefits	0.083	0.076	0.085

Note: Reported are sample means with standard deviations in parentheses; for exhausted benefits, reported is the sample proportion.

Source: Wisconsin UI data.

3.4.3. Program Effects on UI Receipt Outcomes

Using UI payment data, we produce estimates of the overall impact of the program by comparing the mean outcomes between the pooled RESEA and RESEA+ groups and the control group, controlling for the week of random assignment (to account for variation in random assignment proportions over time). To maximize statistical power and improve the precision of the estimates, we estimate program effects using ordinary least squares regression models of the following form:

$$Y_i = T_i \cdot \alpha + X_i \cdot \beta + Earn_i \cdot \gamma + WDA_i \cdot \delta + Week_i \cdot \varepsilon + u_i \quad [2]$$

The dependent variable (Y_i) is the outcome of interest (number of benefits weeks collected, benefit amount collected, benefit exhaustion, or employment and earnings). Control variables include:

- T_i – a treatment indicator that equals 1 if the individual was either in the RESEA or the RESEA+ group and 0 otherwise;
- X_i – includes a constant term, observed characteristics, and UI entitlements;
- $Earn_i$ – a vector with the earnings amount in each of the eight quarters prior to UI entry;
- $Region_i$ – a vector of fixed effects for the individual’s WDA; and
- $Week_i$ – a vector of fixed effects for the week when UI benefit receipt started.

In addition to the control variables, the right-hand side of the equation includes u_i , a zero-mean error term. Greek letters are parameters to be estimated. The parameter of interest is α , which estimates the program’s average treatment effect (ATE).¹⁰

Regression results are presented in Table 8. The middle column reports the estimated average treatment effect with the standard error in parentheses and the right column reports the effect expressed as a percentage of the control group mean. These results provide definitive evidence that the program was effective in reducing UI receipt. The program reduced UI duration by 0.55 weeks, which represents a 4.2% reduction compared with the control group mean (11.3 weeks, from Table 7). As a result, the program reduced average UI payments by \$171 per participant, a 4.4% reduction compared with the control group. This indicates that the program yielded \$171 in UI savings per participant served. Both effects are statistically significant at the 1% level. The final row shows that the program also reduced the likelihood of exhausting benefits by 0.7 percentage points, an 8.2% reduction relative to the control group. This effect is statistically significant at the 1% level.

Table 8: Average Treatment Effects on UI Receipt Outcomes

	Average Treatment Effect	Effect as a percentage of control group mean
Benefit Weeks Collected	-0.55 (0.11)***	-4.2%
Benefit Amount Collected (\$)	-171 (34)***	-4.4%
Exhausted Benefits	-0.007 (0.003)***	-8.2%

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses. Right column reports the average treatment effect as a percentage of the control group mean. *** = statistically significant at the 1% level.

3.4.4. Program Effects on Employment and Earnings

Using UI wage records (available through Q4, 2024), we measure employment and

¹⁰ This parameter estimates the impact of the program for those assigned to the RESEA program, regardless of whether they actually attended an RESEA meeting. By design, all of those assigned to RESEA and RESEA+ were affected by the treatment because they received notification of program requirements.

earnings for claimants in the study sample up to three quarters after UI entry. In particular, we construct the following measures:

- *Employed* – Equals 1 if the claimant had positive earnings in a calendar quarter after UI entry and 0 else. Based on data available at this interim stage, this outcome is measured for each of the three quarters after UI entry.
- *Earnings* – Equals the total amount earned in the third quarter after UI entry. At this interim stage, this outcome is measured for each of the three quarters after UI entry.
- *Total earnings, quarters 1-3* – Equals the total amount earned in the three first quarters after UI entry.

Note that, based on available data at this interim stage, quarter 1 outcomes are measured for all 48,109 in the study sample, quarter 2 outcomes are measured only for the 39,543 claimants assigned from April 2022 to July 2023, and quarter 3 outcomes are measured only for the 30,919 claimants assigned from April 2022 to March 2023.¹¹

Table 9 presents summary statistics of these outcomes. As seen, employment rates after UI entry are similar across the three study groups. At the same time, control group claimants have slightly higher earnings over the entire three-quarter follow-up period. These findings provide informal evidence that the program did not positively affect participant employment and earnings.

¹¹ Because analysis for quarter 2 and quarter 3 outcomes is done using subsamples of the entire study sample, we repeated the random assignment test described in Section 3.3.3 to confirm that study group equivalence is maintained for each subsample. Results indicate that RESEA, RESEA+, and control groups are observationally similar for both subsamples.

Table 9: Employment and Earnings by Study Group

	RESEA Group	RESEA+ Group	Control Group
Employed			
In quarter 1 after UI entry	0.642	0.643	0.635
In quarter 2 after UI entry†	0.718	0.717	0.714
In quarter 3 after UI entry††	0.734	0.733	0.742
Earnings (\$)			
In quarter 1 after UI entry	6,101 (10,182)	6,067 (9,233)	6,161 (14,169)
In quarter 2 after UI entry†	7,739 (8,692)	7,761 (8,832)	7,829 (9,114)
In quarter 3 after UI entry††	8,276 (9,004)	8,204 (8,875)	8,475 (9,249)
Total earnings, quarters 1-3††	22,222 (23,779)	21,970 (23,847)	22,717 (28,002)

Note: Reported are the sample proportions for employed and sample means with standard deviations in parentheses for earnings. †=Available for the 39,543 claimants assigned from April 2022 through June 2023. ††=Available for the 30,919 claimants assigned from April 2022 through March 2023.

Source: Wisconsin UI wage records.

To produce formal estimates of the impacts of the program, we use regression models similar to model 2 above. These models estimate the overall impacts of the RESEA program on employment and earnings by comparing the outcomes of the pooled RESEA and RESEA+ groups with the outcomes of the control group.

Table 10 presents the results. Estimated average treatment effects on employment are close to zero—ranging from minus 0.003 to 0.006—and lack statistical significance. Estimated effects on earnings are also small (and negative) and lack statistical significance. These results show that the Wisconsin RESEA program had no effect on the likelihood that participants would find employment in the first three quarters after UI entry or on participant earnings.

Table 10: Average Treatment Effects, Employment and Earnings

	Average Treatment Effect	Effect as a percentage of control group mean
Employed		
In quarter 1 after UI entry	0.004 (0.005)	+1%
In quarter 2 after UI entry†	0.006 (0.006)	+1%
In quarter 3 after UI entry††	-0.003 (0.006)	<-1%
Earnings (\$)		
In quarter 1 after UI entry	-162 (151)	-3%
In quarter 2 after UI entry†	-9 (112)	<-1%
In quarter 3 after UI entry††	-174 (130)	-2%
Total earnings, quarters 1-3††	-521 (385)	-2%

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses. Right column reports the average treatment effect as a percentage of the control group mean.

3.4.5. The Effects of the Follow-up RESEA Session

The Wisconsin RESEA program typically requires UI claimants to attend a follow-up RESEA session to update their employment plans and receive additional services. By comparing the UI receipt outcomes between the RESEA+ group (required to attend a follow-up session) and the RESEA group (no requirement to attend a follow-up session), we estimate the impact of the follow-up RESEA session on claimants' UI receipt outcomes. For improved statistical power and precision, we use regression models of the following form:

$$Y_i = R_i \cdot a_0 + R_i^* \cdot a_1 + X_i \cdot \beta + Earn_i \cdot \gamma + WDA_i \cdot \delta + Week_i \cdot \varepsilon + u_i \quad [3]$$

The dependent variable (Y_i) is the outcome of interest and control variables include: R_i – an indicator that equals 1 if the individual was assigned to the RESEA group and 0 otherwise; and R_i^* – an indicator that equals 1 if the individual was assigned to the RESEA+ group and 0 otherwise. The remaining control variables are defined as above. There are three parameters of interest in the regression equation:

- a_0 , which estimates the effect of being assigned to the RESEA group;
- a_1 , which estimates the effect of being assigned to the RESEA+ group; and
- $a_1 - a_0$, which estimates the effect of the follow-up RESEA session (i.e., the

outcome difference between the RESEA+ and the RESEA group).

Table 11 reports the analysis results for UI outcomes. Results show that the RESEA treatment (single RESEA meeting, no follow-up) reduced UI duration by 0.46 weeks and benefit amounts collected by \$140. Effects are higher for the RESEA+ treatment (initial *and* follow-up meeting), with a 0.64-week reduction in UI duration and a \$202 reduction in benefit payments. The rightmost column compares the effects of RESEA+ relative to the effects of RESEA, providing estimates for the additional impact caused by the follow-up RESEA session.

Table 11: Effects of the Follow-up RESEA Session, UI Outcomes

	RESEA (a_0)	RESEA+ (a_1)	RESEA+ vs. RESEA ($a_1 - a_0$)
Number of Benefit Weeks Collected	-0.46 (0.13)***	-0.64 (0.13)***	-0.18 (0.14)
Benefit Amount Collected (\$)	-140 (40)***	-202 (40)***	-62 (43)
Exhausted Benefits	-0.000 (0.007)	-0.005 (0.007)	-0.005 (0.006)

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses. *** = statistically significant at the 1% level.

The rightmost column results show that the RESEA+ effects on UI outcomes were larger than the effects of RESEA, which would suggest that the follow-up meeting caused additional impacts on these outcomes. In particular, results indicate that those in the RESEA+ group experienced a 0.18-week reduction and a \$62 benefit reduction, in addition to the 0.46 and \$140 reductions experienced by those in the RESEA group. However, the estimated differences between RESEA+ and RESEA are accompanied by large standard errors, so they lack statistical significance at conventional levels.¹²

The same analysis for employment and earnings reveals no differences of note between the RESEA+ and the RESEA group. As seen in Table 12, estimated effects on employment are close to zero for both RESEA and RESEA+, and none are

¹² Note that because the differential impacts of the follow-up meeting may be small in magnitude, the fact that differential impacts on benefit weeks collected and benefit amounts collected are not statistically significant may reflect lack of statistical power. It is possible that once we estimate impacts using more complete data (including payments data collected through the entire benefit year for claimants assigned from April 2023 through September 2023), both the magnitude and statistical significance of these estimates may change.

statistically different from zero. Effect differences between the two programs are also very small and lack statistical significance. Similar results are obtained for earnings. These results suggest that the RESEA program (with no follow-up session) had little or no effect on either employment or earnings and that the follow-up session produced little or no additional effects.

Table 12: Effects of the Follow-up RESEA Session, Employment and Earnings

	RESEA (a_0)	RESEA+ (a_1)	RESEA+ vs. RESEA ($a_1 - a_0$)
Employed			
In quarter 1 after UI entry	0.003 (0.006)	0.006 (0.006)	0.003 (0.007)
In quarter 2 after UI entry	-0.004 (0.007)	0.009 (0.007)	0.005 (0.007)
In quarter 3 after UI entry	-0.008 (0.007)	0.001 (0.007)	0.009 (0.008)
Earnings amount			
In quarter 1 after UI entry	-159 (179)	-165 (179)	-6 (190)
In quarter 2 after UI entry	-17 (131)	-2 (131)	15 (137)
In quarter 3 after UI entry	-158 (151)	-189 (150)	-32 (152)
Total earnings, quarter 1-3	-449 (448)	-594 (446)	-145 (454)

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses.

3.4.6. Program Cost-Effectiveness

Conducting a full cost-benefit analysis of the RESEA program is outside the scope of work of this evaluation. However, we can obtain a rough estimate of the cost-effectiveness of the program from the perspective of the government by comparing the average UI savings caused by the program with the average cost of serving participants. Table 13 presents comparisons for the RESEA group, RESEA+ group, and the combined RESEA/RESEA+ groups.

Using budget information provided by DWD, over the 18-month RCT intake period, the combined average cost for serving RESEA and RESEA+ claimants was approximately \$160 per participant.¹³ Breaking the cost down further indicates that

¹³ According to DWD, average program costs were as follows: \$176 per participant for those who attended a single RESEA meeting but no follow-up; \$297 per participant for those who attended both an initial and a follow-up meeting; and \$17 per participant for those who did not attend any meetings.

the average cost of serving claimants in the RESEA group was \$128 and the average cost of serving RESEA+ claimants was \$192. These figures indicate that the additional cost of the follow-up meeting was about \$64 per participant.

Comparing the UI savings caused by the program with the average cost per participant provides a rough estimate of the cost-effectiveness of the program in terms of direct expenditures and savings for the government. As shown in Table 13, the average UI savings for RESEA claimants (\$140 per claimant) and RESEA+ claimants (\$202 per claimant) exceeded the average cost per participant by \$12 and \$8, respectively. Similarly, average UI savings for the combined RESEA and RESEA+ groups (\$165) just exceeded the combined average cost of serving them (\$160).

Table 13: RESEA Average Program Costs and UI Savings

	RESEA	RESEA+	Combined
UI savings per participant	\$140	\$202	\$165
Program cost per participant	\$128	\$192	\$160
<i>Difference</i>	+\$12	+\$8	+\$9

Note: Estimated UI savings for RESEA and RESEA+ are based on estimated average treatment effects obtained using model 3 (see Table 11). Estimated program costs are based on information provided by DWD.

These results indicate that both versions of the program—one with and one without a follow-up RESEA session—just about pay for themselves. In particular, the UI savings produced by each version of the program are likely to be sufficient to cover the monetary cost of serving participants.

3.4.7. The Role of the Assessment Score

All RESEA-eligible UI claimants are required to complete an online job readiness assessment at the start of their UI claims, before the application of random assignment. The assessment asks claimants to answer a series of questions related to the following areas:

- **Job search activities.** Claimants are asked about the duration of their job search, number of job interviews they received, and job search activities through informal networks.
- **Job search preparedness.** Claimants are asked about their preparedness to search for a job, including if they have a resume, cover letter, and professional

references for the jobs they are targeting.

- **Skill awareness.** Claimants are asked about their ability to identify their skills, identify how their skills fit with specific jobs, and communicate their skills to potential employers.
- **Technology.** Claimants are asked about their ability to use internet services to aid them in conducting their search, including use of social media, the state job exchange system, and other online tools.
- **Resources.** Claimants are asked if they face any additional difficulties in searching for a job, including lack of child care and transportation. They are also asked if they have a disability or a felony conviction that restricts their search.

Using a pre-determined point system, DWD assigns each question a score and constructs the assessment score by aggregating the scores across all questions. The assessment score has a potential range from zero to 265 points, with zero points indicating that the claimant faces no reemployment barriers and 265 points indicating that the claimant faces all the barriers covered by the questionnaire.

In the absence of the current RCT impact study, DWD uses the assessment scores to determine which claimants would be referred to the RESEA program. Claimants with the highest scores are given priority for RESEA assignment. For the RCT impact study, DWD forfeited the use of the assessment scores and instead used a random assignment algorithm to assign claimants to the three study groups. As a result, each of the three study groups includes claimants across the entire range of values of the assessment score distribution. Importantly, since all claimants are required to fill out the assessment, the assessment score is available for all RESEA, RESEA+, and control group claimants in the study sample.

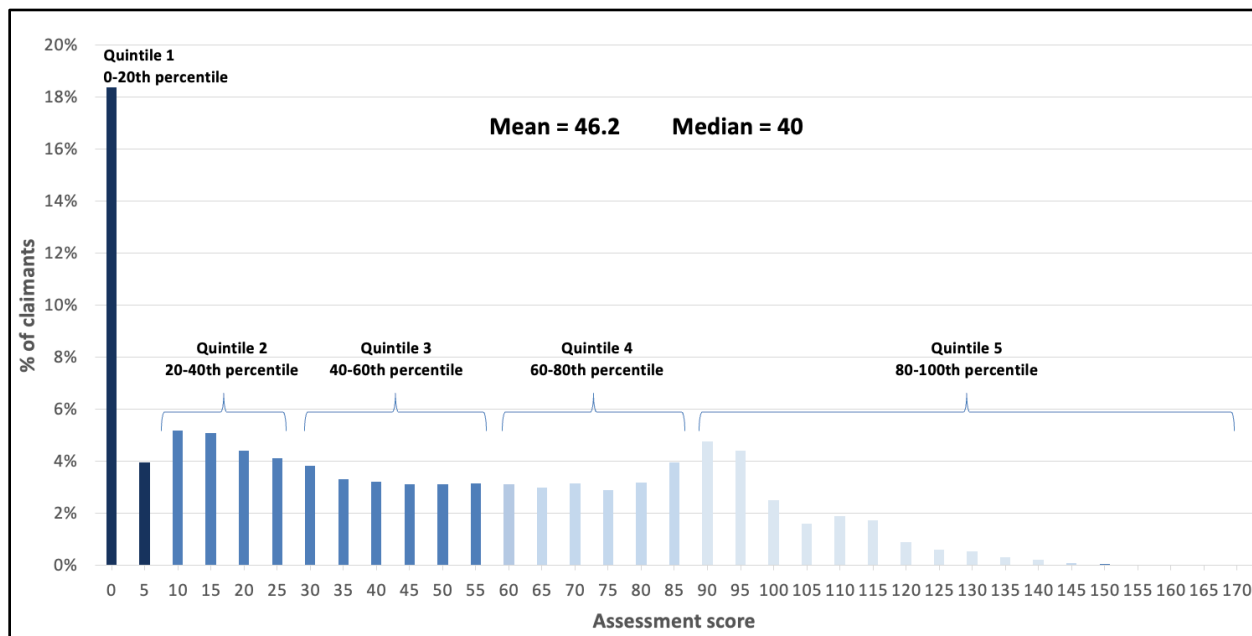
Figure 7 presents the assessment score distribution for claimants in the study sample. The assessment score varied from zero to 170, with a 46.2 mean score and a 40 median score.¹⁴ Further, Figure 7 illustrates the assessment scores for claimants in each quintile of the distribution.¹⁵ Roughly speaking, claimants in

¹⁴ Separate analysis reveals no significant differences in average assessment scores across the three study groups.

¹⁵ Quintile 1 (0-20th percentile) includes claimants with the lowest 20% scores. Quintile 2 (20-40th percentile) includes claimants with higher scores than 20% of claimants (those in quintile 1) but lower scores than 60% of claimants (those in quintiles 3-5). Quintile 3 (40-60th percentile) includes claimants with higher scores than 40% of claimants (those in quintiles 1-2) but lower scores than the

quintile 1 faced no reemployment barriers, claimants in quintiles 2 and 3 faced moderate barriers, and claimants in quintiles 4 and 5 faced significant barriers.

Figure 7: Assessment Score Distribution



Using available data, we examine if claimant assessment scores are correlated with key claimant outcomes, such as UI duration, benefit amount collected, and employment and earnings in quarter 1 after entry.¹⁶ To estimate these relationships, we use a similar structure to that of model 2, except that it also includes indicators for the assessment score:

$$Y_i = T_i \cdot a + b_1 \cdot Q_1 + b_2 \cdot Q_2 + X_i \cdot c + Earn_i \cdot d + WDA_i \cdot e + Week_i \cdot f + g_i \quad [4]$$

Similar to model 2, the dependent variable is the outcome of interest (Y_i) and control variables include: T_i , a treatment indicator that equals 1 if the claimant was either in the RESEA or the RESEA+ group and 0 otherwise; X_i , which includes a constant term,

remaining 40% of claimants (those in quintiles 4-5). Quintile 4 (60-80th percentile) includes claimants with higher scores than 60% of claimants (those in quintiles 1-3) but lower scores than the remaining 20% of claimants (those in quintile 5). Quintile 5 (80-100th percentile) includes claimants with the highest 20% scores.

¹⁶ At this interim stage, we measure employment and earnings in quarter 1 for the entire evaluation sample. Employment and earnings in subsequent quarters are not currently available for the entire evaluation sample, so we will consider those outcomes in the Final Report.

observed characteristics, and UI entitlements; $Earn_{i,t}$, a vector with the earnings amount in each of the eight quarters before UI entry; $WDA_{i,t}$, a vector of fixed effects for the individual's WDA; and $Week_{i,t}$, a vector of fixed effects for the week when UI benefit receipt started.

This model also includes Q_1 , an indicator that equals 1 if the claimant assessment score is in quintiles 2–3 (20–60th percentile) or zero otherwise, and Q_2 , an indicator that equals 1 if the score is in quintiles 4–5 (60–100th percentile) or zero otherwise. The omitted category includes claimants in quintile 1, who have the bottom 20% assessment scores. Parameters b_1 and b_2 estimate the outcome difference between claimants in the 20–60th percentile range and claimants in the 60–100th percentile range with claimants in the 0–20th percentile range (the omitted category).¹⁷

Table 14 presents the results. Starting with the results for UI outcomes, claimants in the 20–60th percentile range collected 7.51 more weeks and \$2,310 higher benefit amounts than claimants in the 0–20th percentile range. Similarly, claimants with the top 40% assessment scores collected 8.20 more weeks and \$2,509 higher benefit amounts than claimants with the bottom 20% assessment scores.

Table 14: Regression Results, Relationship between Claimant Outcomes and the Assessment Score

	UI Receipt		Employment in Quarter 1	
	Benefit Weeks	Benefit Amount	Employed	Earnings
Treatment	-0.61 (0.10)***	-187 (32)***	0.006 (0.005)	-133 (150)
Assessment Score				
0–20 th percentile	--	--	--	--
20–60 th percentile	7.51 (0.13)***	2,310 (40)***	-0.169 (0.007)***	-3,965 (190)***
80–100 th percentile	8.20 (0.13)***	2,509 (41)***	-0.207 (0.007)***	-4,578 (193)***

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses. *** = statistically significant at the 1% level.

Results for quarter 1 employment and earnings show that, compared to those in

¹⁷ In addition to the specification reported, we estimated two alternative specifications. One specification included the raw assessment score as a control variable and the other specification included dummies representing the five quintiles of the assessment score distribution. The results from these alternative specifications, which are available upon request, produce essentially the same results and conclusions as those presented here.

the 0–20th percentile range: 1) claimants in the 20–60 percentile range were 16.9 percentage points less likely to be employed and had \$3,965 lower earnings, and 2) claimants with the top 40% of assessment scores were 20.7 percentage points less likely to be employed and had \$4,578 lower earnings.

These results provide strong evidence that the assessment score used by DWD to measure the employability of UI claimants is strongly associated with claimant outcomes. Claimants with the lowest assessment scores (i.e., those expected to face no reemployment barriers) have much shorter UI durations, collect lower benefit amounts, and have better reemployment outcomes than claimants with higher scores (i.e., those expected to face moderate or substantial barriers).

Note that differences between the parameters for claimants in the 20–60th and 60–100th percentile range suggest that those with the top assessment scores have higher UI receipts and lower reemployment outcomes. However, these differences are not statistically different from zero.

Another important policy question is whether the assessment score can be used to target RESEA to claimants who are more likely to benefit from receiving services. The Wisconsin RESEA program typically targets claimants with the highest assessment scores based on the rationale that those facing more reemployment barriers are more likely to benefit from the program.

The use of random assignment to determine RESEA participation, combined with the availability of the assessment scores for each claimant in the study sample, provides a unique opportunity to address this question. In particular, random assignment ensures that the assessment score distribution is similar across the three groups (RESEA, RESEA+, and control).¹⁸ Thus, we can estimate if the effects of the program may vary based on claimant assessment scores.

For this analysis, we extend model 4 above to include interaction terms between the treatment and assessment score indicators, as follows:

$$Y_i = T_i \cdot a_0 + a_1 \cdot Q_A \cdot T_i + a_2 \cdot Q_B \cdot T_i + b_A \cdot Q_A + b_B \cdot Q_B + X_i \cdot c + Earn_i \cdot d + WDA_i \cdot e + Week_i \cdot f + g_i \quad [5]$$

¹⁸ The average assessment score is 46.5 for RESEA, 45.8 for RESEA+, and 46.2 for control group claimants. Differences across the three groups are very small and lack statistical significance.

The added interaction terms include: $Q_A \cdot T_i$, which equals 1 if the claimant was assigned to the RESEA or the RESEA+ group *and* had an assessment score in the 20–60th percentile range; and $Q_B \cdot T_i$, which equals 1 if the claimant was assigned to the RESEA or RESEA+ group *and* had an assessment score in the 60–100th percentile range. In other words, this model assumes that the impact of the program varies based on the position of claimants on the assessment score distribution. In particular:

- a_0 estimates the impact of the program for claimants in the 0–20th percentile range, which is the omitted category;
- $a_0 + a_1$ estimates the impact for claimants in the 20–60th percentile range; and
- $a_0 + a_2$ estimates the impact for claimants in the top 40% of scores.¹⁹

Regression results, presented in Table 15, indicate that program effects increase with claimant assessment scores. The baseline treatment effects (a_0) for benefit weeks and benefit amount collected are close to zero, indicating that the program had no or little impact for claimants with the bottom 20% of assessment scores (the omitted category). However, the interactions of the treatment effect with the 20–60th percentile and 60–100th percentile indicators (a_1 and a_2 , respectively) are negative and statistically significant, indicating that the program was effective in reducing UI receipt for claimants with high assessment scores.

Estimated impacts for employment are close to zero. Notably, results show that the baseline treatment effect for earnings is negative and significant at the 10% level, indicating that program participation may have caused lower earnings for claimants in the bottom 20% of scores.

¹⁹ Note that we also estimated differential impacts based on the assessment score using two alternative specifications. In particular, one specification included the interaction of the assessment score with the treatment indicator, and the other specification included interactions between the treatment indicator with indicators for each quintile of the assessment score distribution (omitting quintile 1). These alternative specifications, which are available upon request, produced very similar results with those presented here.

Table 15: Regression Results, Program Impacts and the Assessment Score

	UI Receipt		Employment in Quarter 1	
	Benefit Weeks	Benefit Amount	Employed	Earnings
Treatment (a_0)	-0.05 (0.21)	-9 (64)	-0.003 (0.011)	-564 (302)*
Treatment x				
0-20 th percentile	--	--	--	--
20-60 th percentile (a_1)	-0.58 (0.25)**	-193 (81)**	0.019 (0.014)	665 (382)*
60-100 th percentile (a_2)	-0.88 (0.26)***	-276 (82)***	0.002 (0.014)	463 (384)
Assessment Score				
0-20 th percentile	--	--	--	--
20-60 th percentile	7.85 (0.20)***	2,422 (62)***	-0.180 (0.010)***	-4,353 (293)***
60-100 th percentile	8.72 (0.20)***	2,671 (63)***	-0.208 (0.011)***	-3,837 (296)***

Note: Reported are estimated parameters with standard errors in parentheses. *, **, *** = statistically significant at the 10%, 5%, 1% level.

To better understand these results, Table 16 presents the *average treatment effects* for claimants in each assessment score category. Starting with benefit weeks collected, the program’s average treatment effect was -0.05 , indicating a close-to-zero impact for claimants with scores in the bottom 20%. Effects for claimants in the 20-60th percentile range (-0.63) and the 60th-100th percentile range (-0.94) were statistically significant, indicating that the program reduced their UI durations by 0.63 and 0.94 weeks, respectively. The bottom row of Table 16 presents a formal test for the difference between these two effects. Results indicate that, although impacts for claimants with the top 40% scores are higher, they are not statistically different from the impacts for claimants with scores in the 20-60th percentile range.

Similar results are obtained for the benefit amount collected. The program had a close-to-zero impact for claimants with scores in the bottom 20% but led to statistically significant reductions in benefit amounts collected for claimants in the 20-60th percentile range ($-\$203$) and those in the 60-100th percentile range ($-\$285$). These two impact estimates are not statistically different from each other.

Finally, results for employment and earnings in quarter 1 confirm that the program had little or no effect on participant employment, as estimated effects are close to zero across all three categories. However, we find a negative treatment effect on earnings for claimants with scores in the bottom 20%, suggesting that requiring

claimants who appear to be job-ready to participate in RESEA may be counterproductive. Effects on earnings for claimants in the other two categories are not statistically significant.

Table 16: Program Impacts by Assessment Score Category

	UI Receipt		Employment in Quarter 1	
	Benefit Weeks	Benefit Amount	Employed	Earnings
Assessment Score				
0-20 th percentile (a_0)	-0.05 (0.20)	-9 (64)	-0.003 (0.011)	-563 (301)*
20-60 th percentile ($a_0 + a_1$)	-0.63 (0.16)***	-203 (51)***	0.016 (0.009)	102 (238)
60-100 th percentile ($a_0 + a_2$)	-0.94 (0.16)***	-285 (51)***	-0.001 (0.009)	-100 (242)
<i>Difference ($a_2 - a_1$)</i>	<i>-0.30 (0.23)</i>	<i>-82 (72)</i>	<i>-0.017 (0.012)</i>	<i>-202 (337)</i>

Note: Each row reports estimated average treatment effects with standard errors in parentheses, based on the results from Table 15. The last row reports the difference in the average treatment effect between claimants in the 60-100th percentile range and claimants in the 20-60th percentile range, with standard errors in parentheses. *, *** = statistically significant at the 10%, 1% level.

4. Process Evaluation Study

The process evaluation study uses program observations, document reviews, and interviews with program staff to examine the implementation of the RESEA program during the study period. The study emphasizes the methods and processes used for conducting RESEA sessions and delivering services. An important consideration for the study is whether RESEA services and service delivery are consistent across regions and over the study period. Moreover, the study identifies implementation challenges, as well as best practices and lessons learned, that emerge throughout implementation.

4.1. Data Sources

To assess the implementation of the RESEA program, we collected and analyzed three types of qualitative data:

- **Interviews.** The interviews were designed to gather information about program implementation from Job Service program administrators, program

staff and partners responsible for conducting the RESEA sessions, and UI staff. Over the course of the study period, interviews were conducted with staff from a sample of Job Centers selected to reflect variation across several key factors, such as location, type of population served, and size. Semi-structured interview guides were used to ensure information addressing all research questions was obtained, while providing flexibility for interviewees' responses.

- **Program Observations.** We observed selected RESEA sessions and follow-up activities, as permitted by RESEA participants. Observations were conducted using a checklist protocol for recording observations that were linked to the research questions and were designed to identify variation in the implementation of RESEA activities.
- **Document Review.** Additional program detail was gathered by reviewing existing materials related to the implementation of the RESEA program, both statewide and regionally. This included documentation about the data systems used to record RESEA meetings, templates for individual employment plans, labor market information, outreach materials, training materials and guidance documents, the letter requesting that claimants complete the assessment, and program reports.

The evaluation involved three rounds of data collection. The first round was completed early in the study period (August 2021) and prior to the start of random assignment, and interviews were limited to RESEA, UI, and program partner administrative and managerial staff. These early interviews were designed to gather information to inform the development of the logic model and the Evaluation Design Plan.

The second round of data collection occurred about halfway through the first year of random assignment (November 2022) to gather information about RESEA implementation through the perspective of RESEA “presenters” (called “counselors” hereafter) from a sample of Job Centers across the state. The third round of data collection occurred towards the end of random assignment (August 2023) and involved observations of RESEA initial and subsequent meetings with UI claimants.

4.2. Analysis and Findings

In this section, we describe findings identified through analysis of information

gathered through the data collection activities described above. Content analysis was used to obtain insights and identify overarching themes from interviews, the review of program documents, and RESEA meeting observations. These findings, organized and analyzed to allow themes to emerge, shed light on the processes, best practices, and challenges related to Wisconsin’s RESEA program.

Below, we first provide a general description of UI application processes and procedures for selecting RESEA participants,²⁰ followed by a discussion of various aspects of program implementation that we consider noteworthy, especially as context for interpreting quantitative findings and, ultimately, the impact study results.

4.2.1. Overview of UI Claims Process and RESEA Selection

The UI claims process in Wisconsin involves several steps. First, within 14 days of filing an initial claim through my.unemployment.wisconsin.gov, claimants are required to register on the JCW online system. If a claimant does not register within this timeframe, benefits are suspended and no benefits are paid until registration is complete.²¹ If registration is completed after the 14 days, the claimant is not eligible for benefits for any week prior to registration.

Claimants are paid no sooner than seven days after filing for benefits, assuming they have registered with Wisconsin Job Service using the online system. The first payment triggers a legally required letter to be sent by mail instructing the claimant to complete the online assessment within 14 days (the notification indicates the exact date). The claimant is also notified of the requirement through the UI web portal. If this activity is not completed, benefits are withheld. After completing the assessment, claimants meeting the threshold for participation in RESEA are notified via an online prompt that they are required to participate in the program. The RESEA claimant then has 21 days to schedule an RESEA session and attend it.

As described in the program’s TOC in Figure 1, RESEA sessions are held virtually, unless the claimant requests an in-person meeting. Prior to the pandemic, the vast majority of RESEA meetings were held in person and consisted of both a group orientation and one-on-one meeting. When conducted in person, RESEA meetings

²⁰ Note, the RESEA selection process reflects the process used to select claimants prior to the start of the RCT study.

²¹ There are some exceptions. Those enrolled in approved training or those with a return-to-work date are not required to register. See: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/uiben/faqs/registration.htm>.

also included a 3-hour orientation session, featuring visits from representatives of other services available to claimants (e.g., WIOA, veterans, employers). While the group orientation session is not currently a feature of the virtual meetings, claimants are directed to watch an online video after completing the online assessment and before scheduling the RESEA meeting. The video provides information on the work search services and resources available to claimants, duplicating the contents of the in-person group orientation.

The RESEA one-on-one session is described as intensive and tailored to the needs of each RESEA participant, with follow-up activities designed to further address those needs. During this meeting, program staff work with claimants to develop an individual employment plan, provide the claimant with labor market information, and review UI eligibility and work search requirements.²² RESEA participants are provided with assignments or tasks they are expected to complete as part of the RESEA requirement. Because of the information and the connections to services provided to claimants during the RESEA meeting, many may not immediately take up other reemployment services. Subsequent RESEA meetings are scheduled with claimants within 21 days of the first meeting. During these meetings, staff review the claimant's work search records and their continued UI eligibility as well as their individual employment plan.

4.2.2. Program Administration and RESEA Staff Resources

Program Administration. Currently, the key functions associated with implementing the RESEA program (i.e., providing reemployment services and reviewing UI eligibility) fall under two separate divisions within DWD: 1) the UI Division and 2) the Division of Employment and Training (DET). However, this was not always the case. Prior to 1996, DET and the UI Division were one division that handled scheduling, meeting with participants, UI disqualifications, and UI investigations as a team. In some locations, DET and UI operated under one roof even after the two divisions were created. However, this is no longer the case.

While communication across divisions may be significant, such separation may create challenges as well. The involvement of different staff in the operation of the same program and aligning and understanding each other's standard operating procedures requires increased effort for each entity. For example, on an

²² Having been suspended during the pandemic, Wisconsin's work search requirement was reinstated in May 2021. Claimants are required to compete four work search activities weekly and provide proof of such activities.

administrative level, a meeting with UI and DET staff resulted in identifying 28 points of connection requiring continuous communication. This was particularly evident when developing the online scheduling system tied to both the JCW online system and UI, with electronic messaging requiring legal approval by the Bureau of Legal Affairs (the department responsible for providing legal services to the UI program). Importantly, however, UI is always part of the decision-making process and is always made aware of all changes to service delivery.

For RESEA frontline workers, DET centralizes the process of communicating information related to UI issues. For example, rather than contacting UI staff directly, RESEA counselors submit any questions they have about UI eligibility or other UI issues to an RESEA mailbox; responses are provided by the DET RESEA programmer coordinator. Although they did not communicate directly with UI staff, RESEA counselors indicated that the process for getting answers to their questions was clear and effective.

In addition, the DET RESEA coordinator holds bi-weekly meetings with RESEA counselors. In addition to discussing any issues related to RESEA programming and service delivery, the meetings are used to discuss any new UI directives or other UI issues.

RESEA Staff Training. While similar, there was some variation in the training experiences expressed among RESEA counselors interviewed for the study. Since staff were trained at different points in time, this likely reflects such things as the natural evolution of training or procedural shifts, such as those necessary during the pandemic. However, in general, training appeared to provide new RESEA counselors with the skills needed to effectively implement the key components of an RESEA interview and to accurately record information about the RESEA meeting. RESEA staff most commonly described their training to include the following:

- Training to create and record information about the RESEA interview using the Automated System Support for Employment and Training (ASSET), DWD's designated [Management Information System \(MIS\)](#).²³
- Content training in such topics as RESEA, WIOA, and other related partner services, and UI compliance.
- Required online training modules, including a UI certification module.

²³ The information in ASSET is used, among other things, to help inform program staff on how to best serve participants and make decisions.

-
- One-on-one training with the RESEA coordinator.
 - Job shadowing with experienced RESEA counselors.

A SharePoint site provides valuable resources for RESEA counselors, including a step-by-step guide for conducting initial and subsequent sessions and for entering information in ASSET. This manual covers such topics as participant scheduling, the RESEA initial session, RESEA reporting in ASSET as well as an introduction to RESEA, the RESEA participation selection criteria, and the participant experience. In addition, RESEA staff have access to Job Center of Wisconsin which provides resources for referrals to workshops and other partner services such as WIOA training and Veteran's services.

Further, the bi-weekly meetings with the RESEA coordinator, as well as periodic multi-day trainings, were described as methods and opportunities for continuous training.

Staff Resources and Schedule Availability. Maintaining the capacity to conduct RESEA interviews is an important consideration for RESEA program staff to prevent scheduling backlogs and/or lack of available timeslots for self-selection by RESEA participants. The availability of staff to conduct RESEA interviews and/or to post their interview slots (both in-person and virtual) 21 days in advance, as required, can be affected by such things as: 1) the annual ebb and flow of UI claim numbers over the course of a year; 2) the difference in Center size and the number of claimants to be served; 3) staff schedules (vacation, sick, personal); 4) variation in claimant choice of an in-person vs. a virtual RESEA; and 5) week-to-week variation in RESEA counselor availability due to other work demands within their Centers.

However, Wisconsin uses several processes that help mitigate these challenges. For example, the state likely experiences greater flexibility with staffing since most RESEA meetings are conducted virtually. RESEA sessions conducted in person require that, in any given center, the number of participants scheduled must generally match the availability of RESEA counselors within that Center. However, sessions conducted virtually are conducted by staff located throughout the state. Further, RESEA counselors within the same Center have opportunities to assist others as needed or find assistance with coverage via the RESEA mailbox. In addition, the RESEA coordinator monitors the demand for appointments and the availability of slots on ASSET to troubleshoot potential backlogs.

4.2.3. Participant Identification, Notification and Scheduling

Identifying RESEA Participants. As described in Section 3.4.7, before the RCT impact study, DWD used the online assessment scores to determine which claimants would be required to participate in the RESEA program. The assessment involved 31 questions related to job search activities, job search preparedness, skill awareness, technology, and resources. An algorithm creates an assessment score, using weights for questions thought to reflect the importance of each in assessing claimant reemployment barriers. Claimants with the highest scores—i.e., those expected to face more reemployment barriers—were referred to RESEA based on program capacity. To accommodate variation in RESEA staff availability, DWD adjusted the assessment score threshold for RESEA participation based on the volume of UI claims each week.

At the time of our interviews, staff indicated that it was unclear which questions best predicted the benefits of the RESEA program. The findings presented in Section 3.4.7 indicate that the assessment scores are both highly predictive of claimant outcomes and can be used to predict which claimants are likely to benefit from RESEA participation. Note that, during the RCT intake period, from April 2022 through September 2023, DET authorized the use of random assignment for assigning claimants to different study groups, temporarily suspending the use of the assessment scores. The program resumed the use of the assessment scores after the end of the RCT intake period.

Notification of RESEA Selection. Claimants selected to participate in RESEA are notified of their selection in two ways: a notification letter sent via the United States Postal Service (USPS) and a notification when the claimant logs into JCW and the UI portal. The notification informs the claimant of their selection and requirement to participate in RESEA, the consequences for non-participation (i.e., that it may impact their benefit receipt), and provides instructions for self-scheduling an RESEA appointment. Despite these multiple modes of notification, counselors report that claimants often state that they were unaware of the requirement. Further, in some cases, claimants believe that mandated participation in RESEA is punitive. In these cases, RESEA counselors must work with the claimant to dispel any misunderstandings about the nature of the RESEA and gain their trust.²⁴

²⁴ This response prompted one RESEA counselor to wonder if “toning down” the language in the letter might help resolve this issue.

Participant Online Scheduling. Wisconsin is among a minority of states that request that RESEA participants schedule their own RESEA meetings online. This process provides claimants with a great deal of flexibility, providing choice in date and time for the meeting. When RESEA meetings were conducted in person, claimants also had the option of choosing the meeting location. According to DWD staff, providing claimants with this flexibility is expected to reduce the number of “no-shows”, that is, the percentage of participants attending their scheduled meetings may increase when meetings are self-scheduled versus if the meetings are scheduled by staff. Additional benefits of participant scheduling include reducing staff burden by reducing the need to reschedule claimants and increasing claimant compliance.

While staff uniformly agree on the many advantages of self-scheduling, the time to create appointments in JCW is not insignificant for RESEA counselors, especially for virtual sessions where each appointment must contain a unique Teams’ link.

4.2.4. Administration of the RESEA Meetings

Attendance and non-compliance. Although RESEA counselors do not make reminder calls prior to the scheduled interview, the system sends an automated email to the claimant two days prior to the event. If the claimant is not heard from within 5 minutes of their scheduled interview time, staff will attempt to reach them by phone, allowing them 10 minutes to continue with their scheduled appointment. After one hour, their no-show status is documented in ASSET and benefits are subject to being held. Wisconsin’s UI system monitors missed sessions through nightly checks of the DET system. A missed meeting signals that the claim is out of compliance and a denial is triggered.

If the claimant schedules a new session within the same week, benefits will be reinstated and the claimant receives benefits as scheduled. However, if the claimant reschedules any week thereafter, the claim is considered out of compliance and benefits will be lost for each week until compliance is met. If rescheduled within 21 days, benefits will resume at the time of rescheduling, but benefits for lost weeks will not be paid.²⁵ It should be noted, however, that claims of individuals missing two RESEA meetings may be investigated by an adjudicator, as this may reflect an issue of availability.

When claimants are out of compliance with their RESEA due to non-attendance,

²⁵ While the claimant may be able to get these lost benefits back, they must file a claim to do so.

they are notified of such through both the JCW online system and the UI claimant portal. Further, claimants whose benefits have been denied or suspended will receive a letter through USPS notifying them of this action.

Initial and Subsequent RESEA Meetings. As required, RESEA meetings include developing an individual employment plan, providing the claimant with labor market information, and reviewing UI eligibility and work search requirements. Initial RESEA meetings are expected to last anywhere between 30 and 45 minutes, with counselors allocated an additional 30 minutes for documentation and data entry.

In preparation for the RESEA meeting, claimants are asked to bring their resumes as well as documentation for four work search activities from the previous week. RESEA counselors pull together information on assigned claimants from the JCW system. This generally includes examining their resume (as available), their claims status (particularly if they have stopped claiming which may indicate reemployment), their work search activities, and any other information that may help them when conducting the meeting.²⁶

The most common services provided by RESEA counselors during the meeting involve reviewing and updating the claimant's resume. However, counselors also commonly discuss the claimant's employment goals; provide tips on work search and interview techniques; discuss the content of the orientation video; help the claimant navigate the JCW website and identify their local Job Center; identify workforce events within the local area; and, to a lesser extent, make job referrals.

RESEA counselors also review the claimant's completed assessment to identify other services (e.g., the FoodShare program) and in-person job-search workshops that may be of value to the claimant and inform the employment plan. The most common referrals are for resume development workshops. Claimants are also referred to services of partner programs including WIOA and Wagner-Peyser, and programs under Veteran's Services and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). While job training may benefit RESEA participants, some indicated that it may be underutilized as a referral option because the goals for reemployment associated with the RESEA may conflict with participation in training.

For claimants assigned to the RESEA group, referrals to job-search workshops and

²⁶ Claimants are expected to notify RESEA counselors if they will not be attending due to reemployment.

services are recommended but not required. However, all those assigned to the RESEA+ group are mandated to complete an assigned workshop or service as outlined in their employment plan. These claimants must complete their assignments and self-schedule and attend a subsequent meeting within 21 days of the initial meeting. Described as both a challenge and a benefit, subsequent meetings are not necessarily conducted by the same RESEA counselor involved in the initial meeting.²⁷ On one hand, counselors cannot rely on previously acquired knowledge about the claimant. On the other hand, the process provides an opportunity for RESEA counselors to start afresh, perhaps introducing a new and different perspective from what was previously provided.

Though briefer (about 15 minutes), the subsequent RESEA meeting includes: 1) a check of assignment completion; 2) a UI eligibility review; 3) employment plan review; and 4) identification of other recommended services that may be of use to the claimant. Completion of the required assignment is documented in case notes and claimants must provide proof of attendance. If there is none or the claimant is identified as non-compliant, one week of benefits will be lost.

If an eligibility issue is identified as a result of the eligibility review conducted during the initial or subsequent RESEA meeting, the RESEA counselor will identify it as such in ASSET and document the issue through case notes. If the counselor has questions as to whether or not the issue should be flagged as potential non-compliance, a question would be submitted through the RESEA mailbox.

Problems related to the claimant's work search tend to be the most frequent issue associated with non-compliance. Therefore, the process of reviewing the claimant's work search serves as both an opportunity for training the claimant on the associated requirements and a method for gathering information related to noncompliance. For example, RESEA counselors make suggestions for what types of work search are allowed and would be helpful to the claimant. In addition, they may make suggestions for documentation needed to ensure their claim is protected in the case of an audit.

Some believe that if work search non-compliance is suspected, the level of information about the claimant's work search activities may not be sufficient for UI adjudicators to pursue disqualification.²⁸ RESEA counselors consider themselves

²⁷ Claimants use JCW to schedule their subsequent RESEA and are, thus, subject to staff availability.

²⁸ The counselor believed this to be true even though required work search documentation has increased over time.

“information gatherers.” They do not verify claimant work search through employer contacts nor make determinations. Counselors may discuss the concern with the claimant and reinforce the eligibility requirements; however a decision regarding further investigation and/or the findings impact on benefits is made by a UI adjudicator.

About 85% of all RESEA meetings are currently held virtually and 15% are provided in person. While RESEA counselors believe the same level of service can be provided through either virtual or in-person meetings, they also acknowledge the merits of each. For example, virtual meetings provide both claimant and staff flexibility while in-person meetings are an attractive option for those less computer savvy, so that claimants can more directly be introduced to the resource room.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this evaluation is to examine the effectiveness of the Wisconsin RESEA program in improving the labor market outcomes of UI claimants and in reducing the duration of claims and benefit amounts paid by the state’s UI program. The evaluation includes an RCT study to assess the overall impacts of the program and to assess the relative effectiveness of requiring claimants to attend a single RESEA session versus attending an initial and a follow-up session. The evaluation also includes a process evaluation study to assess the implementation of the program and provide contextual background to interpret the findings of the RCT study. This report presents the interim findings based on data collected through March 2024.

To implement the RCT study, the evaluation team worked with DWD to modify the existing RESEA selection process so that claimants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: *RESEA group* (single RESEA session), *RESEA+ group* (initial plus follow-up RESEA session), and *control group* (no RESEA requirements). The RCT intake period began in April 2022 and ended in September 2023. During this period, 48,110 RESEA-eligible claimants were assigned to the RESEA group (29%), RESEA+ group (30%), and the control group (41%).

Analysis of UI data shows that random assignment produced RESEA, RESEA+, and control groups that are similar in terms of observed claimant characteristics, controlling for week of random assignment. In particular, the three groups are

balanced in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, age, education, veteran status, disability status, UI eligibility duration, weekly benefit amount, workforce development area, and prior earnings. These results provide confidence that any differences in outcomes after controlling for week of random assignment across the three groups can be used to estimate both effects of the program overall and the effects of requiring claimants to attend a single RESEA session versus two sessions.

Using available data through March 2024, this report presents interim estimates of the impacts of the program. We find that about 69-70% of RESEA and RESEA+ claimants attended the initial RESEA meeting, as required, while about 22% were exempted for various reasons, including that they had found jobs prior to the meeting. Only about 9% of claimants were not exempt and did not comply with requirements. In addition, the majority of RESEA+ claimants who attended the initial meeting also attended the follow-up meeting; overall, about 54% of RESEA+ claimants attended both meetings.

Comparisons of service take-up rates across the RESEA, RESEA+, and control groups show that the program was effective in pushing UI claimants to receive services. In particular, about 65% of RESEA and 64% of RESEA+ claimants received job counseling services, compared with only 4% of control cases.

Using UI payments data available through March 31, 2024, we find that the program led to significant reductions in the number of benefit weeks collected, benefit amount collected, and likelihood of exhausting benefit entitlements. In particular, the program reduced average UI duration by 0.55 weeks, leading to an average \$171 in UI savings per participant. These results represent reductions of 4.2% in the number of weeks claimed and 4.4% in benefit amount claimed compared with the outcomes of control group claimants. Moreover, the program reduced the likelihood of exhausting benefits by 0.7 percentage points, an 8.2% effect relative to the control group mean.

We also generated interim estimates of the impact of the follow-up RESEA session by comparing program impacts between RESEA and RESEA+ claimants. Results show that the follow-up RESEA session reduced UI duration by 0.18 weeks and benefit amounts collected by \$80, *in addition* to the impacts caused by the initial RESEA session. However, estimates of the additional impact of the follow-up RESEA session are not statistically different from zero so, at this interim stage, we cannot reject the possibility that the follow-up session has no impacts.

Conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the program lies outside the scope of work of this evaluation. However, we obtain a rough estimate of the cost-effectiveness of the program by comparing the average UI savings caused by each version of the RESEA program (RESEA and RESEA+) with the average government expenditure per participant. This analysis indicates that the average UI savings per participant exceed the average program expenditure per participant by \$12 for the RESEA group and by \$8 for the RESEA+ group. These results indicate that the UI savings caused by each version of the program cover the monetary cost of serving participants.

Finally, our analysis indicates that the online assessment score, used by DWD to assess claimant reemployment barriers, is strongly predictive of claimant outcomes and can be used to improve program targeting. Claimants with low assessment scores (i.e., those who face no reemployment barriers), have significantly shorter UI receipt durations and smaller total benefit payments, and much better reemployment outcomes than claimants with high assessment scores (i.e., those who face moderate or significant barriers). Moreover, the program has large and statistically significant impacts on UI receipt for claimants with moderate or high assessment scores but has no statistically significant impacts for claimants with low scores. Results for employment and earnings reveal no positive effects, but suggest that requiring claimants who face no reemployment barriers to participate in RESEA may be counterproductive.

Overall, these interim findings provide promising evidence for the effectiveness of the Wisconsin RESEA program. The program was very successful in connecting claimants with job counselors and in providing claimants with job counseling services. Importantly, the program caused significant reductions in the UI spells of participants, thereby leading to substantial savings for the UI program. In fact, the UI savings caused by both versions of the program—one with a follow-up session and one without—just about covered the cost of serving participants. Additionally, the interim findings provide support for the view that using assessment scores to target RESEA services to claimants facing reemployment barriers improves program effectiveness.

Finally, we emphasize that these findings are based on analysis of data collected at this interim stage of the evaluation and thus do not represent the final evaluation findings. The final results, using data collected through March 2025, will be presented in the final evaluation report in June 2025.

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