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About the Survey

In an effort to build best practices for all states, including those who have or will recently join SIDES (Alaska, California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, and Virginia), the National SIDES Team sought to collect data pertaining to states' current practices in operating and marketing SIDES and E-Response. All state SIDES teams who are currently in production with SIDES were asked to complete an online survey, and their responses have been collated and graphically represented in this report.

SIDES Research

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About SIDES

SIDES, a program of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), is a web-based transmission system of electronic information; a data exchange system between employers, third party administrators (TPAs), and UI agencies. Employers/TPAs with a limited number of UI claims gravitate towards SIDES E-Response, an easy to use and free website that can be used to enter the requested UI information. Large and/or multi state employers tend to utilize SIDES, computer to computer interface, as it allows employers to provide separation and other high volume data to states without staff intervention.

The following data exchange formats are available to the forty-four states and all employers/TPAs live with SIDES: Separation Information, Earnings Verification, Determinations and Decisions, and Monetary and Potential Charges.

For more information on SIDES and SIDES E-Response, please visit <http://info.usides.org>. Most states provided contact information, should you have state specific questions. Please contact Mariann A. Huggins at mariann.huggins@itsc.org for more information.

Executive Summary

As of February 28, 2015, forty-four states are live with SIDES and six more plan to go live within the next two years. Hard on the heels of the Fiscal Year 2016 Presidential budget proposal, which mandated state use of SIDES, states are looking to implement SIDES or increase employer participation of SIDES without having to reinvent the wheel. States' current practices are shared in the pages that follow.

States with the most success in employer engagement, outreach, and marketing follow a multi-faceted approach: a dynamic and easily navigated SIDES page on the state website, mass employer marketing through mailings and print ads, and a consistent social media presence.

States that have seen success in signing employers up for SIDES and SIDES E-Response promote SIDES on their state websites, either requiring employers to sign up or highlighting it as the “go-to” and easiest way to respond for employers. Most effective state website features include the following SIDES/SIDES E-Response info:

- Link to sign up/register
- Facts, FAQs, and benefits, User Guide
- State contact information (phone and/or email)
- Link to <http://info.uisides.org>
- SIDES included in the Employer Handbook

Successful marketing strategies have included customizing the SIDES Employer Marketing Toolkit and developing in-house print ads and pamphlets for mailings and email attachments. Mailers should be concise and catchy.

Lastly, states deploy social media involvement as another employer marketing outlet, resorting to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Consistent real-time information is a must to keep social media accounts up-to-date and to develop relationships with the target audience. Developing and imbedding instructional videos on the SIDES employer page is a good interactive way to bring attention to the program and to divert calls and/or emails to the Help Desk.

Question 1: Select Your State

Multiple survey entries from a state were allowed for a more comprehensive view and survey participation was voluntary. Six states did not respond and three states do not currently participate in SIDES. In total, this report is the result of 55 responses from 38 states.

Question 2: How many employers are subject to UI coverage?

The states that are not included in the table below either did not provide a number or were unsure of the number. The following responses are current as of 02/28/2015:

Arizona	142,000
Colorado	157,245
District of Columbia	33,000+
Delaware	26,731
Georgia	214,730
Hawaii	27,000
Iowa	75,000 total but average about 20,000 per year
Idaho	47,000
Illinois	360,000+
Kentucky	89,000
Louisiana	97,500
Maryland	140,000 registered. 90,000 involved with UI claims
Maine	48,000
Missouri	147,141
Mississippi	53,000
North Carolina	202,294
North Dakota	23,000-24,000
Nebraska	57,000
New Hampshire	40,000
Nevada	62,000
Ohio	230,000
Oklahoma	86,869
Oregon	80,000
Pennsylvania	311,000
South Carolina	100,000
South Dakota	26,563
Tennessee	120,000 active employers, 6,812 for February, 2015
Texas	503,362

Utah	73,823
Virgin Islands	2,000
Vermont	20,000
Washington	212,000
Wisconsin	169,416
West Virginia	35,801
Wyoming	22,000

UI data is produced quarterly by USDOL and can be found on Employment & Training Administration’s page¹ and viewed by quarter and year. Charts and summary tables are included for each state’s statistics, where “Subj. Employers” indicate the employers covered by UI in the state for the quarter.

Question 3: Do you require employers to “register or sign-up” with the state in order to begin using SIDES E-Response?

Yes	76%	29
No	24%	9
<i>answered question</i>		38

Well over half of the states surveyed stated that a SIDES registration form can be found on the state website.

Iowa	Although it does require employers to register or sign-up in order to begin using SIDES E-Response, they are currently attempting to require all new employers to register and providing the option to opt out.
Missouri	Currently sends SIDES registration information along with the paper separation request notices to its employers.
Ohio	Allows its employers to elect one of four ways to receive their request for separation forms: mail, email alert for self-service on state website, SIDES, and SIDES E-Response.

¹ Unemployment Insurance Data Summary. Employment & Training Administration. United States Department of Labor. <http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data.asp>

Question 4: Is SIDES and E-Response informational material posted on the state website?

Yes	84%	32
No	16%	6
answered question		38

Here is a closer look to what the states display for SIDES information on their websites. Of the states with a dedicated page on their website to SIDES, most display fact sheets and videos, enrollment information, and frequently asked questions. Most successful SIDES state pages are dynamic, either located on the landing page of the Employer Services page or somehow tie in as front and center to the employer doing business with the state. Simply having a tab or page on SIDES may not be sufficient if no traffic is created to the page itself.

Place SIDES info either on landing page for UI or Employer Services.

Arizona	Has developed its own Frequently Asked Questions ² from the materials of the SIDES Marketing Toolkit and its own produced SIDES Brochure ³ . Arizona also links its SIDES page ⁴ to the E-Response User Guide (available at http://info.uisides.org), employer registration form, and the USDOL video on SIDES Employer Messaging. Arizona also includes a sample email notification of a separation information request ⁵ .
Delaware	Displays SIDES information on the landing UI page of its website ⁶ ; lists the benefits and includes the link to USDOL video on SIDES Employer Messaging. Delaware explains how SIDES and E-Response work, how an employer can register to participate in SIDES, and who to contact locally with questions.
District of Columbia	Focuses ⁷ on just the E-Response FAQs, fact sheet, and process overview, while also including the USDOL video on SIDES Employer Messaging.

² Frequently Asked Questions: UI SIDES and SIDES E-Response. Arizona Department of Economic Security. <https://www.azdes.gov/main.aspx?menu=316&id=9544>

³ UI SIDES Brochure. Arizona Department of Economic Security. <https://www.azdes.gov/appFiles/Pamphlets/pdf/UIT-1162APAMNA.pdf>

⁴ UI SIDES. Arizona Department of Economic Security. <https://www.azdes.gov/landing.aspx?id=9435>

⁵ Sample email. Arizona Department of Economic Security. https://www.azdes.gov/uploadedFiles/Employment/Unemployment_Insurance_Benefits/SIDES%20Email%20to%20ERs.pdf

⁶ Division of Unemployment Insurance. State of Delaware: The Official Website of the First State. <http://ui.delawareworks.com/>

⁷ State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) E-Response Web Application. DC Department of Employment Services. <https://app.does.dc.gov/eresponse>

Georgia	Similar to Maryland but also includes an entire section on SIDES and SIDES E-Response registration, benefits, and maintenance in its Employer Handbook ⁸ (pages 116-118).
Idaho	Also displays SIDES E-Response header and a link to its own page on the landing UI page ⁹ for employers. Upon navigating to the page, employers see links to register for SIDES E-Response and information on it.
Maine	Mentions SIDES in an in-house created five minute YouTube video ¹⁰ focusing on helping employers protect their business from higher taxes, which they showcase on the Employer Services page. Maine has a concise page for employers on responding to separation requests ¹¹ , which emphasizes that email (via SIDES, of course) is the quickest and easiest way to be notified.
Maryland	Showcases SIDES as front and center on its UI landing page ¹² , and after selecting the SIDES hyperlink ¹³ , employers see a comprehensive view of SIDES. Some of the information available are: the benefits of SIDES and SIDES E-Response, the marketing toolkit documents and E-Response User Guide, a link to submit response for separation requests, a link to the http://info.uisides.org website, and a link to email the Maryland SIDES team with any questions.
Missouri	Focuses on SIDES E-Response with state created instructions ¹⁴ and a nestled YouTube video ¹⁵ .
Nebraska	Has taken significant steps to inform its employers of SIDES and encourage participation, including creating their own FAQs ¹⁶ which link to their own YouTube educational videos. Nebraska has also added a paragraph on SIDES E-Response in its Employer's Guide to Unemployment

⁸ Employer Handbook. Georgia Department of Labor. <http://www.dol.state.ga.us/pdf/forms/dol224.pdf>

⁹ Unemployment Insurance. Idaho Department of Labor. <http://labor.idaho.gov/dnn/idl/Businesses/eservices.aspx>

¹⁰ Protect Your Business from Higher Taxes oc. YouTube video on MaineDOL channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-swFaUFe9g#t=192>

¹¹ Respond to a Separation/Wage Information Request. State of Maine Department of Labor.

http://www.maine.gov/labor/unemployment/separation_request.html

¹² Division of Unemployment Insurance. Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation.

<http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/employment/unemployment.shtml>

¹³ What is SIDES? – State Information Data Exchange. Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation.

<http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/employment/uisides.shtml>

¹⁴ Instructions for the SIDES E-Response Website. Missouri Department of Labor & Industrial Relations.

<https://labor.mo.gov/sites/default/files/SIDESInstructions.pdf>

¹⁵ SIDES E-Response For Small Businesses. YouTube channel of MODept Labor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESZt0cP-Ptw>

¹⁶ SIDES E- Response. Nebraska Department of Labor <http://www.dol.nebraska.gov/SIDES/sidesFAQS.pdf>

	Insurance ¹⁷ on pages 24-25 and a link to its SIDES-dedicated page ¹⁸ (which is also accessible on its website under Employer Services). Nebraska’s SIDES page includes a phone number and an email for questions as well as a link to the employer portal to register for SIDES.
New Hampshire	Does not currently have a permanent place on its site for SIDES, they announce any employer seminars that they hold on their Facebook and Twitter pages.
North Carolina	Hyperlinks SIDES E-Response Fact Sheet (part of SIDES marketing toolkit) with a local point of contact and USDOL video on SIDES Employer Messaging ¹⁹ .
Pennsylvania	Also has a well-developed SIDES FAQs ²⁰ on its website and a page dedicated to both SIDES and SIDES E-Response. Pennsylvania also includes the USDOL video and a link to enroll in SIDES. District of Columbia ²¹ focuses on just the E-Response FAQs, fact sheet, and process overview, while also including the USDOL video on SIDES Employer Messaging.
South Dakota	Includes SIDES information ²² as part of UI Tax page.
Tennessee	Another state with plethora of SIDES information on its website is Tennessee. Much like Nebraska, Tennessee includes a couple of paragraphs on SIDES and SIDES E-Response in its Handbook for Employers ²³ on page 38 but it also provides an Employer’s Quick Reference Guide ²⁴ with a link to its SIDES landing page. The SIDES page includes fact sheets, much-utilized login troubleshooting guide ²⁵ , and all the additional forms (in fillable PDF format) that the state sends to employers as attachments to separation information requests.

¹⁷ The Employer’s Guide to Unemployment Insurance. Nebraska Department of Labor

<http://www.dol.nebraska.gov/workers/The%20Employer's%20Guide%20to%20Unemployment%20Insurance.pdf>

¹⁸ SIDES. Nebraska Department of Labor. <http://www.dol.nebraska.gov/SIDES/>

¹⁹ SIDES Employer Messaging. United States Department of Labor.

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/media/webcast/20130409-dol-sides-test-4578/>

²⁰ SIDES Frequently Asked Questions. Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry.

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=1838153&mode=2>

²¹ State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) E-Response Web Application. DC Department of Employment Services. <https://app.does.dc.gov/eresponse>

²² Unemployment Insurance Tax – State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) and SIDES E-Response. South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation. <http://dlr.sd.gov/ui/uitaxsides.aspx>

²³ Handbook for Employers. State of Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

<http://www.tn.gov/labor-wfd/es/Employers/forms/HandbookforEmployers2013.pdf>

²⁴ Employer’s Quick Reference Guide. State of Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

<http://www.tn.gov/labor-wfd/es/EmployerQuickReferenceGuide.pdf>

²⁵ TN E-Response Login Troubleshooting Guide. State of Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. http://www.tn.gov/labor-wfd/sides/E-Response_Login_Troubleshooting_Guide.pdf

Question 5-6: Do you maintain a Help Desk or have a dedicated phone number for SIDES calls only? If so, how many staff do you have and how many calls do you receive?

Yes	53%	20
No	47%	18
answered question		38

The states that do not appear in the list below either do not have a Help Desk for SIDES calls or did not indicate the number.

Arizona	(602) 542-2460
Colorado	(303) 318-9055
District of Columbia	(202) 698-7522
Georgia	(404) 232-7401
Iowa	(866) 239-0843
North Carolina	Phone: 1 (919) 707-1150 Fax: 1 (919) 715-0780 Toll Free: (866) 278-3822
Nebraska	(402) 471-9910
Nevada	(775) 687-6828
Oklahoma	(405) 962-7595
Oregon	(503) 947-1685
Pennsylvania	(717) 783-0612
Texas	(512) 463-2260
West Virginia	(304) 558-0192
Wyoming	(307) 473-3702 for employers. (307) 235-3271 for TPAs

States were split in half with regards to providing a Help Desk for SIDES-related calls. Most states who responded “No” have an email address or “Help” feature for online employer support. Wyoming has separate lines established for employers and TPAs.

Of those states who do maintain a Help Desk for SIDES-related calls, the number of staff dedicated:

Of those states who do maintain a Help Desk for SIDES-related calls, the number of staff dedicated	
Average	4
Iowa	5-15
Missouri	30
Nebraska	10

SIDES-related calls received in 2014	
District of Columbia	80. ~250 during first year
Georgia	~300
New Hampshire	~100
Ohio	150
Pennsylvania	~500
Tennessee	50
Texas	10-20

Question 7-8: Do you have a designated online “Help” feature to address SIDES questions? If so, how many staff do you have and how much time do you dedicate?

Yes	42%	8
No	58%	11
<i>answered question</i>		19
<i>skipped question</i>		19

Of the states that have an online “Help” feature for SIDES-related questions, all of them referred to their SIDES information material page (see question 4).

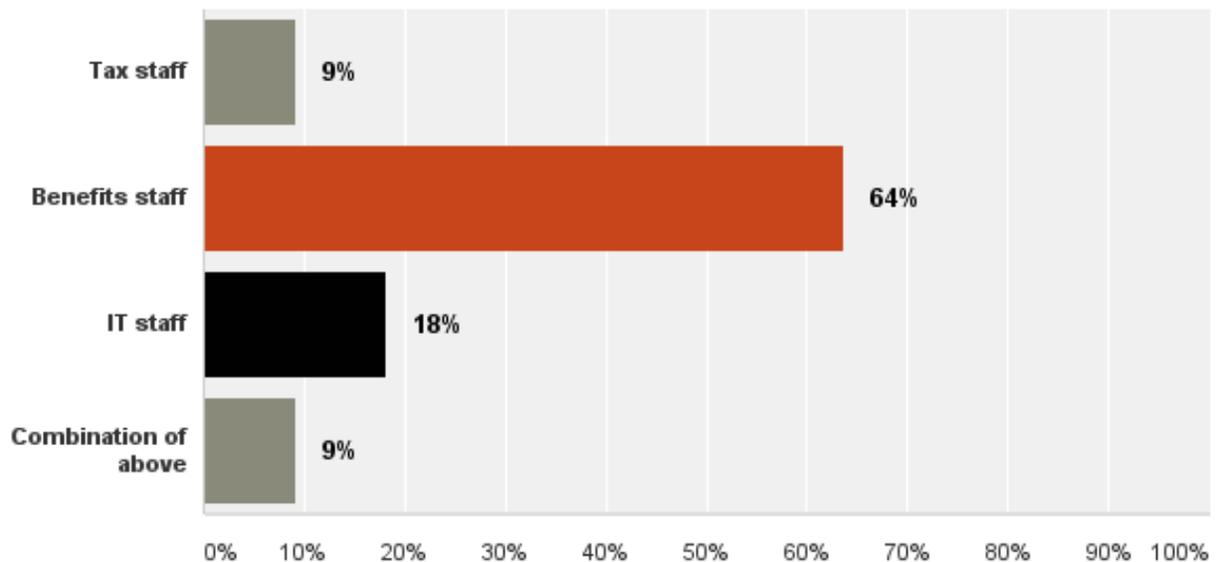
District of Columbia	Tax staff take the initial SIDES calls and resolve registration/ PIN/other access questions and escalate the calls to the benefits staff for claimant of request specific questions; all other calls get forwarded to IT staff
Pennsylvania	Benefits staff answer SIDES questions because SIDES is viewed similar to a paper employer response, which has traditionally been handled by benefits staff
Tennessee	Initially after SIDES implementation IT staff handed all calls and later began training Help Desk staff and the two teams created a training program for replacement staff
Wyoming	Benefit staff responds to employer questions and tax staff responds to TPA questions

Question 9: Are the SIDES questions more technical or are the questions more about how to complete the request for information?

States indicated that the majority of SIDES questions are either technical or login issues. The login issues included locked accounts, forgotten PINs, and moving past error messages on the submission page.

Question 10: What staff are the SIDES questions answered by?

What staff are the SIDES questions answered by



While most of the states operate their help desks with benefits staff, District of Columbia uses IT, benefits, and tax staff to answer SIDES questions. Georgia and Tennessee have IT staff and Arizona has tax staff answer SIDES questions.

Question 11: How did you decide which staff would handle the types of inquiries and the reasons why?

District of Columbia	Tax staff take the initial SIDES calls and resolve registration/PIN/other access questions and escalate the calls to the benefits staff for claimant of request specific questions; all other calls get forwarded to IT staff.
Nebraska	Much like the rest of the states who indicated that benefits staff answer SIDES questions, indicated that SIDES is viewed similar to a paper employer response, which has traditionally been handled by benefits staff.
Tennessee	Initially after SIDES implementation IT staff handed all calls and later began training Help Desk staff and the two teams created a training program for replacement staff.
Wyoming	Benefits staff responds to employer questions and tax staff responds to TPA questions.

Question 12: Please provide examples of the most frequent type of question(s) employers asked.

- Login/PIN problems
- Registration questions
- Compensation after separation
- No active requests shown
- Adding/changing email notification contacts
- Whether SIDES E-Response is the same as the paper form received in the past

Question 13: Can the National SIDES Team help your state reach out to any large/multi state employers re: Web Services, who are not currently a client of a Web-Services participating TPA?

States that indicated “Yes” provided a list of large/multi state employers. This information has been withheld for the purposes of this report.

Question 14: Can the National SIDES Team help your state reach out to any employer associations/groups etc. with information regarding SIDES Web Services or E-Response?

States that indicated “Yes” provided a list of large/multi state employers. This information has been withheld for the purposes of this report.

Question 15: Has your state implemented or in the process of implementing penalties for non-responsive employers or TPAs? If "Yes", what is the penalty? Are Penalty charged to employer or TPA, both?

Yes	45%	15
No	55%	18
answered question		33
skipped question		5

Number or Percentage of Total Untimely Responses that Warrant Penalties	
Ohio	4
Georgia	3
Pennsylvania	1
Maryland	1
North Carolina	>2 or >2%, whichever is greater

Maryland	Instituted a \$15 assessment charge to employers who fail to respond timely to a separation information request, even those represented by a TPA.
Nebraska	Even before implementing SIDES, had begun taking away appeal rights from a non-responsive employer or TPA. Arizona sometimes charges a higher tax rate on the overpayment.
Idaho Kentucky Mississippi Pennsylvania Washington	Do not allow the non-responsive employer (not a representative TPA) to receive a credit for benefit charges once an overpayment is established.
Wisconsin	Typically charges non-responsive employers for the full amount of the overpaid benefits, and reserves the right to suspend the privilege of a TPA to act as an employer’s representative if during a 12-month period, 5% or more of the appeal hearings find that the employer failed, without good cause, to provide correct and complete information requested.

Question 16-17: Does your state use any of the following social media platforms? Do you have any questions about the social media platforms?

Answer Options	Yes	Will Soon
Facebook	26	2
Twitter	25	1
YouTube	22	0
LinkedIn	10	0
Google Plus	2	0
Instagram	1	1
Pinterest	1	1
Tumblr	0	0
answered question	38	

Social media presence has many benefits. Most commonly used platforms, Facebook and Twitter, allow states to simultaneously hone their messages to their dual audiences: the employers and the claimants, and generate website traffic back to the state website via hyperlinks. The more states post on social media, the more chances they create for inbound traffic to their profile and their website.

A well-maintained page or handle also allows the state to build relationships with and answer questions from its customers. States also use Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to post available jobs, job fairs, and soft skill building articles and practices for their job-seekers. Posts about benefit charges, tax rates, separation requests, and any other relevant law changes catch state employers' attention. States also share unemployment and job-related articles



that often times local or state news stations pick-up and re-post, generating conversations and traffic that spans far beyond the particular state's following.

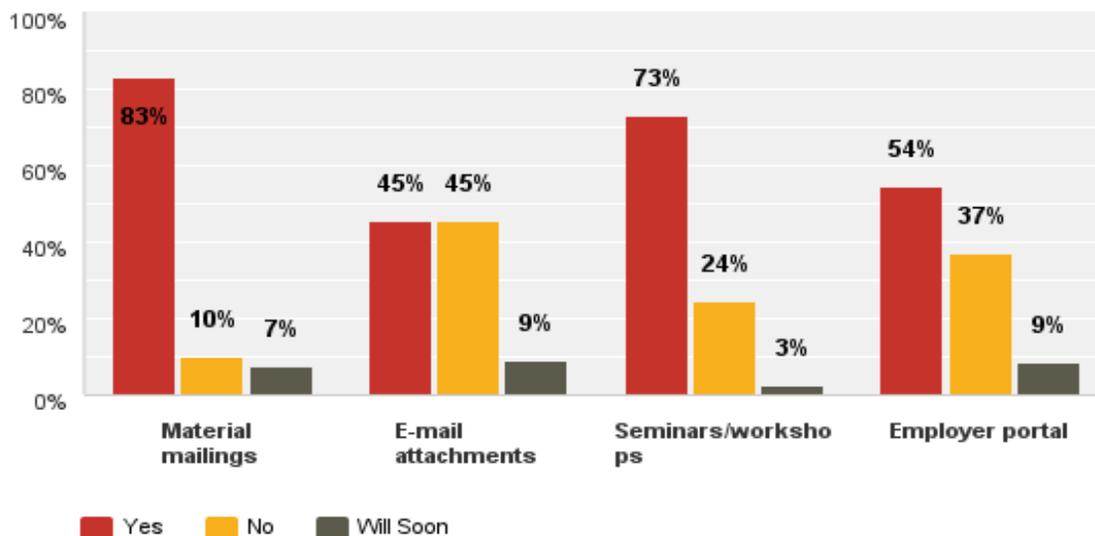
States such as Georgia²⁶, Idaho²⁷, South Dakota²⁸ that indicated using LinkedIn, also post articles, unemployment statistics, and job recruiting events and expositions.

²⁶ Georgia Department of Labor. LinkedIn page. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/georgia-department-of-labor>

²⁷ Idaho Department of Labor. LinkedIn page. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/idaho-department-of-labor>

²⁸ State of South Dakota. LinkedIn page. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/state-of-south-dakota>

Question 18: How else does your state inform employers of SIDES and SIDES E-Response?



Maryland Missouri Ohio Pennsylvania Tennessee	Have done employer presentations or seminars in the past
Georgia Pennsylvania	Send out employer newsletters with updates on UI statistics, law updates/changes, and SIDES information
Maine	Sporadically holds a Human Resources day with all departments for a brief presentation and a SIDES booth. Hawaii and Idaho run print ads in all state newspapers and their online sites

Of the forty two states that responded to this question, the employer outreach strategies ranked from most to least used are: material mailings (32 states), seminars/workshops (27 states), employer portal (21 states), and lastly e-mail attachments (17 states). State material mailings typically include facts, benefits, and directions to sign-up/register for SIDES and/or SIDES E-Response. Some states send either the SIDES-produced Marketing Toolkit or their own infographics as email attachments as part of e-blasts to all registered employers with active UI claims.

We are piloting employer cold calls. Two weeks in, and we have charged 10 hours and signed up 15 employers.
-Idaho

The National SIDES Team has had the pleasure to visit Pennsylvania’s Department of Labor and

Pitch SIDES to an employer while answering their questions via phone
-Oregon

Industry employer seminars, which they co-sponsor with the Chamber of Commerce, PA CareerLink, and a local/regional Society Human Resources Management (SHRM) chapter. Pennsylvania markets the seminars via Facebook, Twitter, their website, and CareerLink offices. The seminar covers CareerLink services available to employers, recent UI law changes, and an overview of SIDES (as well as an E-Response site demo). Lastly, these seminars are also pre-approved by the HR Certification Institute (HRCI), which attending HR professional attending upon their employers’ behalf can benefit from.

Question 19: What marketing/outreach strategies have proven to be:

Most Successful	Least Successful	Most Labor Intensive
Direct mailings (16)	Direct mailings (2)	Direct Mailings (5)
Seminars (4)	Agency website	Association partnerships for meeting sponsorship
Internet advertising (3)	Employer Portal	Large scale events
Print ads (2)	Print ads	Stopping mail notices
E-blasts (2)		Single sign-on with SIDES
Employer Portal		Cold calls
Videos		Online media
Cold calls		

Although direct employer mailings have proven to be one of the most successful outreach strategies, states also recognize how laborious this multi-step, multi-department task can be, and a couple of states claimed to have not seen their benefits. Note that New Hampshire, one of the states that states mailings as least successful strategy, has seen challenges marketing to employers as their benefits system already allows electronic response to claim notices and fact finding requests.

States found that in order to increase readability and read rate among mailed employers, state mailings (and print ads) should be catchy and concise. Once mail reaches the target audience, the pamphlet/ad/factsheet has just a few seconds to catch the eye of the employer. For example, if a state is targeting its mass mailing efforts at the employers with a

higher tax rate, the ads may benefit from a picture of a frazzled person or a stack of paper along with the SIDES information. Mailers also need not include all the information provided by the SIDES Marketing Toolkit. Most importantly, the information needs to relate to the employer and create the need to get to the state SIDES page to sign up or register.

-
- FREE**
 - EASY**
 - EFFICIENT**
 - SAVES MONEY**
 - SAVES TIME**
-

Online media – platforms such as Facebook and Twitter – as stated by Idaho, can be considered labor intensive. In a world where trends and news travel and can change at the speed of light, to stay within your audience’s glance information stream needs to be real-time and consistent. Often times when a state embarks on a journey of Twitter or Facebook presence, staff either tag team or rotate between dedicating time to the state’s social media account.

National SIDES Team thanks all state UI agencies for their continued support of SIDES.