Project Name

Evaluation of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission
21-090-01-OESC

Rapid Response Evaluation: It is estimated this evaluation will be completed within 90 to 100 days from the date of the entrance conference, which took place on September 16th, 2020.

Project Background

The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) was created in 1941 by the Legislature and oversees the operations of local unemployment offices across the state, which provide job placement services to the unemployed. The OESC also collects unemployment insurance from employers to pay out to jobless Oklahomans, collects statistical information to share with the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, and supports worker training.

Due to the stress placed on the economy because of the novel coronavirus, questions have been raised about the ability of OESC to efficiently and effectively serve unemployed citizens in a timely manner.

Original Scope and Project Description

From the workplan approved by the Legislative Oversight Committee:

- Evaluate the efficacy of resources available to the program for delivery of services.
- Examine occurrence of fraudulent filings.
- Examine the rate of unverified Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).
- Assess disaster readiness and process mapping to reduce cycle-time to end-user.

Material Findings from Entrance Conference

The entrance conference with the executive team from OESC revealed that agency leadership is currently pursuing several change initiatives and investments in technology and assets to ensure that they are better equipped to handle another mass-unemployment event such as the one posed by COVID-19.

Agency leadership presented several pathways for the LOFT team to partner with them, including the following:

1. Examine the processes for claiming unemployment as originally intended.
2. Examine the efficacy and necessity of the classified and unclassified employee system.
3. Examine the efficacy and necessity of the Board of Review, an appellate body that reviews denied claims.

Evaluation Objectives

Owing to the stated proactive nature of OESC's reforms, the LOFT evaluation team recommends that this evaluation take the following form:

1. Briefly examine the historical context behind the COVID-19 pandemic response, including any waived flags and unemployment verification, the possibility of Federal claw back of funds, and regional comparative analysis.

2. Examine the current context of the agency, to include its governance and accountability, such as the Board of Review; processes; IT infrastructure, to include current and planned investments; and other components, as necessary.

3. Assess the potential outcomes from a change management perspective of the top three major strategic initiatives that are being planned by the agency in response to performance challenges.