

NORTH
Dakota | Job Service
Be Legendary™

Coming to the aid of the agency during lockdown, handling 350% more claims and paying \$1 billion in relief

Early in the COVID-19 outbreak, unemployment claims in North Dakota surged 350%, and the state also had to process an additional \$1 billion in CARES and FFCRA payments. While the crisis pushed many state IT systems to the brink, Unisys helped Job Service North Dakota (JSND) meet demand in 90 days.

Rapid transition

Unisys migrated our longtime customer, JSND, to the cloud as it faced a historic, COVID-caused spike in unemployment claims and benefits. JSND had migrated its ClearPath® MCP Software Series over several generations of physical infrastructure, and its IT staff was prepared to retire when COVID-19 emerged in March 2020. Unisys developers supplemented retiring staff and migrated the custom software to GovCloud on Microsoft Azure using CloudForte®.

Evolving a custom application to a native cloud environment

Unisys' skills and experience were an ideal match for the challenge. The agency now runs its unemployment insurance applications solely on Azure, eliminating its dependence on physical hardware and providing real-time fail-over to an automated recovery instance. Unisys hosts the unemployment insurance software applications in a secure and stable cloud environment and can provide integration services to support the agency's digital transformation. JSND can now evolve its application ecosystem using Microsoft cloud-native tools and services.

The solution

Unisys transitioned JSND's ClearPath MCP Software Series for Microsoft Azure from hardware-based systems to the GovCloud using CloudForte with support for Azure Site Recovery and Application Services to support the development and maintenance of mission-critical applications. An Azure-based virtual tape library replaced the physical backup process, including remote system monitoring, database administration, batch operations and systems administration – all staffed by Unisys professionals 24/7.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that we need to be more agile than ever in developing and deploying new applications to deliver benefits to citizens in immediate need.

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Pat Kelly
IT Director at JSND

The technical management challenge

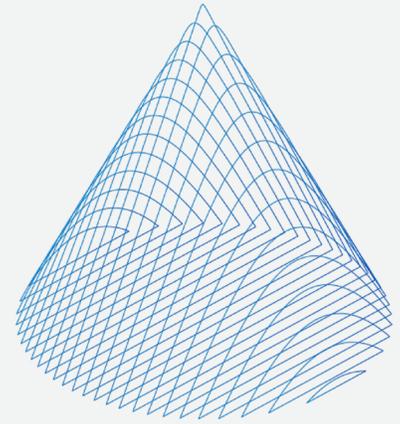
Job Service North Dakota systems and processes have evolved on the Unisys ClearPath® MCP Software Series platform for more than 40 years – across several generations of mainframes and data centers. The agency’s application suite is deeply customized to address state and federal law. When the pandemic began, unemployment filings jumped by 350%, which required paying out 14 times the number of claims compared to pre-COVID volume.

The technology solution had to improve system performance without breaking existing processes or requiring extensive recoding. Magnetic tape backups used in the on-premises data center were emblematic of the challenge. A failure could cause a two-week recovery period due to the lack of holistic disaster recovery solution. JSND also faced the challenge of transitioning from one generation of staff, many of who had been with the organization since it adopted Unisys technology in the 1980s. The transition to the Cloud provided new capabilities requiring new skills.

Results and benefits

- Processed unemployment benefits for 3.5 times more citizens between March and April 2020 due to the spike at the onset of COVID-19, from 9,500 in 2019 to 35,600.*
- Paid out 14 times more claims – 280,000, up from 20,000 – valued at more than \$1 billion in benefits, up from \$80 million annually, between April 2020 and October 2021.
- Accelerated recovery time from up to two weeks to a few minutes using virtual tape backups, and increased production processing speed from 25% to a peak of 100%.
- Reduced capital equipment and maintenance costs by eliminating the physical data center footprint and tape backup system while maintaining existing mission-critical applications.

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



They no longer have to worry about power space cooling or housing that mainframe. JSND extended the life of their software by 10 years and has peace of mind that its systems will function securely with improved management and customizability.



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