



# Journey to the Top

## 2026 SIDES SEMINAR

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH USDOL

April 14-16, 2026 | Denver, CO

### **DRAFT AGENDA**

*Note: All times listed in Mountain Standard Time (MT)*

## **TUESDAY, APRIL 14**

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7:00a – 12:00p	<b>EXHIBITOR CHECK-IN &amp; SET UP</b>	Crystal Ballroom Foyer
7:00a – 6:30p	<b>HOSPITALITY DESK</b> *Check in & pick up your name badge to attend all sessions	Crystal Ballroom Foyer Registration Desk
1:00p – 5:00p	<b>EXHIBITOR SHOWCASE</b>	Crystal Ballroom Foyer
1:00p – 2:00p	<b>PRE-CON CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS</b>	

### **FROM BASE CAMP TO THE TOP – UI 101 PART 1 | CRYSTAL BALLROOM**

Are you ready to climb the mountain of Unemployment Insurance? This UI-101 workshop will take you from the base camp of UI history to the summit of modern decision making, and finally survey the systems designed to enhance the UI experience.

Speakers: **Maridale Vanek**, UI Subject Matter Expert, SIDES, NASWA  
**Ben Peirce**, Vice President, Services, NASWA

### **SKI LODGE | CRESTONE A**

A dedicated meeting space for states and integrated partners to connect with one another.

### **SCALING SIDES E-RESPONSE EXCHANGES & HANDS-ON LAB | REXFORD**

Join us for a hands-on lab designed to allow you to survey our existing exchanges and map out the climb employers make when responding to requests for UI information.

2:00p – 2:15p

**BREAK**

Crystal Ballroom Foyer

2:15p – 3:30p

**PRE-CON COCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**FROM BASE CAMP TO THE TOP – UI 101 PART 2 | CRYSTAL BALLROOM**

Are you ready to climb the mountain of Unemployment Insurance? This UI-101 workshop will take you from the base camp of UI history to the summit of modern decision making, and finally survey the systems designed to enhance the UI experience.

Speakers: **Maridale Vanek**, UI Subject Matter Expert, SIDES, NASWA  
**Ben Peirce**, Vice President, Services, NASWA

**IDH 101 | Crestone A**

**SCALING SIDES E-RESPONSE EXCHANGES | REXFORD**

Join us for a hands-on lab designed to allow you to survey our existing exchanges and map out the climb employers make when responding to requests for UI information.

3:30p – 3:45p

**BREAK**

Crystal Ballroom Foyer

3:45p – 5:00p

**PRE-CON COCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**TRAIL GUIDES – SIDES 101 Q&A | CRYSTAL BALLROOM**

First time attendees! Come meet members of the Operations Committee. State regional representatives and integrated partner voting members will be available to answer any questions you may have about the Seminar, SIDES or how to make the most of your week!

Moderator: **Emily Duncan**, Vice President, Questco  
**Tyler Smith**, UI Technical Services Specialist, Idaho Department of Labor

**SCALING SIDES E-RESPONSE EXCHANGES | REXFORD**

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5:00p – 6:30p	<b>SIDES SEMINAR WELCOME RECEPTION with Exhibitors</b>	Crystal Ballroom Foyer
<b>HOSPITALITY DESK</b>	<i>*Check in &amp; pick up your name badge to attend all sessions</i>	

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

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7:30a – 5:00p	<b>HOSPITALITY DESK</b> <i>*Check in &amp; pick up your name badge to attend all sessions</i>	Crystal Ballroom Foyer Registration Desk
8:00a – 5:00p	<b>EXHIBIT SHOWCASE</b>	Crystal Ballroom Foyer
8:30a – 9:30a	<b>OPENING PLENARY SESSION</b>	Crystal Ballroom

### WELCOME & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**Jim Cotter**, Senior Director, Integrity Systems, NASWA

### COLORADO WELCOME

### NASWA WELCOME & UPDATES

### USDOL UPDATES

9:30a – 10:00a	<b>BREAK</b>	Crystal Ballroom Foyer
10:00a – 11:00a	<b>PLENARY SESSION</b>	Crystal Ballroom

### STATE OF THE STATES Regions VI – X

Moderator: **Rachael Griffith**, UI Administrator, Delaware Department of Labor

11:00a – 11:15a	<b>BREAK</b>	Crystal Ballroom Foyer
11:15a – 12:00p	<b>PLENARY SESSION</b>	Crystal Ballroom

### ASK US ANYTHING

Ask the NASWA SIDES or SIDES Support teams your burning questions!

12:00p – 1:15p     **LUNCH**

1:15p – 2:15p     **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**TOOLS OF THE TRADE** | CRYSTAL BALLROOM

Let's talk about the various SIDES exchanges! States and integrated partners have implemented different exchanges – give us your feedback! What works well? Are there any changes to be made? New exchanges? How can we support participation in additional exchanges? What are the barriers you are currently facing?

Moderator: **NASWA SIDES TEAM**

**ROPED IN ON ACCURACY** | CRESTONE B

The climb to ensure integrity within the UI system is sometimes steep. This workshop provides a look into Improper Payment within state programs, focusing on how these payments are identified, measured, and reduced. See what states are doing to reduce improper payments and strengthen program integrity.

Moderator:

Speakers:

**Donna Njuki**, Quality Assurance & Reporting Manager, Kansas Department of Labor

**Pete Shipman**, Assistant Director Benefits Support, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

**UI ITSC** | ASPEN

Moderator: **Brett Flachsbarth**, Director, UI ITSC, NASWA

**IDH LAB** | REXFORD

2:15p – 2:30p     **BREAK**

Crystal Ballroom Foyer

2:30p – 3:30p     **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

## **FIRESIDE CHAT: E-RESPONSE GOALS, MARKETING, SSO | CRYSTAL BALLROOM**

The SIDES Employer Outreach Toolkit was launched in 2023 and has since yielded positive results for several states. Join speakers from Connecticut, Kansas, and Idaho as they share how they made the toolkit work for them! This session is perfect for those that want to nab some quick wins and increase SIDES E-Response registrations.

Moderator:

Speakers: **Gregg Kallajian**, Operations Coordinator, Connecticut Department of Labor

**Donna Njuki**, Quality Assurance & Reporting Manager, Kansas Department of Labor

**Tyler Smith**, UI Technical Services Specialist, Idaho Department of Labor

## **ELEVATING THE UI EXPERIENCE | CRESTONE A**

Coordinating solutions across states and employers

Moderator: **Alison Duronslet**, Compliance Delivery Manager, Automatic Data Processing, Inc. (ADP)

Speakers: **Katie Watkins**, OnClaim

**Steve Solovic**, SVP of Operations, Experian Employer Services

**Lauren Mann**, Director of Client Services & Program Management, Industrial UI Services

## **DIFFERENT PATHS TO THE PEAK | CRESTONE B**

## **NASWA LEARNING/PFMLA | ASPEN**

## **SCALING SIDES E-RESPONSE EXCHANGES | REXFORD**

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3:30p – 4:00p

**BREAK**

Crystal Ballroom Foyer

4:00p – 5:00p **CLOSING PLEINARY SESSION**

**GROUP ROUNDTABLE** (STATE/TPA Q&A)

Moderator: **Jerome Lord**, Director, Integrity Data Hub, NASWA

## THURSDAY, APRIL 16

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7:30a – 5:00p **HOSPITALITY DESK** Crystal Ballroom Foyer  
\*Check in & pick up your name badge to attend all sessions Registration Desk

7:30a – 4:00p **EXHIBIT SHOWCASE** Crystal Ballroom Foyer

8:30a – 9:30a **PLENARY SESSION** Crystal Ballroom

**STATE OF THE STATES** Regions I-V

Moderator: **Steve Solovic**, SVP of Operations, Experian Employer Services

9:30a – 10:00a **BREAK** Crystal Ballroom Foyer

10:00a – 11:00a **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**PROTECTING THE PATH: FRAUD DETECTION WITH SIDES** | CRYSTAL BALLROOM

Moderators: **Rachael Griffith**, UI Administrator, Delaware Department of Labor

**Steve Solovic**, SVP of Operations, Experian Employers Services

Speakers:

**Gregg Kallajian**, Operations Coordinator, Connecticut  
Department of Labor

**Lauren Mann**, Director of Client Services & Program Management,  
Industrial UI Services

## **SIDES TESTING – NO HILL FOR A STEPPER | CRESTONE A**

Designed to guide participants through the essential steps of a successful testing process, this session is ideal for professionals involved in state program management or business operations who are seeking practical strategies and insights to elevate their testing practices.

Moderator: **TBA**

Speakers: **Shaun Meinert**, Business Automation Analyst, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

## **MOVING MOUNTAINS: AI AND PROCESS AUTOMATION | CRESTONE B**

Agencies are always facing an avalanche of funding cuts and having to learn to “freestyle” heavy workloads. Join the discussion on how AI can assist in the automation process.

Speaker: **Michael Burke**, UCB Director, New Hampshire Employment Security

## **IDH | ASPEN**

## **SCALING SIDES E-RESPONSE EXCHANGES | REXFORD**

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11:00a – 11:15a **BREAK**

Crystal Ballroom Foyer

11:15a – 12:00p **BREAKOUT SESSION**

## **BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMING UI TEAM | CRYSTAL BALLROOM**

Moderator: TBA

Speaker: **Holly Newell**, Chief of UI Operations, Indiana Department of Workforce Development

**REACHING NEW HEIGHTS WITH ADDITIONAL FACT-FINDING & DETERMINATIONS & DECISIONS** | CRESTONE A

In this session, speakers share their experiences in planning for and implementing the Additional Fact-Finding and Determinations & Decisions exchanges. Listen in as they discuss the benefits they've seen since its implementation, and the challenges that these exchanges have helped to address.

Moderator: **TBA**

Speaker: **Tyler Smith**, UI Technical Services Specialist, Idaho Department of Labor

**THE MOUNTAIN VIEW** | CRESTONE B

Modernizing is like navigating a new mountain terrain. We need to all make it to the top together. If we don't, we haven't succeeded. Let's talk about who needs to be considered during your modernization.

**IDH** | ASPEN

**Model connectors & CERTIFICATES** | REXFORD

12:00p – 1:30p **LUNCH**

1:30p – 2:15p **BREAKOUT SESSION**

**TAX SESSION – TOP 10 ISSUES PART 1** | CRYSTAL BALLROOM

Moderator:

Speaker: **Michael Orton**, Experian Employer Services

## SECURITY ON THE SLOPES | CRESTONE A

Our ski patrol will lead a discussion into what SIDES fields can be utilized to connect the claimant information provided to employers and integrated partners by mail. We've added ClaimantID to Earnings Verification and Benefit Charges. How do we work together towards a stronger partnership and more efficient processes?

Moderator: **Renee Carboni**, Quality Assurance Manager, NSN Employer Services

Speaker: **Pete Shipman**, Assistant Director Benefits Support, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

## TRAVELING THE TECHNICAL – BUSINESS SIDE | CRESTONE B

Join us as we jump into a business discussion about the technical side of SIDES and IDH. Learn why certificates are important and how model connectors work. This is your opportunity to learn more about the technical carabiners that keep us connected.

Speakers: **Daniel Berry**, Java Support Developer, IDH, NASWA

**David Zemel**, SIDES Service Delivery Director, ATOS IT Solutions & Services

## IDH | ASPEN

## SCALING SIDES E-RESPONSE EXCHANGES | REXFORD

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2:15p – 2:45p

**BREAK**

Crystal Ballroom Foyer

2:45p – 3:45p

**BREAKOUT SESSION**

## TAX SESSION – TOP 10 ISSUES PART 2 | CRYSTAL BALLROOM

Moderator: **TBA**

Speaker: **Michael Orton**, Experian Employers Services

### **QUALITY AT THE SUMMIT – THE STEPS BEHIND REACHING QUALITY | CRESTONE A**

Speaker: **Daniel Berry**, Java Support Developer, IDH, NASWA

Struggling with what facts you need to make quality eligibility determinations? Join our Q&A session, “BTQ Questions and Answers,” where Department of Labor experts tackle your toughest questions head-on. This session is designed for states and employers seeking clarity on policies, and practical strategies for obtaining and providing quality information.

### **CREATING EFFICIENCIES USING TECHNOLOGY | CRESTONE B**

### **SCALING SIDES E-RESPONSE EXCHANGES | REXFORD**

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3:45p – 4:00p      **BREAK**      Crystal Ballroom Foyer

4:00p – 5:00p      **CLOSING PLEANARY SESSION**      Crystal Ballroom

SIDES Awards Ceremony

## **FRIDAY, APRIL 17**

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8:30a – 12:00p      **OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**      Crystal Ballroom