



# Journey to the Top

## 2026 SIDES SEMINAR

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH USDOL

April 14-16, 2026 | Denver, CO

*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 – 6:30p	<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 & GAME SHOW – CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF IDH FEATURES AND FUNCTIONALITY | CRESTONE A**

In this session attendees will be provided an overview of the Integrity Data Hub (IDH) features, functionalities, and capabilities. Discussion will include how leveraging the IDH dramatically enhances the fraud detection and prevention efforts of state workforce agencies. The session will close with a fun, highly interactive game show where attendees can test their newfound knowledge.

Speaker: **Jerry Lord**, Director, Integrity Data Hub, NASWA

**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: **Caleb Walker**, Business Analyst, Netacent  
**Tyler Smith**, SIDES Technical Assistant, NASWA

**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.

5:00p – 6:30p      **SIDES SEMINAR WELCOME RECEPTION with Exhibitors**      Crystal Ballroom Foyer

*\*Check in & pick up your name badge to attend all sessions*

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

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

8:00a – 5:00p      **EXHIBITOR SHOWCASE**      Crystal Ballroom Foyer

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

### WELCOME & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

### COLORADO WELCOME

**Joe Barela**, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

### NASWA WELCOME & UPDATES

**Randy Gillespie**, Vice President, Finance & Integrity, NASWA

### USDOL UPDATES

**Candace Edens**, Director, Division of UI Operations, USDOL

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

10:00a – 11:00a      **PLENARY SESSION**      Crystal Ballroom

### STATE OF THE STATES Regions VI – X

Members in NASWA regions VI through X will share their state initiative updates.

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

11:00a – 11:15a **BREAK** Crystal Ballroom Foyer

11:15a – 12:00p **PLENARY SESSION** Crystal Ballroom

### ASK US ANYTHING

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

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

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

12:00p – 1:15p **LUNCH** *On Your Own*

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?

Moderators: **Adam Swartz**, Owner, Industrial UI

**Jennifer Bertrand**, Montana Department of Labor and Industry

Speakers: **Candace Edens**, Director, Division of UI Operations, USDOL

**Christina Corbett**, Senior Manager SIDES, NASWA

**Julie Zawislak**, Program Specialist SIDES, NASWA

**Maridale Vanek**, UI Subject Matter Expert SIDES, NASWA

### UI ITSC | ASPEN

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

### FOLLOWING THE TRAIL: HOW THE IDH USES DATA ANALYTICS TO IDENTIFY SUSPICIOUS TRENDS | CRESTONE B

This session will provide attendees with an overview of how the IDH uses state data to identify suspicious activity at the national and state level. Discussion will include anomaly detection, advanced analytics, and future enhancements. This session will

close with Link Analysis Bingo, a fun and interactive game that showcases the value of link analysis within the unemployment insurance framework.

Speakers: **Megan Wiggins**, IDH Data Team Manager, NASWA  
**Chris Templeton**, Sr. Data Analyst, NASWA

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 and Kansas 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: **Kerri McNair**, Program Coordinator, SIDES, NASWA  
Speakers: **Gregg Kallajian**, Operations Coordinator, Connecticut Department of Labor  
**Lindsay Winters**, UI Relations Manager, Kansas Department of Labor

**ELEVATING THE UI EXPERIENCE | CRESTONE A**

Coordinating solutions across states and employers. A seamless UI experience doesn't happen in isolation. This session examines how states, TPAs, and employers can partner more effectively to improve the Unemployment process across state portals, SIDES, paper claims, and account registration. Learn how collaboration, alignment, and shared accountability help elevate both service delivery and outcomes as we continue the Journey to the Top.

Moderator: **Alison Duronslet**, Compliance Delivery Manager, Automatic Data Processing, Inc. (ADP)  
Speakers: **Katie Watkins**, Head of Operations, OnClaim  
**Lauren Mann**, Director of Client Services & Program Management, Industrial UI Services  
**Devin Collins**, Director – Business Transformation & Implementation, UC Alternative  
**Tonya VanKowe**, Senior Director Unemployment Cost Management, Experian

## NASWA LEARNING | ASPEN

Moderator: **Amy Smith**, Senior Director, Learning & Library, NASWA

## 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 – 4:00p      **BREAK**      Crystal Ballroom Foyer

4:00p – 5:00p      **PLENARY SESSION**      Crystal Ballroom

## GROUP ROUNDTABLE

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      Registration Desk  
attend all sessions

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

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

## STATE OF THE STATES Regions I-V

Members in NASWA regions I through V will share their state initiative updates.

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 Employer Services

Speakers: **Gregg Kallajian**, Operations Coordinator, Connecticut Department of Labor  
**Jerome Lord**, Director, Integrity Data Hub, NASWA  
**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: **Julie Zawislak**, Program Specialist, SIDES, NASWA

Speakers: **Shaun Meinert**, Business Automation Analyst, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development  
**Jake Lee**, SUI Partner Manager, Justworks

### **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

### **IMPROVING THE PATH: IDH OUTCOMES RECORDS | ASPEN**

This session will provide an overview of IDH outcomes records. Discussion will include how the IDH uses outcomes provided by states to improve results, how states can provide outcomes within the current framework, and possible future enhancements.

Speakers: **Megan Wiggins**, IDH Data Team Manager, NASWA  
**Kendrah Gonzalez**, IDH Operation Specialist, NASWA

### **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.

11:00a – 11:15a **BREAK**

Crystal Ballroom Foyer

11:15a – 12:00p **BREAKOUT SESSION**

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

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

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: **Eric Congious**, Supervisory UI Program Specialist, USDOL

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

**Renee Carboni**, Director of Process and Quality, NSN Employer Services

**Ryan Haycook**, Workforce Development Technical Specialist, Louisiana Works

**Tim Walker**, UI IT Senior Manager, Arizona Department of Economic Security

**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.

Speakers: **Rich Siegel**, President, AUTO

**Jorie Cummis**, CEO, AUTO

**THE IDH JOURNEY – THE IDH'S JOURNEY UP THE MOUNTAIN OF FRAUD DETECTION AND PREVENTION | ASPEN**

In this session attendees will be provided an overview of the journey the IDH has taken, from idea, to inception, to enhancements, and beyond. The session will highlight the past, present, and future of IDH functionalities, capabilities, and features.

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

**MODEL CONNECTORS & CERTIFICATES | REXFORD**

This lab will allow you to familiarize yourself with the SIDES model connector and work with certificates.

12:00p – 1:30p

**LUNCH**

*On Your Own*

1:30p – 2:15p

**BREAKOUT SESSION**

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

Our tax expert counts down the top 10 issues. This session will highlight reasons six through ten.

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

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

**Sandy Carter**, Experian Employer Services

### **SECURITY ON THE SLOPES | CRESTONE A**

Our ski patrol will lead a discussion about which 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

**Wendy Sanders**, Benefits Services Consultant, FloridaCommerce

### **TRAVELING THE TECHNICAL – BUSINESS SIDE | CRESTONE B**

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.

Moderator: **Andrea Frederick**, Integration Engineer, NASWA

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

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

### **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.

2:15p – 2:45p      **BREAK**      Crystal Ballroom Foyer

2:45p – 3:45p      **BREAKOUT SESSION**

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

Our tax expert counts down the top 10 issues. This session will highlight reasons one through five.

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

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

**Sandy Carter**, Experian Employer Services

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

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 hear from you about your toughest challenges. This session is designed for states and employers seeking clarity on policies, and practical strategies for obtaining and providing quality information.

Moderators: **Candace Edens**, Director, Division of UI Operations, USDOL

Speaker: **Eric Congious**, Supervisory UI Program Specialist, USDOL

**CREATING EFFICIENCIES USING TECHNOLOGY | CRESTONE B**

Various state representatives and integrated partners gather to discuss how technology can take your UI processes to the next level.

Moderator: **David Zemel**, SIDES Service Delivery Director, ATOS

Speakers: **Katie Watkins**, Head of Operations, OnClaim

**Rahul Raj**, TPM Leader, Walmart

**Amanda Seagle**, UC Section Supervisor, Alabama Department of Workforce

**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.

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

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

**SIDES AWARDS CEREMONY**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 17**

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

Crestone Ballroom