

Ohio resumes overhaul of state's aging unemployment benefits computer system

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COLUMBUS, Ohio—Ohio's unemployment benefits office is resuming a long-anticipated overhaul of its 21-year-old computer system, more than two years after federal prosecutors [indicted top officials with the company](#) initially hired to do the work.

On Dec. 31, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services announced that it awarded a contract of up to \$83.3 million to Geographic Solutions Inc. of Palm Harbor, Florida to replace Ohio's unemployment computer system, which dates back to around 2004 and was unable to handle [the massive amount of jobless claims](#) filed during the coronavirus pandemic.

That contract cost also includes ongoing maintenance through up to six two-year renewal periods, [according to a department press release](#).

The upgrade, which is now expected to be done by late 2026, will make several improvements to the state's jobless benefits system, the release stated, including:

- Giving Ohioans access to a single site to handle federal, state and agency benefits applications; review and manage their benefits; and appeal decisions made about those benefits.
- Simplifying self-service options for claims and appeals, with ongoing improvements based on user experiences in Ohio and other states.
- Allowing state unemployment office workers to access claimant and employer information and documents without having to use other applications.

The system that Geographic Solutions will set up in Ohio is an "off-the-shelf" program that is already being used successfully in other states, according to the release.

On Monday, the Ohio Controlling Board approved an \$18 million spending request from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. About \$10 million to \$11 million of that will be used for the first leg of the upgrade, while the remainder will go toward paying increased maintenance costs for the current system, among other costs, according to department spokesman Tom Betti.

Various parts of the system will be updated “strategically” to avoid disrupting the state’s current unemployment system or the ability of Ohioans to file and maintain claims, the department’s release stated.