

# Pandemic Workforce Recovery

Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

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OKLAHOMA



# Current Situation

# Unemployment in Oklahoma

## August 2021

- Oklahoma reached a 3.2% unemployment rate in August, ranking 8th for lowest unemployment in the nation
- OESC paid out \$37 million in unemployment benefits to Oklahomans

## September 2021

- To date, the continued claims four-week moving average has decline for the past seven consecutive weeks
- Oklahoma continues to near pre-pandemic unemployment levels
- State UI Trust Fund paying out less than \$5M/week in UI benefits.



**Governor Kevin Stitt** ✓  
@GovStitt



In August, Oklahoma added 3,300 jobs for a total of 1.8 million in the workforce - the most EVER in state history!

Our unemployment rate dropped to 3.2% - we're still 8th lowest in the nation. [#TopTenOK](#) [@OESCnews](#)

[bls.gov/news.release/l...](https://bls.gov/news.release/l...)

2:04 PM · Sep 20, 2021 · Sprout Social

40 Retweets 12 Quote Tweets 268 Likes

# UI Trust Fund and Conditional Factor

## Oklahoma Employer Tax Rate

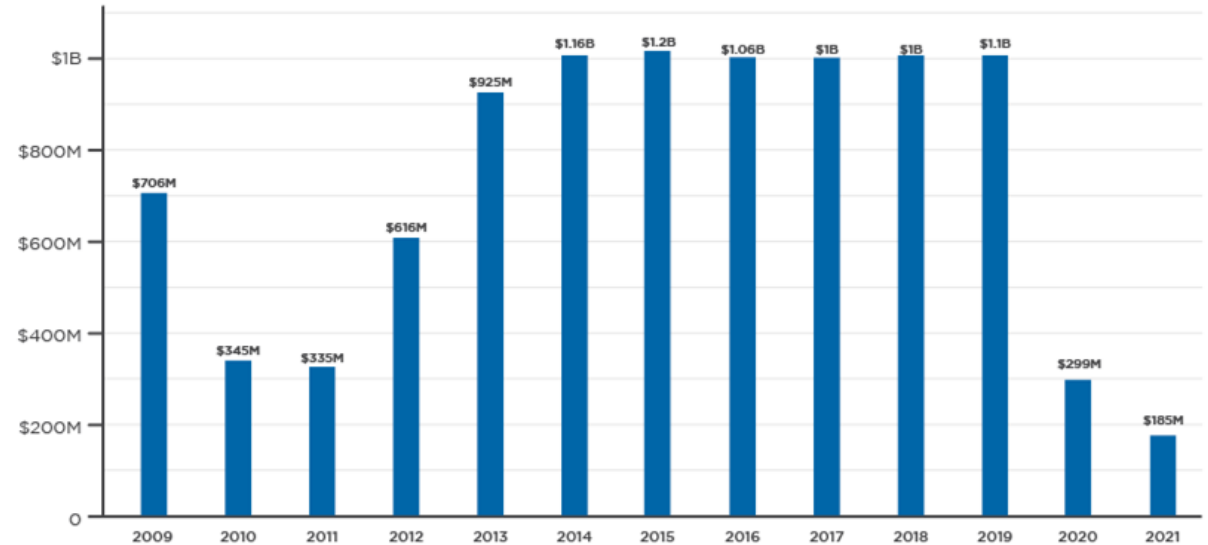
- For 2022, tax rates for most Oklahoma employers will either remain flat or decrease. This is a direct result of the legislature's and the agency's focus on managing the UI Trust Fund and keeping it solvent while also prioritizing keeping employer rates as low as possible.
- More than 18% of employers will see a decrease in their employer tax rate.

## UI Trust Fund

- Oklahoma's UI Trust Fund is in the top ten for most solvent in the nation
- For the first 26 weeks of 2021, Oklahoma employers paid more than \$251 million into the UI Trust Fund

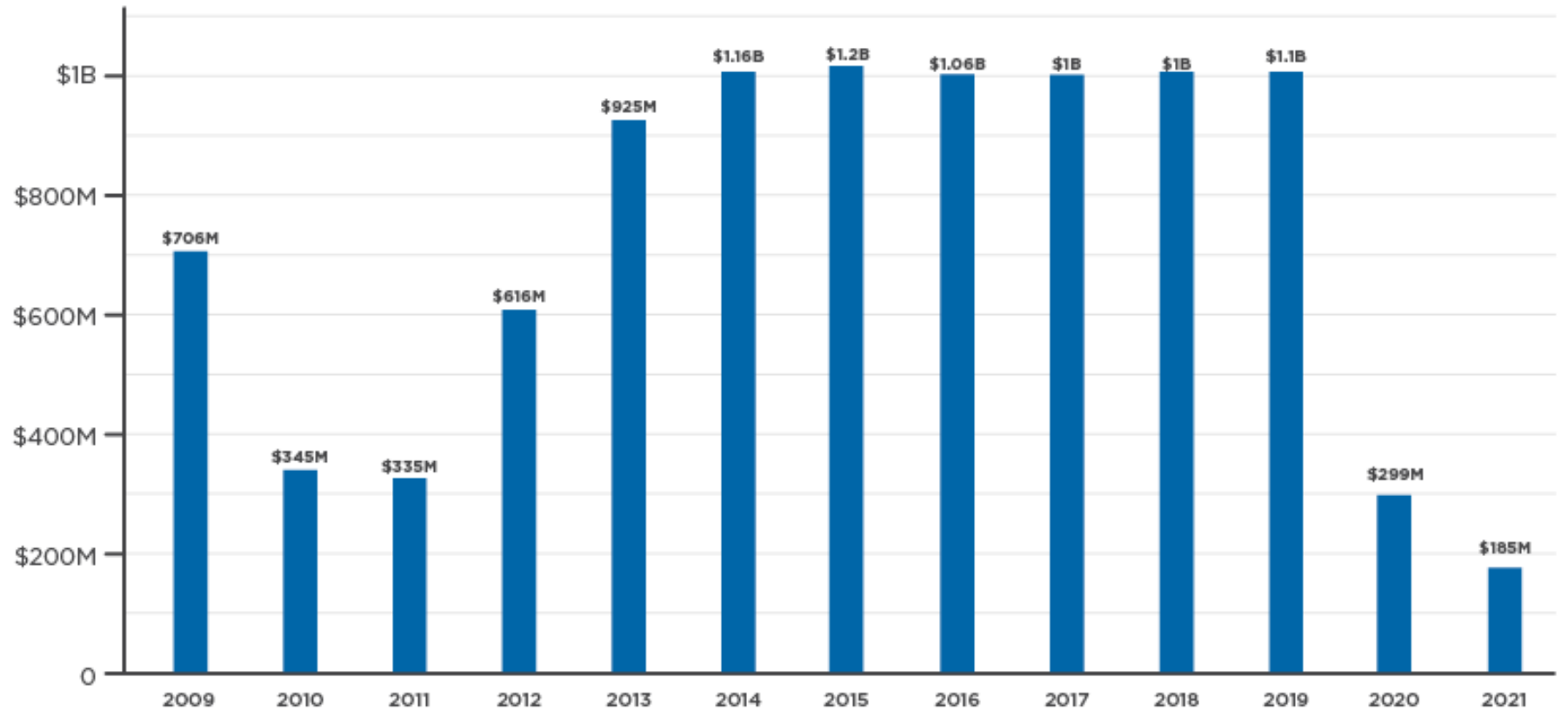


## Trust Fund Balance



Year	Factor Level
2009 - 2010	No Conditional Factor
2011 - 2013	Conditional Factor D
2014	Conditional Factor Is B
2015 - 2020	No Conditional Factor
2021	Conditional Factor D

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# Initial Pandemic Situation and Response

# Unemployment Claims Volume

## June-July 2020

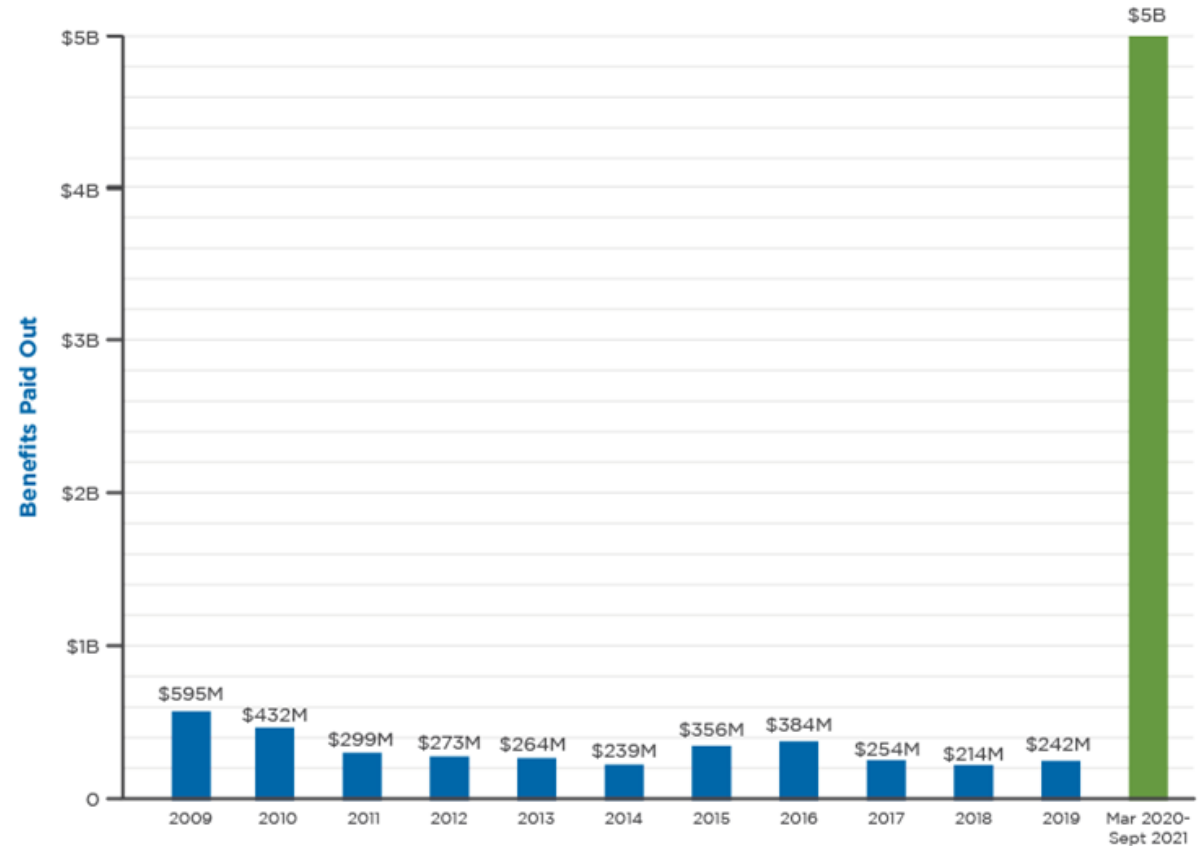
- Within a month of leadership change, OESC hosted claims fairs in OKC, Tulsa and Ardmore serving over 10,000 claimants in a little over a month
- Backlog claims reduced from over 129,000 to under 10,000

## February 2021

- Unemployment claims declined for 35 consecutive weeks

## September 2021

- Paid out \$5B in benefits since March 2020, more than the past **decade** combined



# Improving Agency Systems

## Fraudulent Activity

### March 2020

- One week waiting period for all claims waived nationally.
- Three new claim types introduced overnight for agency to implement.

### April 2020

- OESC sees fraudulent claims rise significantly and identity theft used as main tool to file fraudulent claims. Manual fraud processes used by agency ill equipped to handle situation.

### June 2020

- Way2Go Cards required in hand for direct deposit, restricted three financial institutions

### August 2020

- Average turnaround time to recover funds from a fraudulent claim decreased from about 10-12 weeks to about 5-7 days

### September 2020

- Launched VerifyOK to address unemployment fraud

### October 2020

- OESC awarded \$1.8 million from DOL for fraud prevention efforts

## February 2021

- OESC launched an internal fraud scoring tool in partnership with Google and SpringML
- OESC brings together a task force of state and federal law enforcement partners

## Call Volume and Resolution Rate

- In May 2020, OESC's first call resolution rate was below 5%
- Now, first call resolution rate has reached more than 80%
- Call volume has decreased by 80%
- On average, call wait times are less than 10 minutes

## Agency Operations Continue to be Streamlined

- During the last quarter of 2020 adjudication times had expanded to 10-12 weeks.
- By the end of January 2021, agency staff had cut the wait time to an average of less than 20 days where it continues to be evaluated and refined to expedite the process.
- Staff has reinstated and improved auditing of job search requirement reporting to ensure claimants are completing all requirements fully to receive benefits.
- Details of RFP to replace current job match system being finalized to release in coming month.



# Workforce Recovery and Development

# Career Fairs

## May 2021

- OESC hosted 7 in-person and a virtual career fair across the state to connect employers with Oklahomans looking for work
- CARES money allowed us to waive employer fees
- More than 300 employers participated both online and in-person representing thousands of open jobs

## June 2021

- Hosted 2 additional career fairs in Tulsa and Oklahoma City to address statewide workforce shortage
- The events brought in nearly 550 participants in Tulsa and around 400 in Oklahoma City

## July 2021

- Agency prioritizing grant funding from USDOL and state partnerships through The Force focusing on rural and small business workforce challenges.

## OESC job fair focuses on new careers & re-entering Oklahomans back to the workforce



# Agency Goals

# Digital Transformation

- Funding will support the agency's transformation, BT40, that will modernize OESC's digital infrastructure to meet the needs of Oklahomans and Oklahoma employers. This supports the agency's focus on not only providing unemployment benefits to claimants, but also assisting them with finding re-employment opportunities that match their skills. This includes:
  - Continuing to build the team that is leading and implementing OESC's technology modernization efforts
  - Improving the employer experience
  - Improving the claimant experience through their interactions online and in person
  - Improve communications with both employers, claimants and employees with digital communication tools
  - Updating and streamlining OESC's digital processes
  - Proving a secure and safe means for claimants and employers to share information and interact with the agency.
  - Accurate data and reporting for agency grants and to drive agency processes and success through key performance metrics and goal setting.

# OESC Team

- **Funding will enable the agency to ensure we are providing the services employers, employees and claimants require, we must have a team that has the skill sets needed and support this team with appropriate professional development, alignment and compensation. Our team members are critical to our success in serving Oklahomans and the success of our technology modernization initiative. This funding will allow us to:**
  - Implement long term plan for agency concentrating on creating a highly skilled, tech enabled, knowledgeable and motivated workforce to provide best in class service to state citizens.
  - Increase staff training and professional development.
  - Ensure alignment and proper agency structure
  - Once optimal compensate employees appropriately and improve retention rate
  - Hire a human resources consultant to support our optimal staffing and structure development efforts
  - Stand up pilot program for workforce case management staff and utilize pay for performance plan to drive outcomes in workforce placement.

# Additional Grant Funding

## **Equity Grant:**

- \$4.5 million in funds to provide innovation in equity through communication, technology and access to benefits
- OESC plans to use these funds for digital transformation to prioritize the needs of Oklahomans

## **Good Jobs Challenge**

- Multi million-dollar funding is available to grow Oklahoma's regional workforces by providing training and sectoral partnerships
- OESC hopes to target historically underserved populations, with an emphasis on rural Oklahomans

## **Workforce System Technical Assistance Collaborative Grant**

- Up to \$3.5 million in funds to provide strategic, short and long-term technical assistance to grow the workforce
- OESC hopes to use funds to identify areas of need and potential growth to bridge gaps between workers and quality jobs

## **National Governor's Association Workforce Innovation Funding**

- \$100,000 to advance digital skill development to provide more equitable economic participation that aligns with the state's vision for Oklahoma's workforce
- OESC plans to respond to the impacts of Covid-19 on Oklahoma's workforce by advancing digital skills and literacy for workers

**Thank you**