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ACHIEVEMENT: Development of a private, secure telecommunications network (now known as the Interstate Connections Network (ICON)) for exchange of unemployment insurance (UI) claims information between states.

In his role as Seattle Regional UI Director, Mr. Johnson sought ideas for improving the timeliness of interstate UI benefit payments. He convinced four states in what was then the Seattle region to try what was at the time a radical idea: having interstate claimants file claims (by mail) directly with the participating liable state, and the liable state would communicate responses and/or questions directly back to the claimant. Evaluation of the new process showed that timeliness of benefit payment improved and reemployment services provided by agent states were not negatively affected. Three states in the San Francisco region later joined in this effort, and it became clear that an alternative to mailing forms was needed. Mr. Johnson continued to work to guide the transition of a seven state pilot to nationwide implementation of what we now know as the Interstate Connections Network—ICON for short.

Although ICON was developed to address the problem of egregious delays in payment of interstate unemployment benefits, the network now supports many additional UI data exchange applications including the transfer of wages and billing for combined wage claims, data exchanges for statistical purposes, and benefit payment control cross-matches. This network became even more critical as states adopted remote claims methods and increasingly relied on information technology for claims processing.