



An agile, automated route to innovation

UWV launches a Dutch emergency employment program in six weeks with the help of IBM automation

by Kristin Fern Johnson

5-minute read

Sometimes, it just takes a spark to ignite rapid innovation. Such was the case for UWV* when the Dutch government tasked the organization with executing a program to prevent unemployment in the face of COVID-19.

UWV is an autonomous administrative authority that implements employee insurances and provides labor market and data services: it helps the unemployed find work, determines benefits for those with occupational disabilities and manages medical and unemployment payments to those who qualify.



The NOW** program, otherwise known as the Temporary Emergency Measure Bridging Employment, provided compensation to companies negatively

impacted by COVID-19 so they could continue to pay their employees' salaries. Companies that suffered a loss of 20% or greater in revenue over

*Full company name in Dutch: Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen

a three-month period received a subsidy of up to 90% of wage costs for that period. The limited-duration program was administered over six enrollment periods, which occurred every three months until the program ended on October 1, 2021.

The government gave UWV a mere six weeks to get the program up and running. To meet the short timeline, the organization needed an automated way to handle requests that required special consideration—cases that didn’t quite fit the typical mold due to factors such as previous bankruptcies, lack of historical data or incorrect bank account information.

UWV considered various options—building a Java application from scratch, creating an automated

Reduces time to develop and launch a new application from years to

6

weeks

Automates work-flows to handle exceptions among

250,000

company requests for NOW program services

spreadsheet—but ended up turning to technology it already had in its possession: the **IBM Cloud Pak® for Business Automation** solution. The

organization had started using the solution but hadn’t fully implemented it in a live environment. The time was right to put it into action.

**Full program name in Dutch: Tijdelijke Noodmaatregel Overbrugging Werkgelegenheid

A giant leap in speed and agility

UWV worked closely with IBM Business Partner You-Get BV to develop the NOW requests exemption application using the Business Automation Workflow capability of IBM Cloud Pak for Business Automation. The application helped address one of the greatest challenges the company faced in processing program requests: ensuring all approved requests complied with the complex regulations and requirements of the NOW program.

Here's how it worked: A company applied for NOW funds via an online portal. If there was an exception—such as an outdated address or a



company with offices outside of the Netherlands—the system routed the request through the Business Automation Workflow capability to

the appropriate department based on an established process. Each type of exception followed its own unique process depending on what actions

were needed to resolve it. Requests that were resolved were batched nightly and entered back into the application for the next stage of processing.

Within six weeks, the team released its first iteration of the NOW application—a notable feat, considering it usually takes UWV months, or even years, to launch new applications. “We were all amazed we could manage it,” says Peter van der Heijden, Program Director E-Werken at UWV, “not only from the perspective of our company, but from that of the whole public sector in the Netherlands. It was amazing that we were able to get it up and running in such a short time.”

Post-launch, the team used the agile methodology to continue to develop the application, immediately starting

work on the next iteration to further automate and optimize processes, fix known issues and incorporate user feedback. Every two weeks, the team issued a new release. Previously, development cycles took three months—or longer. This ability to make ongoing updates was crucial to remaining compliant with government changes to the program, which occurred with each three-month NOW enrollment cycle.

The fast turnaround time for new releases, the remarkable speed with which the team got the solution up and running in the first place and the high quality of the solution’s output attracted the attention of the UWV Board of Directors and other departments. “We already had started

implementing the Business Automation Workflow capabilities as a generic information and communications technology (ICT) tool within UWV this type of application, but now people were even more convinced of its value, flexibility and ability to deliver excellent results in a short timeframe,” says van der Heijden.

The next project—streamlining processes for the UWV unemployment payments program—was more complex. “There are many legacy systems that play a role here, each system with its own workloads.” says van der Heijden. “Our goal is to incorporate all of these systems and workloads into one application

that employees can use to view, prioritize and organize their work.”

The client process involves compliance with many government regulations, requiring multiple decision points. “We used the IBM Cloud Pak for Business Automation’s Operational Decision Management capability to help with that,” explains van der Heijden. “On our website, this capability interacts with clients, providing answers based on their input to help with the application process. On the backend, the capability pulls from some of the same regulation information to provide decision-making support to employees.” After careful preparation—with 2,000 employees relying on the application, it was critical that it served their needs from the start—the team launched the application in July 2021.

“We already had plans to implement the solution in more departments’ processes, but now people were convinced of its value, flexibility and ability to deliver results in a short timeframe.”

Peter van der Heijden, Program Director E-Werken, UWV

A roadmap for expansion

Today, UWV continues to expand upon its use of the IBM Cloud Pak for Business Automation solution, with eventual plans to use it across all processes. More than 3,500 of the organization's 19,500 employees are already using the solution in some capacity.

Meanwhile, UWV is still making progress using the Business Automation Workflow capability for current and new projects. For the employment application, the organization is moving forward on replacing several of its 22 legacy systems with the single workflow application. "So far, we have been able to replace two systems with our workflow capability and are working on the next two," says van der Heijden.



The company has now started a new project in its medical division to support people with occupational disabilities, moving from a spreadsheet system

to one based on the IBM solution's Business Automation Workflow capability. That process involves approximately 3,500 users.

UWV also is implementing the solution in its supplies and services as well as its work permit processes. In addition, it is planning to implement the solution in its employment department processes to help people get back to work and support people with disabilities. The employment department is starting with a small project but eventually wants to use the workflow capability across all of its processes.

From a technology perspective, UWV plans to implement the Business Automation Insights capability of the IBM Cloud Pak for Business Automation

solution in 2022. “Generating information for management about our processes, including tracking response times, evaluating effectiveness and rebalancing opportunities, is critical for us,” says van der Heijden. “Everywhere we use the workflow capability, we will probably need to use automation insights.”

“As we look at the future, we see the use of new technologies, including artificial intelligence—such as robotic process automation and machine learning—and process mining,” he continues. If UWV decides to pursue any of these technologies, IBM Cloud Pak for

Business Automation has capabilities that could potentially meet the company’s needs.

But the real impact of the IBM Cloud Pak for Business Automation solution goes far beyond the technology. “The way we’re implementing the solution—starting with small projects in select departments and then getting it up and running and expanding upon it—has been highly successful,” says van der Heijden. “I think it’s the first time within UWV that we are all using the same tool for delivering applications. That’s never happened before.”

“The way we’re implementing the solution—starting with small projects in select departments and then getting it up and running and expanding upon it—has been highly successful.”

Peter van der Heijden, Program Director E-Werken, UWV



About UWV (Employee Insurance Agency)

Commissioned by the Netherland's Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, [UWV](#) (Employee Insurance Agency) (external link) is an autonomous administrative authority (ZBO) and is commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) to implement employee insurances and provide labor market and data services. With 19,500 employees, UWV is headquartered in HG Amsterdam and oversees services for Dutch citizens covering four primary areas: assistance finding employment, evaluation of disability and illness regarding ability to work, benefits administration and data management.

Solution components

- IBM Cloud Pak® for Business Automation
- IBM Business Automation Insights
- IBM Business Automation Workflow
- IBM Operational Decision Manager



About You-Get BV

Based in Watergang, North Holland, in the Netherlands, IBM Business Partner [You-Get](#) (external link) provides technology services in the areas of process improvement, robotic process automation, cognitive solutions, and change and project management. Founded in 2007, the company is privately owned and employs approximately 70 people.