

Questions for Adrian Haro
Chief Executive Officer, The Workers Lab
Questions from Chairman Gerald E. Connolly
Subcommittee on Government Operations
March 31, 2022, Hearing: "Follow the Money: Tackling Improper Payments"

1. In her testimony, minority witness Rachel Greszler argued that providing benefits and services to families and businesses is "like a seesaw" and that "there are trade-offs between improper payments and the ease with which individuals can access benefits." You've actually worked during your career to develop technology to streamline benefit distribution processes. How do you think about the tensions between getting a benefit out quickly and making sure it's going to the right person in the right amount?

What we've demonstrated in this project is that you can actually do both – increase access to public benefits and also increase efficiency inside government all at the same time. It's a false tradeoff to say that you have to sacrifice efficiency to increase access. Doing so can stifle innovation in the public sector and we should be doing everything we can to encourage it.

Deploying cutting-edge technology to help government and claimants shouldn't come at the cost of taking away existing service that happens over the phone, in person, by mail.

Today, most of us are used to having the best technology and services accessible through our phones, and apps. People are expecting this level of service from government, so modernization is essential to keep pace and to ensure that government is efficient and effective. Most people are increasingly comfortable with smartphones and computers, so the focus should be on ensuring that technology is user friendly, accessible in multiple languages and for people with disabilities, and that non-online alternatives exist for people who might prefer that, such as older folks.

While not everyone has a gig account (or account from app-based work), nearly two thirds of Americans bank online today (source: [Statista](#)). Providing easy, secure access to earnings on online bank accounts may not help every person, but it can help a large majority.

Furthermore, We learned through a survey of 256 workers associated with Gig Workers Rising in California that 9 out of 10 of those workers would be willing to share data from their gig or work app accounts if it would lead to faster and more accurate benefits.

2. The Worker's Lab conducted a pilot with several states allowing gig workers to securely link gig worker platforms and financial accounts for the purpose of receiving benefits from their state. How has your organization used technology to help the government improve its benefits programs?

Technology like the one I described in my testimony needs government to have REAL skin in the game on innovation. Ideally, government partners are at the table with workers and technologists helping to support, inform, and build technology solutions aimed at providing better service delivery to its constituents. Part of our value proposition at The Workers Lab is that we are really effective at bringing these kinds of unlikely partners together and holding/creating a low-risk high impact collaborative workspace for innovation. This is what we do. Government and this committee can help create this workspace. And like I said in my testimony, The Workers Lab stands ready and willing to help.

3. Your project with gig workers highlighted how data sharing can benefit the public and enhance program integrity at the same time. How did The Workers Lab work with gig worker platforms to acquire the data states needed to verify claimant income?

We didn't. Where applicable workers consented and chose to link their accounts with the income passport.