**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**WIPS Training Number 2: Introduction to WIPS**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: Welcome to "Introduction to WIPS, ASE WIPS Presentation Series Presentation Number 2." So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to Marcia Hampton,

supervisory program analyst, the Office of Apprenticeship. Marcy?

MARCIA HAMPTON: Thank you very much, Jon. Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for coming back and joining us on this second presentation of our performance and reporting five-part series. We know how valuable your time is, and we really appreciate you making the effort to join in. I'm Marcia Hampton, the team lead, as Jonathan said, on the grants team. Today I'm joined by Andrea Hill, our grants and performance specialist and Shelia Lewis, who is new to our grants team as our performance analyst.

As we go through these five presentations, we're going to be introducing different members of the team on different days. So if you hear different names, it's just because I'm trying to let you be introduced to each of the people that work on the grants team now we've had some changes. On Tuesday, you heard from me and Andrea. You also heard from Jessica Deep (sp) on my team and Aaron Rosenberg, who is the division of E-Surface (sp). (Person ?) has been helping us on the R grant team. So today we'll talk about the objectives. This is our first dip and choose in our workforce integrated performance, or the WIPS system, which you've been hearing about.

This introduction will give you a sense of WIPS in general and the processes that go into it. Each of our presentations in this five series digs a little bit deeper, so each one kind of adds a little bit to the previous one. Next week's sessions are going to drill down into the actual PIRL and structures, things like valid values and logic rules. And then the last session we'll get into troubleshooting. But as you can see on this slide today, we're looking at the key tasks, the roles and responsibilities people have with functionality and then talking a little bit about the WIPS users resource library. Now I'm going to turn it over to Shelia Lewis, and she's going to start you off with some background.

SHELIA LEWIS: Thank you, Marcy. And greetings, everyone. Welcome, again, to the day's event. We appreciate you attending and we appreciate you coming back. So I look forward to working with each and every one of you. So let's get started. In Tuesday's performance training webinar, someone asked what is WIPS? This section is for you and anyone else who (audio blip). The workforce integrated performance system, or WIPS, is a web-based, secure system where grantees upload data files containing participant-level data, which once processed, will generate a quarterly performance report, or the QPR, which is submitted to DOL upon certification.

It's been utilized for a wide array of DOL formula and discretionary performance reporting since 2016. WIPS is an ETA-operated reporting tool used to calculate grantee performance. It's a secure data mechanism, or system, by which grantees upload participant-level data according to a specified schema, short for schematic, which is simply, in this case for apprenticeships, a list of the data elements specifically reported for the apprenticeship grantee.

So grantees upload participant-level data into WIPS by using a data layout called the participant individual record layout, or the PIRL. Only ETA's program office staff has access to the WIPS individual record information. So once your upload is successful and all edit checks are successfully completed, WIPS automatically generates the QPR, or the quarterly performance report, where the grantee may see, validate, and certify the data submitted to DOL. So you may be asking yourself, why did ETA create this?

Well, ETA created WIPS as an integrated performance reporting system for the department's workforce, employment, and training program. So in the spirit of WIOA – which I'll talk about in a few minutes – it's an integrated system that aligns reporting mechanisms and definitions. It also streamlines reporting for grantees that operate more than one program. So the data provided through WIPS are used for a variety of purposes. But foremost, it is used for grantee performance reporting and accountability. So what other reasons does the department use this data for?

Well, one, it's used to track program performance; two, it provides an opportunity for program improvement; three, it's also an opportunity to identify problems or issues which lead to corrective action. And, of course, this is done by identifying data trends or data anomalies. And finally, number 4, it can be used to update procedures and processes. Also, I want you to remember that WIPS is a living system. It's a dynamic system. So you will see monthly release notes that are published on our doleta.gov website. So you would use those updates to maintain and update your systems as well.

So before I move on to the next slide, I just want to point out that WIPS is this system. And the PIRL is a set of standardized data elements, definitions, and reporting instructions that grantees use to describe the characteristics, activities, and outcomes of their participants. So WIPS is a system. And the PIRL is a set of standardized data elements. Moving on, I'll talk a little bit about the background. From history, as you know, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is a bipartisan legislation that the House Committee on Education and Labor developed, and was signed into law in 2014.

One of the major intents of WIOA was to be able to compare data among and between programs. Hence, that's part of the reason why ETA took this opportunity to develop the WIPS system where all of their programs could upload data into one system, thereby making it easier to compare between programs and among programs. So a little more background – the agencies affiliated with the House Committee came together to develop shared program guidance to align with the integrated legislation.

Part of that guidance resulted in a shared set of data points for programs to focus on. And as I stated before, those data points are collectively known as the joint PIRL. The joint PIRL, as with all OMB-approved documents, do periodically go through a review and reauthorization process. The joint PIRL is at the end stages of that process right now. The joint PIRL identifies common data elements for the Department of Labor and for the Department of Education. Moving on, DOL, however, wanted its WIOA-funded programs to track additional measures, so it developed the DOL-only PIRL. This document is in the early stages of reauthorization as we speak.

With thanks to our testing team, including our ASE grantees who volunteered for beta testing to help DOL personnel, we have identified some elements that we may have to revisit from the current PIRL to see if we can reduce the number of data elements collected. Please note that we are not seeking feedback, but we will be able to remove some of those elements in the near future. So we'll keep you posted when that occurs. So as we roll out the current PIRL, or the PIRL 2020, we will keep you updated on when those updates occur.

Moving on, with the interim background and the many programs that the Department of Labor already utilizes WIPS for reporting and its established efficiency for grantees, apprenticeship grants are now joining the workforce integrated performance system, or WIPS, which will be utilized at all apprenticeship grants, starting with you here today – ASE grantees, SAE 2020,

And YARG grantees – and all apprenticeship grantees going forward. Using the WIPS system and the data elements in the PIRL allows the Department of Labor to look at program and return on investment across all the programs using it.

From the grantee perspective, it will help enable both you and your program offices to employ data-driven decision making towards policy, procedure, and implementation. I wanted to point out something very important. This also came up in our first training. So it's important to remember that WIPS is not a case management system. So if you attended Tuesday's training event, you will recall that Aaron Rosenberg talked about case management systems and their importance. So please refer to the recording when it becomes available to be reminded about the importance of a good case management system, which in turn contributes to your grant's success.

Before I turn the program back over to Marcy, I wanted to quickly mention to you if you wanted to get a head start on our next webinar, which is next Tuesday, December 8, I wanted to remind you that you can take a look at the PIRL reporting online resource, which is an interactive, self-paced, online tool about the PIRL. It provides information on some data elements common to multiple programs, as well as some videos that introduce the WIPS system. Here is a link in the slide that will take you directly to this resource that's published on WorkforceGPS. So take an opportunity to look at it if you have a chance before next week.

So now I'm going to hand it back over to Marcy, who will be talking about some key tasks performed in WIPS. Marcy?

MS. HAMPTON: Thank you, Sheila. Yes. Now we're going to move into key tasks. And honestly, before you can report data, you have to collect it. So I know that state grantees have had a couple webinars on this topic already. So please just bear with us because we have a lot of different groups on here. But you can go to the WorkforceGPS site for more tips and guidance at any time. And a grant program may vary widely, so this is always based on who your service providers are. So for state grants, it also depends on the level of integration you have within your larger state-wide workforce system.

Keep in mind that only prime grantees access the WIPS. The grant partners don't. So you're going to make sure that your communication with those different levels are really strong in insights and they understand the timeliness of getting the data to you as the prime, because ultimately the prime is responsible for the timeliness and the reporting requirements. So you want to make sure that you have all of those dates to them. And they need to know how soon they need to get information to you so that you can actually roll it up and get it to us on time.

We talked about this the other day. Andrea did it on the first session. The personally identifiable information. We're not ever going to be not stressing it. It's really important. It's critical to everything that we do. All participant data needs to be stored and transmitted securely. If you're doing it electronically, we still have to secure all of those different processes. Grantee staff must inform participants as to why we're collecting Social Security numbers. We need to tell them why we're collecting them, intake, and then beyond.

ASE grantees have sample language in your intern reporting handbook. That language will be provided in the reference guide that you're going to receive. We're giving that out next week. Remember that transmitting PII data by email or fax, if anyone still happens to use fax machines, is absolutely prohibited. We have a TEGL that came out in 2011. It's 39-11, that talks about guidance on handling and protecting PII. So check that resource section in the resource guide if you want to click onto that TEGL and just kind of a get a rough reminder of what was in it.

When it comes to PII, always air on the side of caution. We have a responsibility to maintain this confidential information and make sure that we're doing everything that we can to protect these people's personal identification. And we've all been there. We've all gotten notices in the mail saying, hey, we accidentally let your information get out, and we all know how we feel. So we really want to make sure that we're taking care of the clients that are working with us. So now I'm going to turn it back to Andrea, and she's going to talk about uploading data file.

ANDREA HILL: Cool. Thanks, Marcy. Well, before we get into actually uploading data files, we're going to kind of go over the steps a little bit that we need to cover beforehand in kind of broad concepts. One of them is that we have to have a dedicated staff member who is ensuring that the data from whatever system you are using for tracking is being extracted and then if necessary converted to the appropriate file type. WIPS only accepts three files types – csv file comma-separated values, txt files, or a gzip file.

And we strongly recommend that you all use csv files. It's just a lot easier to locate data errors if there are any. Sometimes you can go back and use a notepad to look at things in text. And we'll get into later, because remember we've still got three more sessions. But do really look at the csv file as your first choice always. We're going to designate folks who have access to WIPS for every grant. And one thing that is really incumbent on the grantee to make sure that you're doing is to make sure that the contacts that we here at DOL have are up to date.

So that extends beyond just those who are indicated on the 424. But it also goes to folks who are going to be on your performance teams in working with WIPS so that if somebody leaves, we need to make sure that we've got the current contact information for the person who is going to be taking that person's place. For those of you who have been around for a while, WIPS has a new feature. It's called multiple people on an account for discretionary accounts. And there are certifiers. There are roles. There's a certifier and then also submitters.

And for these apprenticeship grants, the only persons who are going to be certifying the reports are going to be either the authorized representative in our official records, or the authorized representative can designate, specifically designate a single individual to certify reports on their behalf. There is a sample letter included in the file share box down on the bottom of the screen there for you guys that you can utilize – we'll go into more details in a little bit – but as well as the PDF of every slide that's on here. Somebody had asked if we could get the link to a couple things. We've already gone over some links. A copy of every slide is in that PDF that has active links for you.

Going back to certification – the authorized representative has to designate a person if the authorized representative himself is not going to be the person certifying the report, which then takes us into how do we get to roles and responsibilities and how do we do that? Well, having clear grants management roles and responsibilities for all of the grants management activity within your grant is really an important part of effective grants management. So again, each grantee must identify individuals who will be actually working in the WIPS system.

If we look just a little bit about roles in general, what we've got, there are a whole bunch of people that are involved in a grant at a lot of different levels. And these apprenticeship grants have even more sort of specialized people who are working on grants. But at the grantee level, you can have case managers, coordinators. There are service providers. And for these ones we have employers and sponsors. And in some cases, they may be collecting participant data. And they may be also tracking participant data using a shared MIS system that you've developed.

We want to point out that RAPIDS is not suitable for this purpose. You really need to have some kind of other mechanism because RAPIDS does not have the capability to track the number of data elements that are required by WIPS. So there are going to be a lot of people touching data. But they have no actual role in WIPS. But again, as Marcy said, we are not ever going to not stress that PII is an important thing that everybody – no matter their role in WIPS – needs to be keeping in the front of their minds as they're collecting the data from the moment that the participant gives it to you, really, letting them know.

So that's why WIPS is a secure upload. And that's why access is restricted to just a few number of people on the grant at the prime level. So then we've got program managers or directors, grant administrators, data managers, or IT staff, or a collection a mix thereof. And those are the folks that would be uploading the files into WIPS, resolving any data errors on your end or on the WIPS end or figuring out what that is and trouble sheeting any issues, both in WIPS and on your end. Those folks would be viewed as submitters. They would have submitter access in WIPS. And up to two people at every grant can be designated submitters.

You don't have to have two. But you can have up to two. And then we have the certifiers. And there's only one certifier per grant. And it must be either the authorized representative or their specifically designated representative. So that person is the person who certifies reports. And how do we get there? Well, we need a letter from you guys. In the same way that if you have a mod, that you write a letter to change a point of contact on the 424. We need a letter signed by the authorized representative on letterhead that is addressed to the grant officer who's indicated on the grant agreement.

Now one thing that you need to know before you send the letter is how you are reporting. We've got two options. If you're a state grantee and you're not going to use your WIOA reporting team and you're not ready to integrate with the workforce system – you know you haven't gotten to that level just yet – you'll be using one way to upload your files, which we will talk about in our upcoming presentations. And we would need the letter to have the person designated to be the certifier on the authorized representative's behalf.

And even if it is the authorized representative who will be certifying, that contact information still needs to be in the letter; and then the contact info for the one or two people to be the submitter. Now, if you are a state grantee and you are using the WIOA reporting team and that system to do shared intake or shared tracking along the way, that letter needs to indicate that that grant will be using the WIOA performance team, and then indicate which schema you'll be using, and then the email of the state employees that should have the apprenticeship program added to their account.

So it's going to work a little differently than it does for a lot of other programs. Rather than just sending in an email from yourself saying I need the account, we do actually need that letter signed by the authorized representative. And again, there's a sample letter that's included in the resources down there. You can take a look. Once we get that letter on this end, we're going to put together the information. And we're going to put together the information on this end. And we will be requesting the accounts on your behalf.

It just makes it a lot easier because of the number of grantees that are being incorporated into WIPS at the same time. It will make it a lot less complicated on our end for a number of different reasons. So we will compile all that information, and we will create the account for you. When you get a new account, you'll get an email from the system that says that you've been added. So please be sure that you're not requesting accounts on your own. We're not going to be able to grant you an account in that way. We need that letter, and we'll follow the process.

So ASE grantees then, once they get the accounts, will be expected to submit for the February 14 report. For that report only, you can also send the interim QPR for that to make sure that one is logged on time. And that's fine. We do anticipate that there will be some bumps just because of first time. We would ask that you submit those early so we can troubleshoot early. But just to make sure that there isn't any issue with your timing, you do have that option to also submit the QPR via the interim process.

But note that those who still have zero participants – which shouldn't be many of you – but for those that do, you cannot submitted it to WIPS. So until you get participants, you will have to continue to submit that interim report. We will have that interim report sort of dual option for February. But once we get around to May, ASE grantees will be reporting exclusively in WIPS. SAE 2020 and YARG grantees will be starting into WIPS in May for the report quarter ending March 31.

So just a reminder for organizations that have multiple apprenticeship grants, each grant is a project unto itself. So the multiple projects should be operating on a concurrent basis. But then the reporting is separated because of that. So a little bit of basic functionality. I will hand it over to Marcy.

MS. HAMPTON: Thank you. All right. Once the submitters or certifiers have their account, they have to log into this system at the link which she has put on the slide right there. And we will give you more information about this one next week on session 4, which I believe is titled, WIPS 101. So this slide is what the page will look like when it opens for you. So if you don't see this little block that says, I agree in this white page, you're not in the right place. So that's how you'll know where you need to be. So in this pretty little graphic here, this one is just kind of walking you from start to finish for a quarterly reporting period and like where you start and where you end up.

So you can see that everything starts in the very beginning with enrolling of a participant. You get their information for your standardized intake process. And that's really where you're starting your data collection. As the participant's going through the process, then you're going to be keeping up-to-date records. You're going to record any training or related activities that begin or end by date and making sure that you're keeping in your case management system all of the things that are really happening with that participant. This information is maintained in your case management system. It's not a RAPIDS thing.

Grantees should have a process in place where you're validating information and your own records throughout the year. This allows for you to take a look at any numbers that might not be right, anything that doesn't seem right. And you can make timely adjustments throughout the year. And then if you do a data validation once a year and you find out something's wrong, you have to go back a whole year. That's just not the best way. So doing it throughout the year, doing random samples of your own stuff is really a good way to make sure that you're keeping on top of that and you can avoid any long-term errors.

When the particular quarter ends, then the data associated with that quarter, then you need to prepare that for upload. So if you're kind of following through the little arrows, right now we're through the red and we're heading into these light purple ones and getting ready to upload. So if you were doing the September 30 quarter, then you'd be looking at July 1 through September 30. And all the information that you had saved in your case management system related to that time frame is going to be moved into the proper file format, which is your 131 columns in the exact order. And you're going to get ready to upload into WIPS.

And then you move into the darker purple one in Andrea's graphics at least four weeks prior to finalize your data for upload. And that's really important because the due date is 45 days after the last day of the quarter to upload. But that is not the first time you want to try uploading, because especially in the beginning, you want to try it a lot earlier so that you can take care of all the errors messages that show up. And when you're trying to learn this from the beginning, you're going to get a lot of them probably. And they all need to be reconciled.

And I'll just tell you, when I had the NFJP grantees starting, some of them got thousands of errors. And they just went into shock. A lot of them are all the same thing. So if you fix it for one, it will correct itself throughout the document. But you just want to get used to the idea that it's not probably going to go smoothly in the beginning if you've never done it before. So you'll fix those errors. And then you'll upload it again and you may get a whole different set. So you kind of have to keep working it in.

So that is really why you just don't want to wait until the day the report's due and think oh my goodness, I have a thousand errors and I don't know what to do and how to proceed. Once you do, though, go through that process, eventually the file will successfully upload. And then you can review your QPR. Now that's a different thing that you have to do, because it's possible when you get your QPR that that data isn't going to look like what you were expecting. And if you know what your data should say and it doesn't look like that, we have to figure out where that problem is.

So at that point, you can take a look at it and see if the problem is on your side and maybe you can figure it out. But if you can't figure it out, we're going to help you with that. You can call the national office grants team and some of us will get together with you on a call or however we need to do it. We'll look at your data. We'll try to work it out. And if we can't figure it out, then we take it to the WIPS team and we have discussions on where we think the problems might be. But we will work through that.

The key for you is if you get data and you think this is not what this should look like, then it's probably not what it should look like and we need to find an answer. So don't panic, because we have ways to get it right eventually. We just have to figure out what in the system wasn't counting correctly. So if you are happy with your QPR and you think it reflects what you were expecting, then you can go ahead and certify that data. You can know that you can upload as many times as you need to before the due date.

If you need to do it several times and keep saving it and trying again, it's okay. Especially in the beginning when you're just kind of learning this process, because there may be things you need to check and you want to run a couple tests before you certify it. And that's totally fine. We see those records and we see how many times you save them, but we also want you to know that your information is right. So don't worry about it if it's in there many times, because we know that when we're all trying to figure this out, it takes a while to get it to work. So now I'm going to turn it back to Andrea. She can talk a little more about preparing your file.

MS. HILL: Thanks, Marcy. Yeah. So preparing your file again. It must have all the columns that are indicated in the most recent schema that you'll be using. There'll be three schemas available for state grants.

If you're not a state, you'll be using the apprenticeship schema by default. For those of you, the full PIRL schema has 544 data elements that it tracks, so that translates to 544 columns. Or the SIRS schema has 344 data elements, which translates to the same number of columns. And the apprenticeship schema has 131 data elements. So that will translate to 131 columns for that data for each participant in your grant program.

That does sound like a lot, but some of the data will not apply to every participant. And as we talked about earlier, through beta testing, we did identify some that we are revisiting. So that number may go down. But right now we still have to deal with the PIRL 2020, which we have in the 131 columns. So that's where we are. The one thing that we do want to point out is that the data file itself cannot have extra empty rows, any footers or headers, or any identifying columns.

So in the schema that you will get in the package next week, it will show you column headers or – as you remember and we'll see in just a minute – there'll be column headers. Those will not be with your data file. Your data file will be just data. And again, WIPS will accept three types of files. But we strongly recommend that you use the csv format. So here's a little bigger picture than what you saw yesterday of part of the apprenticeship schema. So you can see up in yellow on the top those data column headers. So those would not be in the file that you would upload, nor would the names of the participants in the column there on the far left.

Schema is short for schematic. So the file that you upload has to be in the same format with each PIRL data element in an individual place and the corresponding participant level in the rows. So remember to look to the full PIRL or the handbook for specific data element definitions. What's on the schema is sort of a shorthand. It doesn't include the full definition. So if something is there and it doesn't make sense to you, make sure before you start to panic that you just look at the full PIRL to take a look at the full definition. And we will cover this a little more later on. This is just the introduction to WIPS.

I'll just go back one right there up on the top little bit. We're zooming in on that to come to an image of the headers there. Each data element has an identifying number. And we refer to those by their number – PIRL 100, PIRL 102. And that's how they're identified when we talk to each other, when we talk to the tech team, and how you'll identify them to us. It has an identifying name because we have to know what it is. The next column there that's highlighted in purple is really important.

Particularly for the third of you who Tuesday indicated that you were waiting to start developing your systems, this is a particularly important indicator – the data type and size. So if IN is there, that's an integer and then how many digits there would be. So IN5 for the ZIP code county of residence means it's only the 5 (audio blip) or for the post office. Don't try and put the plus 4 in there because that will get kicked out of WIPS. And AN means it's alphanumeric – so your grant number, which is one of the required data elements is an alphanumeric code.

DT is date, which makes sense. And there's a particular format for dates. All dates that are included in WIPS go by the format by year, month, and day. You'll see the code is YYYYMMDD, for year, month, and day. And then below that with the red highlights is the code value. So this is an example of what the code value should be. Be sure to see the full PIRL or the handbook for your full data element definitions. They are not included on the headers here. And keep in mind the package with today's presentation with all the slides in it is included with the resource packages.

Submitting files actually in WIPS – when you do it, you have to choose one of the schemas that we talked about. There's the full WIOA PIRL. Or there's the SIRS schemas. And those are available only to state WIOA reporting agencies. So if you're not using or you're not partnering with the WIOA state reporting agency, the only schema that will be available to you is the apprenticeship schema with 131 columns. If your organization was awarded multiple OA grants and you use the apprenticeship schema, performance data must be submitted as separate data files.

So if you have a YARG grant and an ASE grant, you'll have to submit an ASE data file and a YARG data file. You can't submit just one data file. But certifiers and submitters can have multiple grants assigned to their accounts. So that's not a problem with that. Somebody asked just a little while ago that with the authorized representative requesting access, it does not impact existing accesses for other grants. That is correct. By just requesting it this way, all that does is give us authorization to get the apprenticeship information added to your existing accounts.

When you're logged into WIPS, keep in mind that you have to actively be in WIPS. If you happen to be in there and then you get distracted because you got the email that said it was uploaded and you go back to double check some data and you're trying to run something down, WIPS will log you out after 30 minutes. To stay active, you can refresh the page in your browser or continue to navigate between the different nodes that are available in the buttons, which you'll see later on next week. But be aware that if you are not active for 60 days without logging in, your account will be de-activated.

So if someone gets to go at some point on a 90-day European tour – if we're ever able to travel again – let us know ahead of time. And then we'll be able to keep that from happening. But if someone just doesn't log in, the assumption is that they no longer work for the organization. So that account will be deactivated. Once you upload your file and go through the process that Marcy was talking about and get all the way through. You've resolved all your data errors and everything looks good to the submitters, then the QPR will be generated.

Now, WIPS has data aggregation rules that will generate the QPR based on the data that was submitted. So if we have problems on that end that your data that you have submitted does not really look like it's being accurately reflected on the QPR, then we'll go back in and try and narrow down where that is. If you have, for instance, the first indicator on the QPR – it's really small, but you can't quite see it – is an indicator of sex, if they're male or female. So if you have two males and two females who were registered in this particular quarter and the QPR shows up and there's only one and one that shows on the QPR, then that's not what you would expect.

You would expect to see the two and two. That's the kind of issue that we're talking about that you would want to track down. Each aggregation rule correlates with each data element and code value and then also key dates that are entered for each participant. So the QPR is the reflection of the aggregated data. None of us at DOL, we don't have the ability to look at the PII. The PII is scrubbed. Even if we pull the data out of WIPS, there's a script in place to actually remove the PII so we won't see that. But none of us here at the program office will have the ability to see any of that PII that you have uploaded securely.

So once you've gone through all of that and then your QPR looks correct – it's gone through the validation process, you've got the QPR, the QPR looks right in the quarterly reports tab – that's when it's time to certify. So that's when the submitters would tell the certifier, you can go in and look. And the certifier should go in and validate for themselves that that's actually what is expected. This is just sort of a brief introduction to some of the errors that you may see in WIPS while you're working through that whole process. An invalid column error is a format error which occurs when the data file column number doesn't match the current schema.

So we've got 131 columns. If whoever submits the file, if the submitter does not have that name identifier or participant identifier on the left-hand side removed, then that would be 132 columns, which is not 131. So that makes sense. A format error message says that it includes lines not associated with a participant ID means that there may inadvertently be some data or even a space which counts as a code value but you can't see it which makes it extra challenging for you and all of us to try and find it. But there may be something in one of the columns that is there of that nature or a special character. Or it could be a decimal point where none is expected.

So make sure that your systems are generating the same type of data. If your intake form is electronic and you're inputting data a certain way, you need to make sure that your systems are converting it appropriately. And what's an example of that? If your intake form is electronic and somebody enters the data as 12/3/2020, as we often do just typing stuff, your system would need to convert it to that date format that we talked about earlier – YYYYMMDD. Another type of error is valid values or logic rule errors. There are two different types of errors, but they are very related.

There is a curve for values that are known to be impossible either because they are invalid options or that they're just illogical based on the values in other fields. There's a document logic rule called logic rules and there's a document called valid values, which – as both Marcy and Sheila referred to – are often updated. So you need to make sure that you're keeping on track of those. But valid values are expressions of how data relates to itself. And that date example that we just talked about is one of them. A logic rule error we'll talk about, they're a little bit more complicated. And we'll talk about them more in depth later on.

One of the first things that you want to do when you have a data file error is you want to make sure that you're not just correcting the error in your file upload. You want to make sure that you are also working back and that you are correcting the error in your MIS database, your information management database. So whatever system you're using, you want to make sure that that's fixed in the system itself. And then export the revised information as a new data file that then would be uploaded into WIPS. You don't want to correct something in your upload file and then forget to go back and correct it in your system because that'll just cause you continuing problems.

But again, what do we want to do? All at once now, everybody – Never send PII over email! It's absolutely prohibited – both between DOL and grantees, but also between grantee partners, between primes and subs, or primes and partners. So when referring to data uploads with DOL, every time you upload a file, it gets an individual file upload number and that's what you would refer to. And then that's what we would look up on this side. And then when we pull it, that would have the PII scrubbed.

We're going to talk a little bit about some of the resources that are available. And I've said this before, but again, check the presentation download. All the links are active in there. On the DOL website at the link that's indicated on this page, there's a WIPS user resource library that has stuff added to it all the time by the folks that manage the WIPS system. And there's stuff there that will help you understand the workflow kind of the same way that we're wanting to do or continue to go on – general information, details, answers to FAQs, and real-time information on changes and enhancements.

There's some of the information that it provides, all sorts of good stuff. And who should be utilizing this page? Well, pretty much anyone who has any affiliation with the grants or the participants or reporting or performance for your grantee. Don't forget to take a look at WorkforceGPS. One cool thing is there's a WIPS user walkthrough. There's a video and a PDF transcript that's available. There's a PIRL online resource page where that cool, interactive tool that Sheila talked about earlier is. That's the direct link to the PIRL course at the top there directly.

And then your communities on Workforce GPS – please be sure to visit those and register there. If you have questions about WIPS or performance for any apprenticeship-specific grant, we've got this new email address that we told you about on Tuesday – oagrant.wips@dol.gov. Always be sure to include your grant number or program name, please, in your subject line. Well, I'll pass it back over to Sheila. We're right about on time, but we're going to go a little bit over. We've just got a couple more slides to go through. And we will be answering questions. But we understand if any of you need to drop off. This is recorded and will be posted. So anything that you miss if you have to drop off, you will be able to get. Sheila?

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you, Andrea. For those of you who are putting questions in the chat room, please continue to do so. We have some interesting questions, and hopefully we'll be able to get to a few of those before you drop off. But right now we're going to go through a few questions that we anticipated. And there's one question that is detained over from Tuesday's event. So really quickly, you can read the answers for yourself. But the first question is, what do we submit in WIPS?

Basically, grantees will upload a data file that generates into a quarterly performance report form. Next question, what is CSV format? CSV means comma-separated values. And that is the preferable format that we use during testing and early implementation because it helps to you locate your errors. Next question is, how do we make changes to a data file that was submitted in WIPS? If the data file is incorrect, you can upload revised data file for the reporting quarter until the data is error free.

Moving on to question number four, can we enter individual case files and notes in WIPS? The answer is no. Why? Because WIPS is not a case management system. Next question – once a participant's data is loaded into WIPS, is there any reason for participant information to be maintained by the grantee? Yes. Because individual records that are uploaded to WIPS are just a snapshot. They only represent a snapshot in time. So we anticipate that these uploads any changes that reflect in the future submission.

The next question, what do we do if there's a technical problem in WIPS? Well, if there's a technical problem in WIPS, there's a hyperlink there to click on. And once you submit your issue, be sure to include your grant name, grant number, and your contact information. And also, there is a button in WIPS in the upper right corner for you to click on for our WIPS interface. And next question, what do we do when we have a grant performance-related question?

You would send that question to: oagrants.wips@dol.gov. And include your grant number in the subject line. Be sure to copy your FPO. And include your contact information in the body of the email. Finally, this question's a holdover question from Tuesday's event, and it was also addressed earlier. But the question is, when do we actually start reporting in WIPS? It depends on the type of grantee you are. If you're ASE grantee, you would start reporting in February 2021. Starting with the quarter ending December 31, 2020, your due date is February 14, 2021.

And for SAE2020 and YARG grantees, you start reporting with the quarter ending March 31, 2021. And it would be due May 2021. Moving on, here are some technical assistance resources. I believe those hyperlinks are actually active when you download the document. And now we'll move on to questions. There are few questions that we'll be able to address in the chat room. So I'll let Andrea start with the first one.

MS. HILL: Thanks, Sheila. First question that comes in is, is states utilizing the performance team to submit their PIRL when access is requested it won't impact existing addresses. And that's true. We talked about it a little bit earlier, and I kind of rolled it into my presentation, so that is true. We'll get the letter. And we will add apprenticeships to your existing account. It will have no effect on what's already there. Marcy, here's one for you.

MS. HAMPTON: The question is, if a state only has the SAE20 tier one $450,000 IT grant with no participants, they will not report on WIPS, correct? And the answer is correct. That is true. You still do a quarterly narrative report, but you have nothing to report into WIPS. So you don't have to worry about that.

MS. HILL: Thanks, Marcy. We got a couple questions that are in here about RAPIDS. And RAPIDS, we're grants. RAPIDS has to do on the registration side. So RAPIDS doesn't have anything to do with grants reporting. That's our answer. You'll have to go to your state folks and ask them any RAPIDS questions that you have, your ATRs. Here's one that's related to Marcy's that she just had. For ASE2020 grantees that received only the tier I awards, are narrative reports required to be uploaded into WIPS?

Narrative reports currently, everybody will continue to use the interim report and send the narrative reports to your program office's mailboxes just as you have been. If anybody needs instruction on how to fill out that form, there is a webcast that we recorded a few months ago. And that link is included in the reference package. So you can go listen to that if you have any confusion about that at all. But the QNR is an interactive Word form. And that will continue to be filled out on your end and then emailed to the program offices. Marcy, what if you have a participant that chooses not to disclose certain data information?

MS. HAMPTON: And you will. [Laughter] Our answer to that is we have a requirement to ask for the information. They do not have a requirement to give it to us. All you have to do is document that you asked for it and the person declined to respond or whatever. We can't force people to give us stuff. But just make sure that you keep it as part as your case management file that you asked for it and they chose not to respond.

MS. HILL: Thanks. And there's actually a way to account for that within the PIRL, which we'll get into as we continue on with this series. Another question is, will you be sharing a sample data file? Yes. We will – just not yet. Yes. It will be coming. How should we report on non-binary individuals who do not identify as male or female? Well, we'll go into that a little bit more in the PIRL. But there is an option for folks who don't disclose what they would be. That won't show up on the QPR. And that would be one of the instances where somebody would address that anomaly within the narrative as well.

You won't be able to address it within the QPR. But if we go back to the earlier example that you had two males and two females who were enrolled in this quarter, so let's just say we had two males and two females and we had one non-binary person, which would equate to "did not disclose," because that's the only option that we have are those three options. And if they don't want to be identified as male or female, then that would be a "did not disclose."

What would show up on the QPR are only the male or female. So then, yes. You would say this is where that anomaly lies if you're looking at the other data points in there, is that we did have the one person that identified as non-binary. And that's where that shows up. Is full data also needed for pre-apprentice participants? This one is kind of complicated actually. It depends on your program. Different programs have different guidelines for participants. So if your program target goal includes pre-apprentices as participants, then, yes, you would.

In the instance of ASE, it's a little more complicated, so we're happy to send you that answer via email if you could please submit it to the mailbox: apprenticeship.grants@dol.gov. And please copy your FPO, and then we'll give you the longer, more complicated answer for that. The answer for this purpose here is "yes-ish." But if someone is actually a participant, yes. You need the data elements. The next one on there is about addressing anomalies. Marcy, did you have anything to add to my earlier explanation about that?

MS. HAMPTON: No. I think that was fine.

MS. HILL: Okay. I guess there is one little thing – in the bottom, for fields not reported. So for folks that are counted as participants, there are instructions in the PIRL that we'll go over in more detail later. But basically, the general rule is that there needs to be a data value in each one of the data elements for each participant. Somebody's asking a question about the SIRS schema. If you don't know what the SIRS schema is, you don't need to know [laughs], is the short way to answer that.

If you are reporting with the SIRS, there are all sorts of reasons and things about that. So I would direct you to your WIOA folks to ask more questions about the SIRS versus the full PIRL. Marcy, somebody's asking about they are in the process still of building their system and developing processes to gather data according to the PIRL schema right now. Do you have a sense of when and which data elements might be removed?

MS. HAMPTON: I think we'll have an answer to that at Tuesday's presentation. And we're sort of coming up with the formal response for that. It's still in the early stages, and I don't think we're really ready to say which ones are coming out. But I think we will get at least some answered for you. How's that?

MS. HILL: Great. Thank you. The next one here – if we use the full PIRL for our reporting data, will the apprenticeship data have to be the 500-plus columns? If you use the full PIRL for if you have integrated reporting of apprenticeship with your WIOA office, the WIOA office has the option to use either the separate schema or the full PIRL schema. The apprenticeship information is within both of those. Sheila, here's a question for you. Someone has identified as non-binary, then they are identified as non-binary. And this is conforming their data with a data bias.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you, Andrea. Yeah. I will address that question because I was actually involved in several discussions that went back and forth with regard to that data element. And I think we all have to remember that the entire data collection, it's approved by the Office of Management and Budget, OMB. And the data collection is also based on comments on two public comment periods. And those comments are seriously considered. Various sexual orientations were considered, but the data collection was approved with those data elements and code values that you see that are approved.

So I wouldn't say that – your observation isn't wrong. It's just that we had to correct what was approved. So the code value, I believe, is 1 and 2; and I believe there's a 9 for "did not disclose." I agree it will probably skew the data. But you should take the opportunity to indicate that additional information in your quarterly narrative report. So I hope that answers the question. It's not a perfect world. And we were just not able to, or not allowed to, collect more than a 1 and a 2, or a male and a female in that instance.

MS. HILL: Thanks, Sheila.

MS. HAMPTON: There was another question I can answer as well. And someone's asking about the apprenticeship narrative – does it go into WIPS? Again, remember, there's a separate narrative report. WIPS is for individual record data – not for narrative data. So your narrative report is completely separate from, I would guess, your quantitative data. So any narrative information that you have that you can add and submit that tells us more about your program that you're not able to submit with the record layout you should include in your narrative. The narrative does not go into WIPS at all.

MS. HILL: Just really quickly, that's true. Just like we talked about, it does not currently go into WIPS at all. Everyone should continue to submit their narrative reports to the program mailbox as we talked about earlier. At some point in the future, though, as other programs do, we will have the QNR within WIPS. But, as Sheila said, right now it's completely separate, and please send through to the mailbox. Thanks, Marcy.

MS. HAMPTON: Sure. So we've come to the end of our session. We're out of time. If there are any more questions in there that we haven't addressed, we will look at them and put answers together maybe in writing and send them out. We certainly appreciate all of you dialing back in for the second session and hope we see you next week again on the 3rd and 4th. It's a lot of information in a short amount of time. And it's pretty dry, but you need to hear it and understand it. And we want to hear your questions so that we can help you make this transition. So thanks again.

And we look forward to talking to you again on Tuesday. Back to you, Jon.

(END)