**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**WIPS Training Number 5: WIPS Troubleshooting**

**Tuesday, December 15, 2020**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Menifee, CA*

JON VEHLOW: Welcome to "WIPS Troubleshooting, OA WIPS Presentation Series, Presentation Number 5." So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Marcy Hampton, supervisory program analyst with the Office of Apprenticeship; Marcy?

MARCY HAMPTON: Thank you, Jonathan. Good afternoon everybody and welcome to this final performance and reporting presentation in our five-part series. This presentation has been scheduled for 90 minutes to allow time for as many questions as possible.

I am Marcy Hampton, the grants team lead in the National Office of Apprenticeship and today you will be listening to our program analysts Andrea Hill, Shelia Lewis and Jessica Diep. We have two guest speakers, George McEntyre and Michaela Malloy-Rotert from the beta testing group who will be sharing some insights with you.

And we also have Evan Rosenberg from the Office of Youth Services and Cesar Acevedo from the Office of Policy and Research and they will be available to answer questions if we need them at the end.

So today is with troubleshooting. There has been a lot of information thrown at you these past few weeks, but we will start to make sense of it with you as you begin trying to enter your grant data. Hopefully all of the presentation and resources will be very helpful to you. Also, please utilize the office hours as much as you can when you need questions answered that are not in the PA tool. And you can also use the mailbox.

So now let's talk a few minutes about the objectives for today. So we're going to identify types of errors that occur within WIPS, discuss the issues with WIPS access and you'll probably have quite a few of them so you want to make sure that you keep the PA tool for that pretty handy.

Resolve common issues and errors that are encountered, recap your broad concepts of the last four sessions and then review how to upload your data files, check the results, generate your QPR, add a QNR, which is the quarterly narrative report, and then certify your report. So now I'm going to turn it over to Shelia who's going to kick us off with the introduction.

SHELIA LEWIS: Thank you, Marcy, and greetings everyone. Welcome to our WIPS performance event number five. For those of you who have not had an opportunity to upload a data file into WIPS, you probably have no idea what types of error messages you may encounter. Not to worry. There are many resources designed to assist you.

One goal of today's event serves to familiarize you with those types of issues. So we will begin by exploring the types of issues you may encounter in the workforce integrated performance system, or WIPS.

This slide provides a bit of an outline for Jessica and Andrea's upcoming content. The first category includes WIPS-specific errors. Those may include WIPS systems access, password reset issues or technical assistance issues such as suppose you forgot your password or you have a WIPS-specific technical question or you have a question on apprenticeship performance related policy. You can find resources there that'll point you to the correct mailbox or the correct number where you can get an answer.

Also, you can get information and any updates on the WIPS system. You'll find information on data file errors, data validation, or the quarterly performance report certification and quarterly narrative report certification.

So moving on, I mentioned that we have several – there are several WIPS updates. Those updates are published on our ETA performance website. You'll see an active link there at the bottom of that particular slide.

Everything related to WIPS that you will need is posted on this site, such as newsletters, release notes, edit checks, such as (valid ?) values, logical rules, and file schema. The WIPS quick start guide is also published on the site.

So that's all for my content for now, so I'll hand it off to Jessica who will be sharing more information about accessing WIPS. Jessica?

JESSICA DIEP: Yes. Thank you, Shelia. Yeah. So in order to gain WIPS access, the authorized representative must send a signed letter on letterhead to the program e-mail box at oagrants.wips@dol.gov. If you need to change your authorized representative, the grant modification process to do this must be done through your FPO, and there's more details on this slide here.

So only the authorized representative can request WIPS access and they can do this by sending a signed letter on letterhead via e-mail to the program e-mail box and the oagrants.wips@dol.gov e-mail.

This letter must be received by January 8th, 2021 for a ASE grantees. And for SAE2020 and YARG grantees, the date is February 14th, 2021. And for ease of remembering, it's also the due date of your next quarterly report. You can view the sample letter here on this slide, on the right hand side, and you can also download the sample letter in the supporting materials in the file share box in this presentation.

It's important that a DOL record of the authorized representative stay up to date since only the authorized representative can request WIPS access, certify data, and designate up to two submitters.

So accessing WIPS for the first time. The DOL will collect all of the initial account information from the letters that are sent and will create the accounts for you. It may take some time after the due date to create your account. Once your account is created, your WIPS instructions, temporary password, and link to the system will be sent from admin@dol.appiancloud.com. So please make sure this e-mail is on your safe list.

For technical issues, you can request technical assistance on the same page as the one on which you use to log in. It is the third link down. Just click request technical assistance. You can also submit your technical WIPS questions directly to the provided link in the second bullet.

On the same page, you can also request a temporary password if you forget your password. And for policy questions or general WIPS help, you can e-mail oagrants.wips@dol.gov. And now to Andrea for data files.

ANDREA HILL: Great. Thanks so much, Jessica, and welcome again, everybody. Good to see everybody here. We're kind of just recapping troubleshooting that we've already talked about and going over a lot of the things that we've already talked about in a nice little package today.

So just to remind you, this is an apprenticeships schema and it's the format that data has to be uploaded into WIPS. And again, we highly recommend the CSV file be the format that you upload. And this is a semi-populated one that you can see here.

Again, the schema at the top that you look at in that file that you got back with the third presentation has the headers and then a header or an outlier participant column to the left. And those columns cannot be included with your file when you try and upload.

Remember, if the information, the limited information here for data element name and the code value doesn't remind you of the specifics about what it is exactly, always look to the full definition in the PIRL for additional information and clarify about what it is that you're supposed to be including in whatever particular data element that you're looking in.

So again, this is basically what your file will look like. It's just a few of the columns over to the left, but it'll just be data with no column headers or row headers. You'll have 131 columns. The columns in your data file should start with the OBS number at the far left and the last column for the OA schema is the apprenticeship grant number, which is PIRL 2920.

Again, I know we keep kind of pounding this into the talking points. But I cannot emphasize enough that no data element headers, no empty rows, no blank entries when code values are required in a data element, no participant names certainly, and no data elements that have a null value instead of a blank value if there's supposed to be.

Keep in mind that there are some data elements that require leading zeroes. For instance, some zip codes require leading zeroes, so those you need to pay particular attention to and make sure that those leading zeroes stay there.

Spaces, again, are counted as a code value. So they can be kind of tricky. If you have a data element that looks like it's empty but if somehow there was a space inadvertently put in it, that would come up as an error, but you wouldn't necessarily be able to identify it as such. So you want to make sure that your fingers are taking control of your keyboard and reduce the typos with extra spaces.

We do have the three types of files that can get in to WIPS. There's the text file or the GZIP file. But again, we highly recommend that all grantees both export their data from their information systems in a CSV file format and then upload them also in that format.

Keep in mind your file size cannot exceed one gigabyte which is pretty big considering that there's only – that there's no data. There's no formatting or any of that other special stuff that can go in there.

When you upload, again, this is a version – a vision actually of what you'll see when you're inside WIPS. Again, to reiterate, what we talked about the other day, you want to make sure that you're using the PIRL 2020 version. There may be multiple versions available to you. Right now, there's the PIRL 2018 and PIRL 2020, but all the apprenticeship stuff is located in 2020. So that makes it easy for us right now anyway, until we get the next one.

You want to select your correct schema. Most grantees who are not affiliated – well, grantees that are not affiliated with a WIOA reporting agency will be using the apprenticeship schema. If it's a state grant that may have partnered with the WIOA reporting agency, there are other schemas that are available to you and the WIOA agency will be sure and walk you through anything that you need to know about that.

The quarter end date. You need to make sure that you're selecting the right quarter end date so that you don't overwrite a previous file inadvertently. That would be bad. And then you just browse to your file to upload it, just anywhere that you normally would. If you've used the Internet in general, that's how you do it. And then you click the magic blue submit button over to the right in order to upload it.

Keep in mind that if you have issues with your file itself, if it can't be unloaded or uploaded, excuse me, you want to follow the instructions that will pop up in order to resolve the issue. In this case that we're looking at right here, the file that was uploaded was a Word file instead of one of the three types that are allowable.

And so there'll be a little pop up that will tell you that it's not the right – so the right kind of file. So then you would go and troubleshoot from that. It's not going to tell you exactly what the issue is but keep in mind there's only those three file types that can be uploaded. And keep your size in mind as well.

We're going to take a little dive for dive right now into some of the edit check results. And we're really excited that we have a couple of our beta testers here to kind of put a little bit of their experience as well into these. Now, again, these are all slides that you've seen before and we're reiterating their importance. But I will pass it along to George McEntyre at this point to lead us off with a little bit of data validation; George?

GEORGE MCENTYRE: Thanks, Andrea. Good morning or good afternoon, I should say, everyone. So once you're notified by e-mail that your uploaded file has been processed by WIPS, you can select the edit check results icon at the top of the WIPS page.

This will take you to the edit check results overview. Now, on this page, it'll show you your uploaded file information, including three columns that identify total errors, total duplicates and format errors.

These three columns correspond to the types of edit checks for one valid values. This indicates the total errors and format errors. WIPS will verify data for format, element length, and if the data entered is correct, such as dates, numbers, number of digits, etc.

For example, data file, the column number matches the current schema. And also, incorrect data was entered such as letters instead of numbers. The second column will be duplicate rules. Indicates that if you have the same participant entered more than once. And finally, logical rules are reported under total errors. WIPS will verify the information conforms to the logical rules for that data element.

For example, the logical rule may state something like this. If date completed apprenticeship element 2911 is not blank, then the exit wage element 2917 is mandatory. Please note, data entered for one element based on the logical rule can be impacted by data entered in one or more different elements. Next slide please. I think Andrea's going to handle this one.

MS. HILL: Whoops. I'm sorry. I was still on mute. I was talking away. So this is just to reiterate a little bit of what George was just talking about and some actual errors within those larger error types. So again, valid values are logical errors that George just talked about.

And then earlier, the ones that I talked about would be format error messages that would come up after you've uploaded your file. You may have mistakenly input values in rows that are not part of the schema or there may be letters instead of numbers where numbers are expected or a special character like an ampersand or an asterisk, again, a typo type situation.

And one thing that can get really tricky and frustrating when you're uploading files is an invalid column number error. Because it won't tell you exactly where your error is. It'll just tell you invalid column error.

Usually the place to start on that is at the end of your schema that you may have just one extra file at the – or extra column at the end that just needs to be deleted. That's a good place to start. And then you'll have to start working your way backwards from there. But that's part of the process, is just working it through. So those are just some error types that you might encounter; George?

MR. MCENTYRE: So on the edit check results overview in the total errors column, it will indicate if you have no errors on your report. And if so, you can then proceed to My Reports tab at the top of the page to certify your report. If you do have errors, it will indicate how many total errors, duplicates, or format errors you have on your uploaded report that need to be resolved. Next.

If you click on the number of errors indicated in the total errors column, it will take you to the edit check errors summary. This is where you can start correcting errors on your report. I found it easier to reference the logical rules for each data element while working the errors to see if other data elements impacted my entry ended in a particular data element.

Clicking on the element number will take you to the edit check error detail that provides more detail on the error. This identifies the individual or individuals that have an error. You may also click on the export error button which will generate an Excel file with the error information. I think I'm handing it off.

MICHAELA MALLOY-ROTERT: Thank you, George. This is Michaela. Good afternoon. What types of issues cause duplicate errors? WIPS reports a duplicate error if any of the following rules are violated. If multiple records have the same individual identifier, which is PIRL data element 100, then no record can have the same covered person entry date in PIRL data element 306 or client ID with the same period of participation. There'll be more on this later.

Where the data program entry PIRL 900 is not null, then for bullet one and three, this is a little bit more difficult to conceptualize until you're actually working through the duplicate errors in the file.

For bullet two, if multiple records have the same individual identifier, that being PIRL 100, and overlapping dates between the records, this will result in a duplicate error. So in other words, you will occasionally have the same individual identifier or client ID or state ID in the file, but they will have different periods of participation and that's okay.

For the third bullet, this will make more sense when you begin working through your upload file. Duplicate errors, that being two records for the same individual, shows as two records. So a file, for example, with 10 records in it that may say – show four duplicates really is only two records or, as you're looking at the file and working in the file, you could view them as rows as you are working with them in either Excel or Notepad or however you work with your WIPS uploads.

Some tips for duplicates is paying attention to the period of participation, that being the participation date and exit date in PIRL element – data element 900 and 901, reducing your duplicate errors. The more you work with your file manually, that will likely increase your chances of having duplicates. Individuals that stop one apprenticeship program and go to another program, those – in those instances, they'll have to be exited from one in order to be counted. Next slide.

What types of issues cause valid – cause value or logic errors? WIPS reports a valid value error if data in any cell does not conform to the current definition in valid values. Dates are often not in the correct format, being the four-digit year first and then the two-digit month and then the two-digit day, or data value is not in the expected code. For example, a state code is in the postal code rather than the two-digit – (inaudible) – code.

WIPS reports logic rule errors if the data in any cell does not conform to the current logic rule outlined in the most recent logic rules document. A logic rule error often indicates a coding problem in the grantee data system.

To be honest, as one works through the files working through your errors, if it is a valid value rule or a logic rule, it doesn't really matter when I work through my files, because both of these will be identified in the error descriptions, as George described.

The main part for the entry-level and middle user level is to know which document the error may be identified in which is part of the resources documents that's provided by the Department of Labor. Valid values versus logic rules, or what I would call edit checks. The edit checks ensure data integrity. Next slide.

What types of issues cause errors? A format error is where the layout does not match the schema chosen in the dropdown. It might have a missing column or columns in the wrong order, or as Andrea described, maybe an extra column or one fewer.

When you upload the data file, the WIPS system runs through the format errors first. If any format errors result, it will stop and you will not be able to see any errors beyond that. The next type of error in the – that the system identifies next are duplicate errors, then the total errors.

Total errors include value or logic errors and may include missing values, more characters entered than the maximum number allotted for that data element, the value entered is a value other than the values allowed and duplicate and logic errors.

An example of this might be one field in your data file in a record conflicting with another field. An example of that that I experienced was – the error was a school status participation reported as not having – or having – that they were a graduate and not having attained – or I'm sorry. Having attained their high school diploma. But the credential attained that they reported was a high school diploma. So those two fields conflicted.

There are lots of other examples of types of errors that can be seen. Sometimes, as you get errors corrected, more show up. Again, as you view the errors on Slide 22 I believe it was, it moved from the right to the left where it first looks at format errors, then duplicate errors, then the total errors. Next slide.

Preparing data files for WIPS. For advanced users, you could use data in your file by opening it in Notepad. You could do this in one of two ways. You can go to your CSV data file in your file folders and click on that – or right click on that file and then select open with Notepad to review the contents of your data file. Or you can open Notepad and follow the – open the file following the mapping or the path to get to your file.

In our state, we've been able to utilize Notepad++ which gives a couple of advantages over the basic Notepad program. And it was just the minimal additional cost to get to that, one of which is that it lines the rows up a little bit better. On occasion we have used Notepad versus Excel to modify or to review the files. And the next slide will be Andrea.

MS. HILL: Awesome. Thanks so much Michaela. It's so good to hear you guys' experience and we're going to talk a little bit more in a couple minuets. But just want to remind everybody, this is a view, again, of your edit check error summary page.

And again, as George mentioned earlier, at Number 2 is the description of the error and at Number 3 is where you would click on the element number to get deeper down into the location of where any particular error is. But what we really want to remind you here is that at the button at Number 1 is where you'll be able to export for your use or for your submittal to any of the technical help that we'll be able to have for you a copy of the error file itself.

So there's no PII that would come in that. It's just a copy of what the errors are and where the errors are located. And so sometimes it's helpful to have that file for both people on other sides of the phone to be able to walk through together to be able to find stuff.

Want to remind you that any grant program can only have one quarterly performance report in any quarter. So once you get through and you certify your report, if you upload another report for the same quarter that you've already got a certified report, you will get a warning message that will let you – alert you to the fact that you're about to overwrite a previously certified QPR.

And sometimes, that's – and sometimes you want to do that because you identify that there's something that you inadvertently misreported. But keep in mind once it's certified, it's submitted to DOL. So any time that you upload another report, it will overwrite the previously uploaded report.

So just sort of a process of how to go through resolving data file errors. Again, as George mentioned, first you look at the errors that you found in your edit check results, going through those steps that we've outlined before you before. And then you would correct errors in your data system actually, in the data file within the data system itself.

And then you would generate a new file and upload that revised file for that same reporting quarter. And then you would circle back around if you have more errors, as Michaela just said, and continue that process until your data is error-free.

Keep in mind that every time that you upload a file, when it is finished processing, at whatever level that may be, if you have errors at any point or if it's successfully uploaded all the way through, you'll get an e-mail from the system to say that either the report is finished generating or that your upload is finished.

So from there, once you've gone through that whole process, then you can proceed to the My Reports tab in order to go ahead and verify and certify the report. So as I just mentioned, you want to resolve any data file errors in your original information system database and then you want to export the revised information as a new CSV data file that then you would upload into WIPS.

Sometimes it seems like it would be more expedient to just fix the error in the file itself and then upload it again, but ultimately, you want to make sure that your records are accurate and reflective of the information that you have given to DOL. So you want to make sure that you're actually making those edits within your system itself.

When sending questions or inquiries about WIPS reporting, we've got actually the two mailboxes which are in our contact slide later on. We've got apprenticeship.grants@dol.gov where you can send performance questions, being sure to copy your FPO. And then the – put your file number ID in the body of the slide.

With the file ID, it allows technical staff, either here or on the WIPS side, to be able to again get to your information and then extract that information with all PII masked. The other e-mail is oagrants.wips@dol.gov and that's the e-mail that Jessica referenced earlier where you want to send the designation letters.

And then just again, as another reminder, and we will keep saying it, but don't ever, ever send PII via e-mail between your grant partners or between DOL and grantees. Again, with DOL you want to reference the file number and then the onus is on the prime grantees to be able to develop a secure process on your end between any grant partners that you have.

So now again we have George and Michaela, who have so graciously helped us out. We had a – our beta team, and we're still in testing for the QPRs actually. But we've actually had kind of a good time I think, haven't we, George and Michaela and with the whole gang.

But we wanted to talk to you a little bit more to be able to have people are here on the phone get a better sense of what it's like from the grantee perspective. We can say a whole lot from this perspective but we're not on the user end.

So I'll start with George I guess. Well, and – but I'll ask the same question of you both. What is your role specifically within your apprenticeship grant and kind of your background? How did you find your way to that role within your program? George?

MR. MCENTYRE: OK. Thank you. So over the past 20 plus years, my background has primarily been in the policies, procedures, program technical assistance, performance assistance, legislative analysis fields within the workforce. For the past almost five years, I've been working on the apprenticeship grants.

My responsibility there consists of grant reports, data and performance collection, tracking. I also handle the fiscal budget and expenditure tracking and I help out on the grant submission activity and review state and federal apprenticeship-related legislation, to do the analysis on that and also track it. And I have to say that I had previously no experience with WIPS.

MS. HILL: Did you know – did you have any idea what WIPS was at all, having had previous experience with apprenticeship grants?

MR. MCENTYRE: No idea. Not until about, what, eight or nine weeks ago.

MS. HILL: And here you are presenting. Awesome.

MR. MCENTYRE: And here I am.

MS. HILL: Awesome. Michaela, how about you? Can you give us and other grantees a little idea about your specific role within your grant and within your background as well?

MS. MALLOY-ROTERT: Sure. My name, again, is Michaela Malloy-Rotert and I am a workforce program coordinator with Iowa Workforce Development. I have 14 years of experience in performance and reporting, including uploading data files for reporting to the Department of Labor across workforce system delivery programs.

This includes – (inaudible) – Title 1 Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth, national dislocated worker grants, TRADE, JVSG or veterans programs, and most recently, increased emphasis on migrant seasonal farmworker reporting through the data file upload versus providing a narrative report as the only means of reporting. And now the registered apprenticeship program.

I have worked in WIPS since its implementation and previous data file upload systems provided by the Department of Labor before that, as well as responsible for data integrity to include data validation. And for those not familiar with WIPS, I have been in your shoes and remember very clearly the learning curve over these years, even as the Department of Labor systems have developed over the years. So we definitely understand some of your frustrations or concerns as you go along sorting through your data files.

MS. HILL: Well, that's one thing, Michaela, that we wanted to talk about. And specifically, grantees have had a lot of material that they've heard over these past few sessions and we've talked a lot about sort of processes that we want put in place for the grantees and kind of best ways and how to do it.

And – but ultimately, people speak human and performance systems and WIPS sort of speak computer. So maybe can you tell us a little bit about what happens in your process at your – in your job, to translate sort of computer requirements into human, to get the information both from participants and then translating that back into computer? And –

MS. MALLOY-ROTERT: Sure. Well, when this –

MS. HILL: – specifically – yeah. Go ahead.

MS. MALLOY-ROTERT: When this started, it actually started on the program side which is probably not something – I mean, that's where you would expect it to start because usually data and performance is kind of – comes after the program requirements sort of kind of life.

So one of the things that were started were the program side kind of started with our data system and then between the both of us that we've partnered fairly well, it was getting familiar with the specifications for the registered apprenticeship program. For me, it was a little – it came more naturally just because I've been doing this for so long with the other programs.

It was actually – it was a matter of reviewing our data sources, reviewing what data do we have and from where might we be able to gather some of it to match up using the social security number of the records, evaluate what may have been missing from the program side, a couple additional questions were added to the intake questions specific to the registered apprenticeship program. And then processes were developed for where we could draw from existing programs, that being the data collection side and what data sources we were able to access.

And then from there on out, it will be – those processes were shared with subgrantees and that and then we will be providing technical assistance as we go along to maybe kind of refine our reporting and what data is being collected and as well as what's being reported out.

MS. HILL: Wow. That's awesome. That's a lot and it's awesome, but thank you very much. How about you, George? How did you, just having recently gotten started with this type of reporting anyway and your introduction to WIPS and your grant. What three or four things did you do first or decide first when kind of approaching this project and moving into this type of participant reporting?

MR. MCENTYRE: So since the first SA grant until now, we've only used a manual system to track and report grant moments. And after seeing the large amount of information that was going to be needed by these grants, we made the decision that based on time to basically buy an off-the-shelf participant tracking system rather than designing our own.

You know, we purchased this new system to collect the large amounts of participant data required by WIPS and help us with our quarterly reporting. And so we're – we'll have grantees that will upload participant information into the system hopefully daily. And we really haven't decided if we will gather all the reported information piecemealed to the quarter or wait until the end of the quarter and actually collect it all at one time.

You know, the information that we received during these trainings are really going to help us develop the training for our grantees. We're also developing some desk aids based on required reporting elements, logical rules and valid values. I'm in the process of developing data validation requirements for the new apprenticeship elements.

You know, we anticipate that our grantees are going to need technical assistance for probably the first couple of quarters. So some of the things that I did, since WIPS was so new to me, is right off the bat, I read through the info that was provided, such as the report format, the logical rules, and the valid values. Just a quick run through to kind of get familiar with it.

And the second thing I did, I developed a spreadsheet with all the WIPS apprenticeship data elements and allowed space at the end to enter my test participants' reporting information in the spreadsheet and to keep track of each upload and the errors associated with that entry.

So then once my upload was finally accepted by WIPS, then I could drop down to another line and change each subsequent test upload from the original. And I could kind of track my progress that way.

MS. HILL: That's awesome, George, information, especially for those grantees who are here and are just really kind of in the same place that you were a couple, three months ago. But can you, George, kind of walk us through your process on data upload itself. What's your timeline kind of? What – when you are uploading your data, how do you approach it? And kind of walk us through your thought process for how to maintain data integrity, to get to a file you are feeling pretty confident about and sort of the subsequent error resolution process that you do.

MR. MCENTYRE: So since this is actually going to be our first time – well, actually, my first time to work with WIPS and going into the quarterly reports, we kind of anticipate a rather aggressive deadline for data to be entered by our grantees following the end of the quarter to allow us enough time to troubleshoot and resolve errors among our grantees. This will allow state-level staff enough time to complete the narrative portion of the quarterly report and prepare the performance report for uploads into WIPS.

Some of the tips I can give is familiarizing yourself with the logical rules and the valid values which will help data integrity and help you minimize errors. You want to allow yourself time to work through any errors that are identified. And when you address all the errors, or when you think you've addressed all the errors and upload the corrected reports, don't be surprised if new errors are identified. And I know this very well. Most important tip I can give you is to not get discouraged working errors. I had to submit one report seven times before it was error-free and it was only for three participants.

MS. HILL: So there is a little bit of a learning curve too that's involved in this process then you would say.

MR. MCENTYRE: There's a light at the end of the tunnel.

MS. HILL: This is a good point too. I just want to let our grantees know that both George and Michaela have been generous enough to share a couple of their own tools that they have developed. And so there is sort of a vetting process that we have to go through before DOL sends them out, but know that when you see a logic rule tool comparison that'll come out, that that's courtesy of Mr. McEntyre.

And then there's a really fantastic sort of step-by-step tool that Michaela has developed about sort of navigating that Notepad conversion. So we'll have those out to you shortly. And so thank you both very much for that for sure. Michaela, can you talk us through a little bit about your timeline about data upload and your error resolution process too?

MS. MALLOY-ROTERT: Sure. So I want to start with saying that this process does not happen overnight. Even refined – it's a process that is refined really throughout the years. So as far as like my data file, we've – there's a submission coming up, what, February 14th? And I begin a month in advance of the data file being due to the Department of Labor, so in this case January 15th, 16th or so, I'll be able to start working with my file.

Now, that's not to say I can't work with some of the data like the participant and the demographic and that information prior to that, but as far as when it does start calculating outcomes and exit dates, it's really hard to kind of do it too far in advance just because of the way the exit dates generate.

So I begin with a data extract from – we have a third-party vender that does our data management system. We had written our own data extract from our own – I don't know if it was doc-based data management system. And then we begin adding the external data sources such as the UI wage data, SWIS data which is the interstate wage data.

We have some UC claimant status which actually is just one data element, but we gather that as a separate file. And then we are in our state working towards automating some of these processes where possible and working with our project team and previously our IT programmers to develop the extracts.

When the file is ready, we upload the data file to WIPS around the first of the month on the month that it's due. So in this case, around the first of the month I'll be able to start uploading it because by then, all that wage data and the exiters will have generated. Mind you, you guys – a lot of you are starting – this might be your first submission so you may not have a lot of exiters yet, but when the exiters start generating that's going to become more important for you.

The final upload will return errors, especially as you're beginning with, in our case, our work on the registered apprenticeship data testing, and it results in more errors as we're putting the files together manually. Now, in my case, we'll be able to utilize our vender for our data management system in a couple submissions. But our initial file was – tried to be put together manually and I did that work and I will tell you it is not easy to do it manually.

Ideally, as subgrantees – or grantees or subgrantees, allow yourself time to work with your staff or subgrantees to correct any data issues in your data management system. This is – being a new process under registered apprenticeship is, again, likely going to result in more errors earlier in the process than for, example, by the end of the grant.

The closer you get to the report deadline being due, the more stressful it can be to get the file through with no reject errors. Department of Labor has improved the processing time by tenfold at least, but there were a few years ago that if you happened to draw the unlucky straw of timing and get in line, get your file uploaded and in line behind a very large state, it took several hours for the file to process, just to even see if there were any errors.

So then you'd go work your error file and reupload. And like I said, as that gets closer to that deadline, the – your stress level will increase tenfold. So do allow yourself plenty of time. Ensuring some data integrity and minimizing errors. Review. You can review that data where possible before starting the process a month in advance. Like I said, you can't get it too far in advance because of the exit process, the exits generating.

If you have the staff, you – I would recommend utilizing a data person which is – would be separate from your program person. However, they would work closely together. If you're able to partner with your Wagner-Peyser program or Title I WIOA, you may be able to work within your workforce delivery system, data management system if that's something that you can work with them to get to that point just to help you with your data management.

There would be many benefits to this, not only from a programmatic standpoint. But you would have access to the wage data just for your participants, co-enrollment opportunities which lead to better outcomes and better partnering within the workforce delivery system – upscaling customers, work readiness assessments, resume prep, etc.

You would be adding – you would potentially be adding some questions to the intake process. The file extract quarterly would – which would improve your data integrity if you were able to partner in your workforce delivery system. I know every grantee or subgrantee may be in a little bit different situation but I will tell you from my experience, trying to work this file manually is – would definitely be a challenge, even for someone with as many years of experience as I have.

You may be able to utilize data from the Office of Apprenticeship. I believe they call it the Rapid system. However, it would be missing some data elements, some of the data factors that go into what's needed for the performance and reporting outcomes. And the work would – to prepare that file would be manual.

There's 20 additional data elements with registered apprenticeship than what's already – than what they're already used to providing in like say the Wagner-Peyser or Title I programs. If you can partner with existing partners in the workforce delivery system, you should be able to keep costs down to assist with that data file. Understanding that many of these IT staff are tapped out, especially with the pandemic and adapting those systems, that may be the easiest route for you to go.

The last thing that I have to share on data integrity and minimizing errors is that only in cases of emergency do I actually modify the data file directly in the file versus having the staff correct it in the data management system and then re-extracting.

If you modify it directly in the data file, you'll – you will need to correct it in the data management system anyway and you'll have the same issue in the next quarters if you don't. As a matter of data integrity, you – what I do in my state is I try to have the staff responsible for where they entered the data, make the correction in the data management system.

This can be a process, so you do want to allow yourself plenty of time with that and you will – if you're not a patient person, you'll want to learn a little bit of patience through that process because it's only a process.

And then you would provide – by doing that too you'd be providing some technical assistance to those grantees or subgrantees to ensure that the issue is addressed and that it doesn't become an ongoing program. Or problem. Sorry.

MS. HILL: Thanks so much, Michaela. That's great information. So hopefully folks are listening to both the brand-new and the well-versed with some of your tips. With that, just one final question. Michaela, is there one or – is there one thing or maybe two things that you wish your early self had known? Either before you started in performance and/or before you started working with WIPS. One particular handy tip or –

MS. MALLOY-ROTERT: Well, one of the things that I've been impressed by this series of presentations is I had wished that they had these back when I started this process. Taking advantage of the office hours when they're offered because it's an opportunity to ask specific questions of issues that you've come across that even if the Department of Labor facilitators that are kind of moderating the office hours can't answer, then some of your – it's kind of a peer to peer support as well.

I would recommend that you could go a quarter to manually putting a file together but I don't know if that would be something sustainable, especially as you're adding participants and then with trying to calculate the outcomes.

The other thing kind of I thought of this when George was mentioning his process, is starting with a smaller data file. My goal through the RA – through the beta testing process was to end up with six records that was successfully put through. And I had a plan for two of them meeting one type of criteria, two of them meeting another, and then two of them were actual participants that we had.

And honestly, I ended up kind of starting with one record. If I could get that one record through, then it was golden and then I could build upon it from there. And you could start that process, even as early as now, getting ready for that February submission.

Sometimes, I will use Notepad to get past a – like, say a duplicate issue, to be able to continue moving forward to ensure there are few, if any, errors. So what I mean by that is it – as I mentioned earlier, it goes through the duplicate – I'm sorry. The format errors first, which is the column number, or the invalid column number.

Secondly, it goes through duplicates. Thirdly, it goes through the total errors. And sometimes, if you get hung up on an issue like duplicate errors, you have no idea what errors are sitting behind those duplicates. So sometimes just to get past that so that I can continue working forward and I can continue working with my – the staff or the subgrantees to be able to correct their records and their data management system, I'll go and just eliminate one of those duplicates that's causing me a problem or whatever.

And then I will submit the file that way. It's not ever – it's generally never the file that I certify but at least it allows me to get past that so that I could continue working on the rest of the errors. Andrea will likely be able to provide some information, like a desk aid, that I shared with her on working, something like that, in Notepad. You could do it in Excel as well.

And then with that desk aid, I also – I'll just answer the question forward now is – the question was, how do you keep Excel from automatically truncating the leading zeroes when looking at the data. And that desk aid also has something on there with that which is basically a data import and keeping – there's a way to tell it to keep your format the same and then you save it back out as a CSV file as well. So there hopefully will be some additional guidance on that.

MS. HILL: Thank you so much, Michaela. And again, we've got more desk aids coming, two of them courtesy of our two guest speakers that are here today. George, just coming back to you, just sort of the same question. Is there anything that you would say to yourself of 12 weeks ago, as you headed into this, that you wish you had known?

MR. MCENTYRE: Well, like I said before, I'm brand-new to WIPS. Eight weeks ago, I had no idea what WIPS was. So of course, I wish I had worked with WIPS before. However, the training and the office hour sessions I've been receiving have been just extremely helpful in figuring out how to work the system and how to work the errors and what impacts different data sources.

And what I can tell everybody out there is don't get overwhelmed with the number of data elements. You need to figure out a system that works for you for resolving the errors. And just a heads up that I kind of learned the hard way is that once you correct one error and resubmit it, your report, there may – that may generate a whole new set of errors. And it may get frustrating working the errors, but stick with it and eventually you'll get it.

MS. HILL: Thank you so much to you both for spending the time, both for spending the time on the beta team and to all our beta testers because we can't do it without you. And then especially to you two for coming and presenting here on this training because I'm sure it'll help grantees quite a bit, especially when they go back and maybe relisten to these.

So let's just go ahead and, well, start wrapping up the whole series here. I wanted to let you all know, Michaela had mentioned something about office hours and peer to peer. We do have a list of beta testers who have volunteered to be peer to peer assistors to you all too. So once we get past the new year, there are things that we recognize here at DOL that we just can't answer that those folks that are out on the grantee end might be able to better help you all with.

I – if you wanted to reach out to your WIOA reporting agency, for instance, how do you start doing that? Somebody in the state would be able to answer that much better than we would here. So we are going to have that available for you too.

So just wanted to point out again, we've got the most recent edit checks that are available at this link on the PowerPoint. And again, the slides for the PowerPoint are here located down in the file share for you. The most recent duplicate rules, logical rules and valid values are always here on this page. So be sure that you're keeping apprised of those.

We have a lot of technical assistance resources that you've seen throughout this series. We have a sample case management data file that's on the way. But then we also have, again, the WorkforceGPS communities. We've got links that go directly to TEGLs for you. We have a walkthrough webcast of how to fill out the QNR in the Word format that we have right now.

We have a participant tracking, excuse me, strategies webinar for the ASE grantees that we did a few months ago. And then the – again, the WIPS folks have a walkthrough video. Actually, two walkthrough videos for you. So you've seen a lot of static slides of how to get through WIPS but those are dynamic and somebody shows you on a movie how to go through there.

These are our e-mail addresses again, where to get ahold of us if you have WIPS reporting questions, send them to oagrants.wips@dol. There's a link to technical assistance for WIPS, so if your system gets frozen out or you tried to upload a file 17 times and it keeps freezing, any kind of technical assistance with WIPS, that's the form that you would go fill out either on the web or we also showed you where inside the WIPS interface there's a technical assistance request link.

Your program mailboxes are here. The state grants are all at apprenticeship.grants@dol.gov and then YARG grants are at youthasready.grants@dol.gov. Someone asked a little bit earlier about account, the account letter. So the account letter that we talked about the other day and that Jessica talked about earlier, that's signed by the authorized representative that designates who will have access in WIPS.

For any particular apprenticeship grant, would go to both the program office and oagrants.wips e-mail addresses. And then some of the technical resources that we've given you here. We've got a bunch of handouts during the series. When we get the recordings up, which will be in the next few days, there will also be a performance handbook there for you as well as another copy of all these handouts if you weren't able to download them during the presentations.

And then we've got, again, still to come, things that are coming down the pike to continue to help you. We've got, again, the beta tester tools there that Michaela and George developed. We're going to have a broader and expanded version of the FAQs that were started the other day, continue trainings through the WorkforceGPS performance community that the folks that operate WIPS will be providing.

We'll have specific grant outcomes trainings after the first of the year. And let's not forget office hours. So those dates and times are still to be determined, but there'll be an e-mail coming out to you from oagrants.wips just after the first of the year. So with that, again, want to thank Michaela and George for being here. Going to pass it over to Shelia and we're going to be able to answer some questions for you all.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thanks, Andrea. Yep. We have a few questions in the chat room. So Evan, I think there's one to you. Number three.

EVAN ROSENBERG: Sorry, Shelia. Was that directed at me? I was – I couldn't hear.

MS. LEWIS: That's okay. A question about YARG grantees. It's number three. They're asking for clarification.

MR. ROSENBERG: Yeah. So the question was, will you clarify when YARG grantees will gain access to enter data into WIPS? Are we responsible for QPR WIPS reporting in quarter two or quarter three? So I'm going to answer the second question first, which his you are not responsible for WIPS reporting in quarter two.

And by quarter two, I'm assuming you mean the October 1 through December 31, 2020 quarter, the quarter we're currently in. That would be the second quarter of your grants and of our program year. And no. You are not responsible. You – we won't be providing you access for WIPS for this quarter. You're not responsible for reporting in the quarter ending December 31.

We have heard that a couple grantees have asked about that, so we're going to send out more communication on that this week just to make sure our Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grants understand that they do not need to use WIPS and they will not be submitting any records in WIPS in the quarter ending December 31.

So the first time the YARG grantees will be using WIPS is for the quarter ending March 31 for the reports due on May 15th. So you still have a lot of time before you'll be using WIPS for YARG grantees.

We will be asking you, as part of your narrative report, to give us any basic data you have about participants and roles and things like that, since we won't be getting any data from you through WIPS. But we'll be sending out communication on that when we send out the reminder that you do not need to be using WIPS in the quarter ending December 31.

And then so the first part of the question about clarifying when you'll gain access to enter data into WIPS, I don't have a specific date for you but we will make sure that you have access to WIPS long before you need to start using it. We have some more training planned specifically for the YARG grantees the first week of February, which we'll also be notifying you about.

So my guess is it'll probably be shortly after that. We don't want to overwhelm you too soon with WIPS access. And since your first report quarter that you'll enter data into WIPS isn't until mid-May, I think if we give you access sometime in February, that'd probably be sufficient. But we'll definitely get back to you on when you'll get access to start entering data into WIPS.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you, Evan. Marcy, we have a grantee that's concerned that they won't meet their February 14th date in WIPS. Should they contact their FPO?

MS. HAMPTON: Yes. They absolutely should. I would say for this one, because we're just getting into this, you want to start as early as possible and you want to try to figure out those errors. You want to have some test data in there to see what comes back. Don't wait until the last minute to start trying.

We do anticipate that some people will have trouble getting it in on time but the first quarter we'll be a little lenient for sure about how long it takes. But we do want you to try to get it in if possible on that date. As we go on down through the line, they freeze the data after some point afterwards with reports so that they can do the aggregate calculations and the data isn't changing.

So it is important that you do get them in on time if – we're new, so we're going to have some bumps in the road. But do let your FPO know. Keep them in the loop. They will be able to help you. They will be able to work with us if there's questions you can't get answered and that you're not getting answers to through the other resources. And we'll just see how it goes, but do your best to try to meet that deadline.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you, Marcy. We have a tag-team for Marcy and Andrea. Will registered apprenticeship programs any longer be able to recruit outside of the state workforce system?

MS. HILL: Thanks, Shelia. So yes. Absolutely. The utilization, again, of WIPS as a reporting system does not mean that participants for registered apprenticeship grants have to come exclusively from the workforce system. With the ASE grant, we encourage co-enrollment wherever possible and of course we want to integrate the systems a little bit more so there's more communication and we're able to serve people a little better.

But there is absolutely no restriction on where the participants themselves come from. They do have to meet the eligibility requirements of course, but they – you can continue to get participants for the grants from wherever you're recruiting them from, keeping in mind that grants are specific to the grant project themselves and you should not be reporting the overall statewide population of apprentices.

Is there anything there, Marcy, that you want to add?

MS. LEWIS: OK. I guess not.

MS. HILL: I think she's on mute.

MS. LEWIS: Oh. You're on mute?

MS. HAMPTON: [Inaudible]

MS. LEWIS: Oh. Sorry. So did you want to add anything? I didn't hear you.

MS. HAMPTON: No. I'm good with that answer. I didn't see the question, the whole thing, so I – just making sure that the question was not, could they go outside of like their state or anything if they're a state grant or anything. Otherwise, I think the answer was exactly correct.

MS. LEWIS: OK. All right. Thank you, Marcy and Andrea. So now I want to go back to Evan. So Evan, the question is, has any entity had legal concerns from employers when gathering the information? Specifically, the question is – okay. I'm trying to read the question. They seem to be against EEO regulations.

MR. ROSENBERG: Yeah. I'm happy to speak to that issue. So I think there might be a little bit of confusion between the type of questions that employers could ask employees versus the type of questions that grantees can ask participants. And I suspect a little bit of this confusion relates to who we're talking about as participants in our program. So this'll be a little bit of a long answer, but I think it's important to clarify to make sure we're all on the same page.

So a participant in this program is someone that you, as the grantee, are directly serving, providing grant-funded services to. And so when you enroll a participant in the program, you're formally enrolling them into the program. You're providing them services and as a grantee of the Department of Labor, you absolutely are able to collect the information that we're asking you to collect.

And this type of information, we historically collect for all of our programs. And yes. It definitely is EEO, or Equal Employment Opportunity, information. A good example of that is, one of the required data elements is the – is whether the participant is a single parent. And where an employer can't ask an employee whether the employee is a parent or is pregnant or is low-income or things like that, that would be completely inappropriate and against EEO regulations for an employee to – an employer to ask an employee about.

These are absolutely questions and information that Department of Labor grantees collect and ask their participants and it's part of enrolling in the program is you have to be able to answer these questions or provide the information. And for some of them, you might not be able to get the information and the participants may not want to share the information, and they have the right to do that. Disability information is a good example of that.

But you're not going against any EEO regulations by collecting this data or asking your participants because you're not the employer of the individual. You're the grantee for a program participant who is participating in your program and receiving grant-funded services from you. So hopefully that answers it.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Great. Thank you, Evan. Going back to you, Andrea. We have a question about PIRL data element 105, special project ID.

MS. HILL: OK. So special project ID, there are three special project ID PIRL elements. And those are sort of in reserve for future use. Currently, we ask that all grantees leave those blank. We don't have a code for any special project. We may in the future, but we don't know. So those should just be left blank, those three special project IDs.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you, Andrea. Another one for you is a sample schema that was provided in an earlier training session the same order of the schema in WIPS?

MS. HILL: Yes. It is. We've got the horizontal schema that we provided you that has the data element and code value type and size that runs across the top of the columns. So yes. That is. And then there's also that vertical version. But those are all in the same order. Yep.

MS. LEWIS: OK. And Andrea, there's one last one for you. It's pretty long. Number five. You want to tackle that one? It looks like it's several parts. I'm going to let you read it.

MS. HILL: OK. So somebody's asking a question about – so this is kind of a hypothetical question about duplicate errors and funding sources. And so if they have a person who is being provided services by two different grants, how do we upload that data? Is basically the question.

So if you're using the apprenticeship schema, it's one – it's only – it's one file per grant. So you would upload – so if you have, say, a YARG grant and you also have an ASE grant, you would – you could have someone co-enrolled with those programs. But the thing is, is you would upload one file for your ASE grant and then you would upload another file specific to your YARG grant.

So it wouldn't really be a duplicate error because if someone was co-enrolled, they would appear on both of those if they were co-enrolled appropriately but it would be two different files that would be uploaded.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you, Andrea. And let's see. We have a few more coming in. All right. We have a follow up question. Oh. It just moved. Just a second. I'm waiting for the question to pop up. Could we get some clarification on the – I think there's a follow up question that may be directed to Evan on – it says assume that that goes for SAA using intermediaries. Could we get a clarification on that question? And I'll come back to it.

We also have a follow up question for number five. Are we reporting – are – if they're a state reporting agency and they're using the global schema, one file for all apprenticeship grants, could you clarify that? I think there's a question there somewhere. Let's see. While we're waiting, are there any more questions? We have a couple more minutes. Is there a question that you were going to take, Cesar?

CESAR ACEVEDO: Yeah. It looks like there's a follow up but number five was deleted.

MS. LEWIS: Yeah. I was thinking that too.

MR. VEHLOW: I'll bring that question back up. One second here.

MR. ACEVEDO: OK. So I think the question was related to uploading. One participant's being funded by two or more grants. At this time, it sounds like that's not possible. It's something that we can go back and sort of review within the structure of WIPS.

But at this point, I think we have to – the same would apply for Andrea's response where you can only submit one apprenticeship grant per file. So in that case, you'd have to, as a state grantee, submit your full PIRL with all your formula programs and then submit individual files for your apprenticeship grants.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you, Cesar. And I think we have time for one more. Andrea, if you want to take the last one.

MS. HILL: Sure. Somebody asked to please confirm the apprentices that need the WIPS information are all the apprentices we provide WIOA money to. And no. The apprentices that you are reporting into WIPS are those persons who are participants, as Evan had talked about a little bit earlier, who are receiving money from your apprenticeship grant, who are receiving a grant-funded service funded by either your state expansion or your YARG grant.

These apprentices have nothing to do necessarily with WIOA. They can be co-enrolled but they don't have to be. It's only those people who are receiving services from your apprenticeship grant, your grant that starts with AP.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Andrea, thank you very much. We have one more question. It says, do you recommend we upload multiple files? One per grant, even though we are a state reporting agency and use the apprenticeship schema, not the global schema. And said just to circumvent this issue. And this is another follow up question. Any takers? Michaela, did you have – not – did you have a comment about that question?

MS. MALLOY-ROTERT: I'm not exactly sure how many grants we have right now with apprenticeship just because I'm across so many programs. But I will say that we have a combined PIRL file that covers most of the programs that I mentioned earlier. We are going to submit our registered apprenticeship grants file separately from our combined file. And the reason for that has to do with the exit dates generating and things like that. So that's what our state is planning to do.

MS. LEWIS: All right. Thank you, Michaela. And that ends our event and our event series. So thank everyone for participating. Thanks to all of our presenters and our guest presenters and beta testers. Thank you very much and look forward to more information that'll be uploaded into WorkforceGPS. And those file recordings will be available soon. So stay tuned and look out for those in WorkforceGPS. Thank you for attending our event. Have a good day.

MR. VEHLOW: I believe, Marcy, you wanted to wrap things up right now? If Marcy, you want to jump in there.

MS. HAMPTON: Yes. Thank you. Thank you everybody. You did make it through the entire series for five presentations and we appreciate you staying on. It was a long journey but I think this information will really help you to move forward. These presentations we post on WorkforceGPS in about a week. This page will be on the eighth page but the links will be there – (inaudible) – pages so you can just click directly into those and they’ll take you to the right place.

Don't forget to save the presentation and the reference guide and the PIRL schema. You now have the PDF to download which includes the condensed version of all the slides as well as all the PA resources, and there's a PDF booklet form for you. Don't forget the – (inaudible) – the ASE grantees is due on January 8th. There's a sample that's included that Jessica mentioned.

The questions we collected during this webinar series, we are going to, as I said, make a combined document so that we can forward out to you in a few weeks. So you'll have a lot of questions in one place.

I currently want to thank Andrea who drafted the majority of this training and to all of our presenters that contributed to this five-part series. And we certainly enjoyed having the beta testers today because that gave you a different perspective. A lot of planning and hard work went into this information, getting it all together, getting these PA documents ready. So thank you to the entire team for that.

The beta testers, as a group, we thank you also because you gave us a lot of good feedback that we've been able to adjust and try to make some changes as we go through this which will hopefully benefit the rest of you. And we obviously really appreciate that you took the time to get on those calls with us twice a week and try to make it better for the rest of us.

(Inaudible) – five performance webinars within a short period of time, but we think that the information is going to be really helpful. We noticed there were a couple of people that got on in the middle of the night so thank you very much for doing that. We know you're really far away and the time wasn't great. But you made the effort to get on every time. And so thank you for doing that. And if you have any special needs, we will adjust our schedules to work with you in the future.

That's about it for now. We're waiting to get the ASE grantee questions so that we can I think sort it out for the first submission on or before February 14th. We will work with you very closely to make sure that the deadline – that you can meet them, and if not, that we're close to it so that we can help you overcome any of your challenges.

And the rest of you will start your WIPS reporting on or before May 15th. So thank you very much and Jonathan, I'll turn it back to you.

MR. VEHLOW: Thank you, Marcy.

(END)