**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**TAAACS: Filling out the 2021 Version**

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LAURA CASERTANO: I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar and I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Robert Hoekstra, the program analyst and technical expert with the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance. Robert, take it away.

ROBERT HOEKSTRA: Thanks so much. Hi, everyone. I know, I think, most of you on the call. So we're going to kind of jump right in. I do appreciate people filling out that poll ahead of time. It looks like we've got people kind of across the spectrum, so some people that are just learning about TAAACS for the first time and some people who, you know, have already looked through the new version. So we'll try and cover everybody's bases.

Go ahead and fill in questions in the chat, I will get to as many questions as I can, hopefully all of them as we go through. I'm also going to say you've got a couple of resources on your screen. You should have Weblinks and that is a link where you can download the current copy of the tax collection. I highly recommend people pull that up and have it along side because we're going to kind of through part of this walk step by step through that and so you can kind of follow along as we're talking through it.

The other thing I want to point out is, obviously we are going to have today's PowerPoint but there's also some discussion notes. For those of you who participated in a listening session back in the spring, you will have already seen this document but this is essentially our logic about why we made some changes between the old version and the new version. We'll talk a little bit about that as we go through, but if you are looking for some more details on why we changed some things, that's in that document.

Great. All right. So now we're going to jump right in. So here's what we're going to kind of cover today. We're going to talk about what TAAACS is. We're going to talk about why we revised it. We're going to go through the basics of completing the form and then we're going to do a step-by-step, like I said, walking through that form and answering questions as we go through.

We are going to then do some dedicated time on worker lists. This is the biggest change in the new TAAACS collections. We're going to talk through that together and then we're going to talk about kind of the wrap up at the bottom of the form our comments, affirmations and submissions.

All right. So what is TAAACS? TAAACS is the TAA, Trade Adjustment Assistance Administrative Collection of States. This is essentially a tool we use once a year. And by tool I mean an excel sheet you fill out that gives us some very discreet quantitative data about how your state is organized. So it tells us what your policies are. It tell us how many staff you have and things like that and that way we can use it for data analysis.

Before this existed, we spent a lot of time reaching out to states and asking them to describe things to us or when you would have someone come out for monitoring, they'd end up having a long portion of that interviewing to try and figure out what does the state organization look like and this isn't meant to displace those but to make it a lot easier by having that standardized way for us to be able to look through and see what's going on with the state, how they're organized and what kinds of capabilities they have.

We do collect it annually. This is actually going to be our third annual collection that we're in right now that will be due November 30th and it's primarily filled out by TAA coordinators, although they'll probably have to work with some other folks in filling out some portions. So for example, there's a portion on IT systems, you'll definitely have to talk with your reporting staff, financial staff on some of those things. But most of the questions are geared toward the TAA coordinator being able to answer.

All right. So I kind of mentioned this already but what does this thing allow us to do? It let's us do some actual data analysis around state practices, helps us find promising practices. We find out what states have really outlier issues and then it gives us that baseline information for staff that are going out to do monitoring. And that way we can better understand the challenges, [inaudible] technical assistance, and understand what's going on with various states.

All right. It's an excel sheet like I mentioned and so it's just an excel sheet that gets filled out and emailed back to us. It is always completed annually between October 1st and November 30th of each year. It has two tabs. That's actually new this year, it used to be one tab. And the worker group lists is the part that's added on to the second tab, so we'll talk through that fairly extensively.

And you just email it back. You actually email it back to me and we do require that the entire thing be filled out so there are, I think, three total optional fields and we can talk through those a little bit but basically everything should have an answer on there.

All right. So it's broken down by sections. So we've got some definitions up top and we're going to go through each one of these sections on their own but just know that each section, after the definitions where we ask these questions and we're going to step through those and kind of organize in the same flow that we get for participation and things like that. So state organization and then outreach and then how we determine eligibility, benefits and services and IT system and etcetera. So we'll jump through that.

All right. So one of the questions is why revise this in 2021. We do the annual collection to get updates but we also, after our first two rounds, after creating this brand-new collection, we realize that there were some places where we could really improve it. One of the big goals was to improve clarity, so we got some pretty consistent questions back or places where we got answers that clearly understood questions a little bit differently. So we really wanted to improve clarity. We wanted to improve the usability of the data.

So for example, we actually have you do rankings under the prior version of the collection, that was extremely frustrating for states and it also made the data a little bit more meaningless because it was hard to tell what was primary versus secondary because some states would only rank the ones that they used and just have a couple and some states would rank the full length, which was good and how you were supposed to do it but it also made it look ridiculous for our analysis.

We tried to simplify and remove anything that was unhelpful so we had a bunch of stuff in there that we thought would be really good for us to collect and when we got the information back, we found out that it wasn't actually all that helpful. You'll see that some of them did get broken down into questions. So for example, anyone who remembers we used to have this question that was, are you centralized or localized. And that category like as a broad question was almost completely meaningless. So we removed it and asked some more specific questions about what we were actually trying to get at.

And then we create a consolidated outreach section, did a little bit more on integration and we expanded. And this is going to be really hopefully easy for you guys but also a big benefit to us, we expanded a lot on barriers and technical assistance, and then we added this worker group number section which we will definitely get into pretty extensively.

All right. So basics of completing the form. Don't modify the form. So just so that you guys know when we get it back we automatedly pull all that data back in so we can get one data set across all states so don't add new lines or copy and pastings. You should just be filling out the form as is.

You should definitely return it as an excel because like I said, if someone sends it back to us like as a PDF, which we have frequently gotten, we can't scrape that data from it. So I do go back to the states and say, send it back to me as an excel because that's really how we need it. And you're going to send it right back to me.

All of the sections you actually have to fill out are highlighted on the form in yellow. They have dropdowns in almost all cases. I think there's three free text fields on the entire form. And I encourage people not to put side comments. So I know a lot of states have a tendency when they fill out the dropdown they want to put comments right there next to it but that doesn't get pulled into the dataset. We actually have a dedicated comment section where you can put any comments on and clarifications you have on any of the questions. So we do want that information but make sure you put it in the comment section.

And we provide some explanations. So you'll see when you click in the box you'll get a hover over, it'll give some details. So for example, if you're looking for some definitions they're frequently in there. And then in the dropdown we actually give you the selectable choices. So don't try and put anything that's not there. And try and pick the best options.

My biggest comment though is ask questions. So if you're confused by a question, or you don't understand the question, as you guys know, I am always on top of my emails, so just send me a quick email, I can definitely get back to you right away on how to fill it out because the best thing we need is solid data. If you're guessing, then there's probably something wrong.

Good. All right, so I'm going to do a section by section walk through. I'm going to pause at the end of each section for questions but I'm going to start now with a pause. Any questions on kind of the general structure of the TAAACS and why we're using it? All right, seeing none, we're going to jump right in.

So I carved out a specific section on definitions. This has always been on there but I'm going to step through it on here because people often skimmed over it. But it actually has a lot of important information in there. So for example, we use the phrase TaOA. This is training and other activities grants. You can see that it's just those training funds, those jobs search, case management funds. It is not TRA, it is not RTAA. And you can see that we actually make some references here so you can differentiate because there are some places where we're asking about TAA specifically as differentiated from TRA.

We also provide a definition of full-time equivalent workers. So when we do talk about staffing, full-time equivalent workers are portional people. So if you have someone who spends half their time on trade and half their time on WIOA dislocated worker, they count as a half a person. That is not a judgement on anybody, that is just how you do the math. So there's an explanation here.

We are focused on staff that are actually funded by our trade grant. So the TaOA grant, I highly recommend that you actually think about where people are charging their time as a way to add up how many people you have when we get to the staffing questions.

I also highlighted something down here. We have a couple of states that don't actually get a grant and I know that makes filling this out a little bit more complicated but if you don't have a grant active at the time, think about who would be charging to that grant if you do not have an active grant. OK.

We got a couple of other definitions here. TAA Merit FTE, this is based on the merit staffing rule. You can see the citation here. If you're trying to figure out who's merit and non-merit, and that will be an important distinction for us. There is a definition here for local office. We use the phrase local office, we're talking American Job Centers, affiliate, partner, one stops, that's how we're referring to that group.

We also make a reference to regions and this is usually when a state organizes those local offices into distinct groups. And so when we say regions, that's what we're talking about, is we're talking about if they are organized in existing groups and we'll see when we actually get to the question on that. If you don't have any regions that is also perfectly fine. That's part of what we want to know.

All right. And then we refer to fiscal, and this is really talking about the team that fills out your 9130. So sometimes people [inaudible] the financial or they may have a name for the actual department and that's all great. When we say fiscal in the collection, we're talking about that group.

All right, any questions on the definitions before we jump into the first section? All right. And if I do move too quickly and you think of a question after I've moved on, just type it in the chat, I will get back to it as soon as I can. So feel free to ask questions about any part of it as we go.

So the first section of actual collection is state organization. And there's a couple different sections we're going to walk through them together. The very first section, the first five questions are staffing numbers. And this is actually where a lot of those definitions matter. So we're asking for your FTE for administration, performance reporting, fiscal reporting, indirect participant support and direct participant support.

And you'll notice that there's caveats on all of these. These should be distinct groups, so you shouldn't have someone who counts in both categories. Or if they do count in both categories, then you should adjust their FTE based on that. So for example, if they spend half of their time in direct participant support and half of their time in indirect participant support, each one of those should get a half a person, not a whole person.

You can see that this is actually going to total it up. So when you put these in, it's going to give you a total for each category. It's going to give you a total of merit and non-merit FTE. So hopefully that helps solidify that these really should be additive and you shouldn't be duplicate counting across any of those categories.

So each category is exclusive, it's unique. Each category needs to have a count in there. You have to have an actual entry in for both merit and non-merit, although some of those categories may be zero. So that's perfectly fine. You may have no non-merit staff working on reporting, for example, and that's perfectly fine.

I do want you to pay attention to the cost allocations. I'm going to actually back-up the slide really quick. You see that there's these notes at the very bottom that says the first three are all classified as admin expenditures, the bottom two are classified as case management expenditures. And so if you're trying to figure out how these should be adding up and relating to your financial reporting, that's a good place to look. Those are the line items they get charged to.

So if you have someone who's doing partially case management and partially administration, you could actually look at how much of their time goes to admin versus case management and that will tell you what the FTE breakdown is. Total should add up. And remember that these are only people funded by the training and other activities grant. So if you have TRA or RTAA staff that are not having their time paid for by training and other activities grant, then they do not get counted in the table.

So I see a question from Mandy in the chat asking about indirect participant support. So indirect participant support would be things like approved training plans. They provide technical assistance to case managers that are providing direct support. So it's people who are involved in serving clients, but they're not the person directly talking to them. So it's people doing that background, things like training approvals and helping out the case managers.

A couple of other people typed in chat so I'm going to wait just a second and see what comes in. All right, while those coming are I'm going to talk a little bit about local offices and regions. We do ask how many local offices you have and this should include all of your offices including satellite offices. So if you have -- it's not just the workboards but all of the satellite locations that they might have. We are looking for a total count of offices.

And then in number seven we're asking for the total number of regions you have. And like I said, if you're not organized into regions, that's perfectly fine, just put zero in there and then we'll know that you don't organize your state into regions.

All right, so the next set of questions we did have on the old version of the TAAAC so this hopefully is not too new for you. We are looking for kind of the distribution of expertise, both for those involved in state administration and case management. And for each of these categories the total should add to a hundred percent. So the percent, expert, intermediate and novice, if you add them all up it should add end up at a hundred percent.

The idea is you don't have to obviously tell us who's experienced and who's not but we want to get some idea of do you have relatively new staff, do you have people who have been around for a long time. This isn't a strict number of like how long they've been there. Think about their actual expertise in administering the program.

And part of the reason why we don't use something in like duration is obviously we have some people who have been there a long time but only know very narrow parts of the trade program. We have people who are relatively new but are deeply engrained in understanding how the program works and so we don't want to fix it to something like how long someone's been there, we want to get an idea of what the actual expertise level is.

So I see a terrific question in the chat about total number of local offices and whether we're looking for those that serve TAA customers or total number of local offices. So this is a trade specific collection. So if there are offices that could never serve a trade participant, I would not count them. But I'm not counting how many people are currently served by them. So I would not count them only if that local office literally would not provide any trade services if someone walked in the door. So bear that in mind that we are looking trade specific but they don't have to be currently serving someone to be counted.

All right. So we have a couple of questions after that. These other questions ask how you're organized. So for example, the non-merit staff that actually conduct client intake are the case managers who most closely work with TAA participants and obviously the person who does intake and the case managers may or may not be the same people. We want to know whether the case managers are merit or non-merit staff. We want to know if the case managers are organized centrally or locally managed.

We want to get an idea of whether the standard operating procedures are done centrally or locally, and you can see that there's some dropdowns here so you'll see dropdowns giving you kind of a range of options for that. And I've got some pop-ups here for the last two so the do you use standardized forms. And so this is one of the things we replaced, this centralized localized with, do you have the same form that you use across the state so it's fully uniform or are most of your forms uniform but they tweak it a little bit or do all the individual localities have their own copy of a form that they organize their own way. So that's us trying to get a gauge of how much uniformity there is across this in your state.

The final question in the state organization is cost allocation methodology. So cost allocation, as you guys know, you should be sharing costs of American Job Centers, the infrastructure and operating costs. This is specifically asking about infrastructure costs. And we're looking for what mechanism you use for allocating costs between say trade and WIOA if you have shared American Job Centers.

Now, there are some options here. We threw out what we thought are some common ones after talking to a couple of states. You are welcome to put other, you can feel free to explain in the comments. So it's just getting us a gauge on that one. There is another question where we do talk about cost allocation, so just remember that there's actually two of these and they have slightly different options.

I do see a couple of questions in the chat. So one from Kristine asking whether centrally or locally if that's related to merit staff. So centrally does not necessarily mean merit staff. It is a matter of whether it is organized in a central state office or down in your local offices. You could have merit staff operating in your locals, you could have non-merit staff operating centrally in a state in how your state's organized.

So it's really a matter of are these spread out and managed by locality or are they all managed directly under the state itself. I would generally use geography as a proxy for this, although I know with remote work that gets even more complicated. But are these people sitting in the locals working at the local level or are they people working directly for the state office.

All right. Regarding staff that's for TAA but part of their time's at school because they work on multiple central grants including TAA, [inaudible] reporting, etcetera. So you do need to break down and you can use some estimates, right? So if they are, for example, you have a reporting person that works on multiple programs, you should be estimating how much of that is TAA. If you have people who do multiple of those roles, you should be estimating how much of that is that specific role.

So for example, if you have a person who does both performance and financial reporting and they spend 75 percent of their time on WIOA and 25 percent on trade, their financial reporting is 25 percent and their participant reporting is 75 percent of their time, then I would say that their trade performance reporting is 75 percent of 75 percent, which I can't do the math in my head, and their financial would be 25 percent trade times 75 percent reporting and 25 percent trade times 25 percent financial. So you should be breaking it down as best you can.

Now I do know that you may not have like really solid numbers on these categories, and that's fine. Really we're trying to get an idea of the distribution. So you don't have to make sure it's down to the tenth decimal point or anything like that but we do want to have a general idea of how much is actually being worked on on trade.

Great, we have one more minute for questions before we move on to the next section. All right. So the second section is outreach. Most of the question in here you probably saw before. We moved it up in the order to make it more logical and pulled some things together to make it all in the same place.

The first set of questions we're going to ask are, which unit does things, so this is rapid response, your TAA unit, your TRA or UI unit, your local or other. You'll select those from dropdowns. We broadly write down outreach in how you identify layoffs, who file petitions, who's getting the contact information and how you contact workers. So I've got a couple of notes on this.

When you are identifying layoffs, one of the questions differentiates between primary systematized and non-systematized. And it makes a very specific clarification there. This systematized does not necessarily mean automated. So it could be that we have a policy that every Monday we go and check layoff notifications and then we do X, Y and Z.

That is a systematized process. You have a way of doing it that you do every single time. It may not be automated, but you still have a way of doing it. So just bear that in mind. We will have a section later where we also make reference to systematized, but it clarifies that that's electronic only. That is not true here. Here systematized can be both electronic or just an actual process.

Addition in filing we get rid of the rankings as I said. So we got primary. This is the people who are primarily filing. You may have multiple groups of people in this category. You can have people who, it's not their primary responsibilities, they're not usually the one doing it but they do file them. So for example, you may have rapid response as a primarily filer but also locals when someone walks in is going to file a petition sporadically, that's not their main job.

They would then be a non-primary common filer and then of course there's going to be some of those groups that are going to just rarely or never file petitions. So select this one even if at some point they did file a petition, if they realistically aren't filing petitions on any regular schedule, please select that option.

And then for both getting contact information and contacting workers, we've got a whole list of options on methods for getting that and how you contact them. You can see the breakdown here where it's going to go primary, secondary, exceptional circumstances only or not used. I think that's relatively intuitive. It should be that's the way you default -- send something out, then that's great.

If when you don't get contacts you always follow up with X, Y and Z, that's a secondary method. And then exceptional is those things that you don't really have a policy to do but you start getting creative and these are things you have started to use when all the other methods fail. So hopefully that's fairly intuitive.

All right. Any questions on the outreach section before we scoot on? I'm going to say this outreach section is a section that's incredibly important for us. We've done a lot of analysis on that already. The rankings have gotten in our way so that's kind of why we changed it away from rankings. But this is actually really helpful for us to understand how the outreach process is and how affective it is. So looking forward to that.

OK. All right. Next section is eligibility, benefits and services. There's a couple of different groups to this. The first half is just a simple dropdown. It's going to be a yes, no, or a state local. So it gives us kind of expanding information on which staff are making certain kinds of determinations. So who is making the eligibility determination, is that state staff or local staff.

And you can see the list here, I think they're all fairly self-explanatory. We haven't had any major issues. We did break this out a little bit more so it used to be that we asked about training determinations but we didn't ask about TRA or TAA eligibility. So we've got a couple more things on here but I think they're pretty straightforward unless you guys tell me they're not, which I'm happy to hear.

There is a training threshold question. So as we know there is no actual training cap in trade but I do know a lot of states have policies that say over this threshold the local can no longer approve the training plan, it has to go to the state, or something like that. That's the kind of threshold we're looking for. If you don't have that that's perfectly fine but if you do we not only want to know that you do but we want to know what that threshold is. And that varies considerably across the country. This was actually pretty fascinating data when we got the first collection.

All right. Any questions on this section? All right. So the second part of this section is we do ask one of our two free text fields, do you use a participant assessment tool. So for example, for assessing things like soft skills, if you do, we want to know the name of it. If you use multiples, we want to know that, explain that. It's just a free text field so feel free to enter it. So provide the actual name as best you can. Obviously, for data analysis, we're going to have to clean this up, so the more complete and consistent you guys can be on providing the actual name the easier it is for us to use.

All right. The next section is on remote versus in-person. As you guys who are familiar with the new PIRL changes, we are going to collect a little bit from PIRL as well, but broadly this is going to give us a good measure for kind of how the state is operating and it collects some of the things that we can't get in the PIRL. So for example, we want to know whether your rapid response orientations have generally been in-person or remote. And so try and make that distinction.

You can see from the dropdown we give you a range of options and we are really asking for in the last year and by that we mean this last fiscal year. So we are now just started fiscal year '22. We are looking for information on fiscal year '21. So I don't want you making the judgement on whether this is a COVID specific thing or quote unquote normal or etcetera. I imagine those things are going to be shifting over time one way or the other.

This is just take a snapshot, look at the last year and see what you've been doing. Now, I know for this collection, for example, we are going to have people primarily providing those services during COVID, so I'm expecting large amounts. But one of the things we'll find really interesting is how that shifts as we move further up. So just look at what happened next year and base it on that.

Great. All right. So we built out a pretty expanded section here on job searching and relocation. This is a really important benefit for us, it's almost never utilized. Our activity is dismally low despite the fact that we know that this is related to really important outcomes for participants. So we're trying to get a lot more information.

So the first part of this, if you are familiar with the last year's TAAACS, will look familiar. It's just going to be a, do you offer this at these various times in the participation. So is it done when you complete training. And this is just a yes, no. So it should be fairly easy to fill out.

The second section is all about barriers. And this is new. We want to know why you think people aren't using these services. And so for each one, you need to select whether it's going to be a major barrier, a moderate barrier, or a minor barrier or it's just not a barrier at all.

We fully recognize these radians are subjective but the idea is if we ask all the states and we get some aggregate about what things are considered significant barriers, that's give us a pretty good indication whether it's really a barrier or at least perceived by the states as a barrier, that's really important information for us. And we'll see an expanded barrier section later on but this one's specifically for job search and relocation.

Great. All right. That's the end of that section. I'm going to pause just a minute, see if there's any other questions. All right. All right. So the next section we're going to talk about is integration. A lot of it is a repeat from what we had before. We did expand it and squeeze it in a couple of different places. So for example, we have a whole bunch of questions here on integration. So whether it's rapid response or WIOA dislocated worker, we want to know for all those programs how well you integrate with them.

Now, we completely changed the scale. So if you're going to look at what you used last year, I recommend you don't because the numbers are actually completely different. That used to be a 1 to 5 scale. We have made it a 0 to 3 scale. So 0 was a specific request when people say, I don't even know what this program is. That's when you put a 0 because clearly you're not working with them, so that's a 0.

If you are doing a little bit of integration but it's pretty siloed, then it's going to be a 1. If you're coordinating kind of as needed, then it's a 2. And if you are lock step [?] up, highly integrated with regular coordination, you have a plan for how you coordinate with them, that's a 3 and we want to know that as well. And then we did add a number of other programs so you can see that we broke down some new programs, things like RTA. So you'll see that new on here.

Oria, I see your question. I'm going to circle back to it after this section.

All right. There are three categories where we ask for a slew of how you coordinate with them. This looks very similar to what we asked last year. We got rid of a couple of the options that were just not that helpful. So for rapid response, TRA and fiscal, we ask a series of questions about, are you in the same agency, same department. Do you have shared meetings, do you do cross-training, and this gives us a good detailed idea of how you're working with those other groups. But we only do that to those three major partners: Rapid response, TRA and fiscal because those are the ones we really need that detailed information on.

We did add a couple of other questions on, for example, the WIOA programs asking whether you're in the same agency. That's only the top level, are you in the same agency or not. But for the most part you'll see that that's on here.

I do want to call out one thing, that the systematized here specifically, parenthetically says this is an electronic process, like whenever we come enroll we send an automated email letting them know, or something like that. If there's an automated way in your system to do that coordination, we want to know that here. That's as differentiated from other formal process where that is not happening through a system but you do have an established procedure for doing that coordination.

All right, so we some time focusing on RTA and our two big WIOA partners. We asked whether the frontline staff are the same. So for us, it's important to know whether that dislocated worker person is the same person that's serving trade or you actually have different staff and they shift between them.

We also have a couple questions on here about when RTA is providing services, whether it's a follow-up, an early intervention and whether or not there's specific procedures around that. The dropdowns are pretty self-explanatory, I'm not going to go into them unless you guys have questions but it should be fairly straightforward.

And then finally we have a couple of questions on co-enrollment and common exit I am going to flag for everybody. The very first email I sent out where the tax collection actually had a duplicate question, we actually asked the common exit question both in this section and the IT and reporting section. We got rid of it in the lower one. Make sure you're downloading the current version and that's in that link that you can see in the web links. And I sent that out by email as well. So just make sure you're getting the correct version or your number is going to be slightly off.

So we do want to know what your co-enrollment policy is. There is now a little of an explanation that I got -- common questions about what Title I, what Title III, there's an explanation about what those are. And then what is your co-enrollment policy. And you are correct that in thinking the duplicated worker there is a requirement in the regulations to co-enroll, but we want to know if there's actually a policy [inaudible] currently on how to do that. So it's still important information for us even though it is required.

OK. While I'm waiting to see if there's any questions on the integration section, Laurie asked a question about how FEIN might be used in determining eligibility. So if you are using your federal employer identification numbers in looking at UI records to determine eligibility, some states do that, many states don't. I think last time last year we had about 20 states that did, but that's what we're looking for.

If you don't know what we're talking about, the answer is probably no. There's both good and bad to that, so it's not a judgement one way or the other, it's just a matter of understanding how you guys are doing it and that's true for almost everything on here. Obviously, we're looking for promising practices but there's good reasons to have almost any answer on that, almost any one of these.

All right. The next section we're going to talk about IT systems and reporting. I know this is going to be the most thrilling section but we did reorganize this pretty significantly and you'll see a lot of overlap. The old way asked about participant's portals, that confused a lot of people. We moved away from that and we asked about specific forms which we found that very helpful so we eliminated a lot of questions in that section.

So first thing we want to know is just do you have a data reporting unit. Is it a dedicated data reporting unit? How many people work there? Do they cover just trade or do they cover other programs? There's a couple questions up top asking about that. Those should be fairly straight forward to answer.

And then one of the really core questions that it's hidden in there just because it's another item in there but we ask how many systems it takes for you to generate the PIRL. So if you've got separate case management, separate TRA, separate fiscal, this number can get very high very quickly. I don't think I've seen a single state that has listed one. So if you are listing one, you probably are not counting something but I want you to think about how many total systems you need to use.

We do ask some questions here about whether it's -- and I think we get to it on the next slide -- but on whether some of those systems are managed centrally or locally. So I know some states, for example, they actually pull from a bunch of different local systems that obviously we want to know that. We want to have some idea of how many systems you actually have to reach out to.

We do want to get your vendor -- some common answers I put in here. If you are not supported by a vendor, and I'm underlining supported, so if some contractor built your system and now you're maintaining it completely, you are not vendor supported, you do not need to list a vendor. If, however, it is actually supported by a vendor, we want to know what the name of that vendor is.

We do go through and clean this up but make it as intuitive as we can so that when someone writes, for example, geographic solutions and someone else writes GSL, we do know those are the same but try and make sure it's a complete statement. Don't use your internal name. If you say it is Michigan Works, that is great but it is not actually the name of the vendor so it's not very helpful to us. So just make sure you're including that vendor information in there.

And then we ask for a number of dates. We ask for the three major systems: Case management, fiscal TRA, what the date of the last upgrade was. This is something I know a lot of states have trouble filling out but it's actually really important to us and we can see how old the systems are, which is kind of fascinating when we know that, for example, your UI system hasn't been updated in 35 years. And I'm not kidding, that's actually true. So we do want to know that.

Now, I fully recognize, as you go further back in time, that date might get squishy, it's not longer July 14th, it is -- but give us the best guess at a date you can if it's far enough back in time that it's fairly squishy because we do basically calculate how old those systems are and use that in analysis.

Now, the next upgrade dates are optional. That's because you might not have planned one yet. But if there is a plan upgrade, we do want to know. Now, we define this is as major upgrade, both last and next. And think of that as like versions. So if you're doing like these minor patches, that's not really what we're looking for. We're talking about like versions of the software. Think something where you probably have to retrain people. So if you're doing a major revamp or rolling out a brand-new [inaudible] or something like that, that's something that's going to be a major upgrade.

OK. All right. So we have two other really important questions. So one you've seen before if you looked at this last year, which is the electronic file used by case managers. This one is really interesting and really helpful to us to understand how much they're using paper versus the electronic system. And you can see that this goes across the spectrum.

So we just do things in paper or we work primarily in paper but we document some things in the system so the PIRL record can be made but really we're working in paper and then double documenting, that's good to know versus people that don't have a single scrap of paper on their desk, everything gets scanned in and you work completely electronically. So there's a gradation here. Most states are somewhere in the middle but kind of select the one that makes the most sense. And this is really focused on what your case managers are doing with their time. Yeah.

The collection of signatures, this is a new question to how do you accept signatures. That could be that you just take paper ones, you can take the scanned ones or you're using electronic signatures. Now, all those are fine, we just want to know kind of where people are at in terms of their ability to handle those kinds of signatures format. So select the one that's most applicable.

All right. So the next section and this is kind of a new breakdown because we tried to rework this participant portal thing. We want to know how integrated your IT system is. So you can see some definitions over here on the left-hand side. So for example, if you are having a real-time communication with a participant, you may have no system for doing that or you my have an integrated into your case management system whereas click here and you end up in a virtual meeting with the person or it could be somewhere in between. It could be, hey, we use a zoom link.

Now, that's perfectly fine, that is going to be a non-integrated commercially available tool. OK? So I want you to think about for each of these services what kind of tool you're using. If you have a variety of tools, give us the best answer you can. There is a distinction here between asynchronous, the things that you don't have to both be there doing the same thing at the same time, versus synchronous where you're actually have a direct conversation in real-time. And so I hope that's fairly explained but, yeah, pay attention to these definitions because they try and make it as easy as possible.

All right, so we have a couple of other questions. You can see the dropdowns here, I'm not going to go through each one of them. I think the things are relatively straightforward.

So we generally want to know how electronic forms are. Who shares your case management system between other programs. We want to know what your cost allocation methodology is. Notice that this one's slightly different. We actually have a separate one for separate TAA systems. So if you have a completely separate system, you don't have to cost allocate it all, so that's something that's an option here that's not an option above. And then obviously how centralized those systems are. So that should wrap up our IT section with what I hope are relatively quick things to select.

All right. I don't see anybody typing so I'm going to move on but if you do have any questions on the IT systems or reporting just throw them in the chat and we'll definitely cover them.

All right. So the shortest section, training for TAA staff. This actually hasn't changed at all from the prior collection. It should be hopefully very easy to fill out. This is not how you provide training to participants, but how you train actual TAA staff. You know, your case managers, your reporting staff, the people who support your program.

Most of these are a yes no. You can see three of them are asking for frequency, so it's, we do conferences on average once a year. Or we do webinars and some people are going to put out a couple in a year, some people are going to put out one every week. So it gives you kind of a range to figure out how much that is used and how you provide those resources. That gives us an idea kind of what the training methodology is. Like I said, this isn't new but if you do have any questions, please let us know.

All right. I'm going to wait for just a minute for questions on that section before I move on.

All right. So we're going to talk next about the barriers and technical assistance. All right, so I did get a question on the IT for 81.3. And I really appreciate it when you do have questions to cite that number. In column B on the entire sheet we do put a number in there so that we know exactly which one you're talking about.

So 81.3 is whether direct synchronous communication like email between participants and case management, what would a non-integrated choice for email communication be. So fast Outlook definitely would be non-integrated because it's not built into your case management system or if they're using any other kind of like email or message service.

Something built-in would be in the system you type in a comment in that and some why it gets communicated to the participant whether it be in an app or a patient portal or a system portal or something like that. So if you are typing it into your case management system it would be integrated. If you have your own custom-built system, which I'm hoping is not true for emails, then you would have a separate state system. And if it's a commercially [inaudible] tool than like Outlook would be that. That's a great question.

All right. Barriers and technical assistance is greatly expanded. So the first section will look pretty familiar from last year except we got rid of the ranking. So it used to be rank these things, that was super annoying and not all that helpful. We got rid of it. This is a huge list of the all the various kinds of barriers you can think of. We actually -- I think we added one or two on here but for the most part this is relatively like it was in prior years.

For each one, you're selecting whether it's a major, moderate or minor barrier or not a barrier at all. So like I said, we recognize this is subjective. We recognize what we're really collecting is your perception of how much it's a barrier for other people but that's still really important information for us so that we understand where people think there are barriers. So for each one, you're just going to make that selection.

All right. We added a new section kind of in the middle here asking about how much you want to be networked with other states. So do you want to share contact information and strengths and challenges? So the idea is if we all say we have an issue with one particular challenge, do you want us like facilitating groups that say, hey this person says that they're doing really well, why don't you guys talk to that person.

And likewise, do you want us to have establishment of email groups? Do you want us to have regular ongoing meetings? So this is just what kind of level of interest you want and this can be anything. So I know we've got a lot of resources out there and all this is really about pairing up states. And we ask about just whether you're interested in doing that.

We ask this both for similar and pure states and for neighboring states. So the distinction there is, your pure states maybe are ones that generally the same size, generally organized the same way, who are kind of similarly positioned, whereas your neighboring states are the ones actually like geographically next to you. We know that obviously geographic is primarily how our regions are organized, but not necessarily the best for sharing pure practices. So that's why there's the distinction here.

All right. And then the most fun part is a brand-new strengths assessment. And as you can see I had to have two whole columns because we ask this about a lot of things. Hopefully, they're fairly straight forward. Each one you're just selecting, I think I have a promising practice here, I think that it is a non-urgent technical assistance need so like it could be better, help us out when you can. Or urgent like this has been a big problem, we need to talk about this as soon as possible. And obviously there is a none of the above which is fine if you're good you don't really need technical assistance but you don't really have anything special, that's also fine.

This is actually really important to us to figure out which technical assistance we should be focusing on and also which states to reach out to. As you guys can probably imagine, us know who has a promising practice usually is us asking around, asking some questions and we may have never asked you whether you have a really good practice around worker intake or monitoring your locals or something like that. And so this is a good way for us to ask everybody, who out there thinks they got something good and promising.

Now, that's no guarantee that we will necessarily reach out to you. Usually what we do is we say these are the ones that think they have promising practices. We will get some of the data, see how that bears out and compares to others. And then usually we get some more information about what those promising practices are before moving on. But this at least gives us a starting point about who thinks that they have got something pretty cool to share. So it's actually really important to us.

A couple people typing in the chat, so I'm going to -- oh, great question. So there's a question from Laurie back on 82 this is in the IT and reporting section, there was a question about the completion of forms and whether it's done electronically. And this is really talking about the participant form? So for example, can a participant fill out a TAA application? Can a participant fill out information or an application for TRA or something like that? Can the participant do those things in that way? So great question.

91.17, so training flexibility that is a great question. So Laura is right on the right topic. Things like online trainings, I would also talk about part-time training. I would also think about ways to combine, for example, different training providers into a single training plan. You know those kinds of thinking outside the box on how to provide rather than just sit down in classroom training.

So if you've got anything that's a promising practice around that or want to know more about that, that's what we're looking for. So it's pretty open ended but obviously like I said, this is really trying to give us a starting point. Great question.

All right. So the final part of page one is our resources. We almost never have a good way to know how much people are using our resources. You know we might get a website count or something like that or we might get total views on a webinar but that's not really telling us how useful these things are and figuring out what formats would be providing technical assistance in is really important to us so that we can kind of gauge what kinds of products we should be rolling out.

This is a list of all the various things we do. As you can imagine this probably will get out of date pretty quickly because we roll out new things all the time but I do want you to think about this about which of those things you find really helpful and which things you don't really use. And there is an option here for I don't know about this resource.

There is no shame in saying, I have no idea what this thing is. That is perfectly fine. That tells us that we are not communicating things well enough and making it clear how to get access to those resources. So that's actually really valuable information for us too. So for each one of these, make that selection, say these things are really helpful, these things aren't and that gives us some gauge about what kinds of products we should be providing.

I think as of right now the only thing missing from this is we added in this practitioner resources webpage, we actually now have a fourth category for outreach resources, otherwise I think this is pretty up to date.

All right, before we move on to the -- I probably don't want to use the word dreaded but I don't have anything else off the top of my head, the dreaded worker list section, anything else on this barrier so I can close this section?

All right. So we're going to talk about worker lists. This is a second tab in that excel sheet. It is brand new. We've never asked for anything like this before and it's really us trying to capture how big these worker groups are. As you know, we make an estimate when we certify based on some information we collect from the company, how many workers we think could be affected, that's a requirement we've had.

We've gotten repeated feedback that this is awesome (sp) or not helpful, so this information is going to give us both a really good way to ground both what's wrong with our numbers as well as a good way to evaluate things like [inaudible]. So this is going to be really critical information. We do have instructions at the top with definitions. We're going to walk through them a little bit now but just know I did provide what I hope are fairly understandable descriptions of each of the columns up at the top.

All right. So actually I'm going to go back. First thing is this petition number with suffix. If you have three different suffixes for a certification and you're sending notifications on all of them, we want to see all of them listed. So that's really important for us. Make sure you get that right because that is how we both cross match with our estimate and with the participant data. So if we get bad petition numbers it kind of messes everything up.

All right. We want on this list any notification sent in the period. And I recognize that what that means is, if you are doing rounds or notifications on a petition, that may actually occur in multiple years, and that's fine. So when we do the question again next year, we may see the same row again but it should be just the count of notifications that occurred again that year.

So we get the number of notifications, the very bottom one. This is counting how many of those individual notifications we did. So here we're not counting something like, I did a newspaper notice, right, because that's not tied to people but we sent out 50 letters or we sent out 20 text messages. And you're counting the number of people you contacted. So if you sent 50 letters and followed up with 20 text messages but it was the same people, then it's still 50, it's not 70. OK?

We do want to know what date you first requested that contact list from the company. That gives us an idea what kinds of delays we're getting in the process so that we understand where we might improve the timing because we know that that quick contact is really critical to serving people, so that way we can kind of dig into where in the process we might have drag in getting people in.

I want to know that irrelevantly (sp) of whether you actually got that list. We find out in a minute whether or not they provided it so you are going to say, yes they provided it, no they didn't. That'll also give us a really good gauge of how much trouble we're having getting worker lists from companies, who's struggling, who's doing it really well, that's going to let us break that down.

And that initial contact may happen after a certification but it also may happen before. So as you guys know for example, we provide information right when a petition's filed on what company officials there are and you may be reaching out for those workers lists well before certification, that's fine, put those dates in, we just want to know what that first one is.

And then the number on the worker lists. So this is the total number of people that you're finding are in that worker group. And that may be people on the list that the company actually provided, it may be you didn't get a list from the company and instead you had to go to UI records and you identified 40 people. OK? So however you got it, this is the total number of people you think are in that worker group.

All right. Sorry, catching up on comments. So there's a question on whether it would be sufficient to look at WARN non-WARN notices and ruling notifications. So first I have a couple of notes. One is, WARN notifications are really important but those aren't the entirety of how we get that, right? So if you just look at WARN notices, the scope of the WARN notice may be different than the scope of the certification.

So we're really looking at worker lists [inaudible] certification. We're only looking at those groups that are certified. We also want to make sure that we are looking at not enrolling because we actually get that data in PIRL so we actually took it off here after some feedback. But we want to know how many people you sent messages to. So how many people you're notifying, that's why this is filling kind of that gap data for us.

So yes, we want the total number of people you're notifying, not how many people actually got back to you, not how many people actually came into the program, just the total number of people you're notifying. So that's the notifications and then worker lists is the total number of people you think were in that worker group.

So each line should correspond to a TAW number with suffix or that may or may not have a suffix on it. So if you had three rounds of notifications in the periods that is perfectly fine, but what we want is one line that says the very first time we asked for the list for that petition number and the total number of people across all rounds and the total number of people we notified across all rounds.

So we should be getting as get (sp) for petition number. Now, I will say, petition numbers, especially suffixes you may be working with the same company multiple times. If there are different petitions going on then you may have some redundancy between the various petition lines but it should be unique per petition number. So I wouldn't expect to have 91000A on there twice but you could have 91000 and 91000A on there.

So it's not the number of notifications, it's the number of workers notified. So on the TAAACS [inaudible] in Column F, and I'll scoot back a page. So number on worker list is in D and in F you've got number of workers notified, that is the number of people you notified. So like I said, we're not counting all the petitions. If you sent 50 letters and then 20 text messages, we don't want 70, we want 50 if those are the same people. So it's the number of people you notified not the total number of notifications.

Great. All right. I think that's fairly straightforward. There is this note section. So a couple of notes. If the TAW isn't on there, so we may see in our system that we certified a TAW number is listed as being on your state, if we don't see it on there we are assuming that you did not find a worker list and notified no one. So if that is not true, make sure it's on your spreadsheet because if we don't have anything to match it against, then our only assumption can be that nothing happened.

My second note is that we did add a column for comments. So this I encourage people to talk about this as much as they want to. So for example, if you had to go back to the company four times and subpoena them and that's why it took ages to get this list, like we want to know that. We want to know what struggles you're having, if you had a contact list but it was incomplete, we want to know that. If you use some other method for getting this worker list, like those are great comments to have.

Now, we aren't requiring the collection of every single of those. Those comments are optional, but if there is something valuable in that, we really do love those juicy details. I promise you, which is in WARN, going to dig through those and find the really interesting ones and talk them all the time. So we really, really do want as much context on those things as we can for whatever you can provide.

Those are honestly some of the most fun things to look at. And so the total number of individuals notified, so when we add up that column, in Column F, number of workers notified, across all the petitions we should get the total number of workers notified in that fiscal year.

Now, that being said, I do want to bear in mind that the driving factor for being on the list is that the notifications happen in the year. So if you did notifications on a petition that was both two years ago and last year, that count really still only includes the ones that happened in this most recent fiscal year, not in the year before. The idea is that if we start adding these together, you know next year we get another one, we should be able to add those up rather than having to figure out what's the overlap on what account (sp).

OK. Cool. All right. So I'm sure we'll get some comments, so I'll address those as they come in. There is a section at the bottom. There's a comment box in 93, that can take whatever comments you want. So if there's any questions you really need to provide clarification on like, hey, I selected this option but it really doesn't fit, this is really what's going on or, hey, it's a unit that does this wasn't on the list, I really should have been putting in this, that's a great thing to put in the comment.

Like I said, the citation of the question number is actually really, really helpful, so try and put those things in there. If you put comments anywhere else on the form it will probably get missed, so make sure you use the comment box.

You do need to fill out the affirmation information. This is usually the TA coordinator, your state may have someone else actually sign the affirmation, that's fine. I will say no one needs to scan it, have a hand-written ink signature and send it back to me, which we got a lot of last time. There was a specification clarification on here. The slash S slash name is perfectly sufficient as a signature. We just want someone to say, yes, I am the one who says that this is as right as it can be. So that's it. So don't make it overly complicated for you but we do need that information filled out.

You're going to email it back to me when it's done. I am going to take a look at it when it comes in. I look through, make sure everything's filled out, make sure there isn't anything like really goofy about it. I will say either thanks, great, I appreciate it or I will say, hey, look you missed these questions, I need answers for that before I can accept it. So I do do a look over and try and make sure all of the data is good before we pull it in.

So I encourage you guys to try and make sure it's complete but also feel free to ask question. You're also perfectly welcome to send me a half-completed form, hey, I got stuck here, here's my questions. And I'm happy to look over whatever, send answers back to you, have phone conversations. You guys should be well aware of how to get ahold of me although I think that's on this slide as well. So yes, feel free to reach out. I'm here for questions, that's the point.

Yeah, so we got nine more minutes for any other questions. I don't have any other content, I actually don't have any references, which is a little weird here. But make sure you use that most recent version of the form. November 30th is when they're due back to me. So you can ask for an extension. I hesitate to say that and that's granted by your region, that's fine, it's just like any other submission. I hesitate to say that because last year we got a lot of requests for extensions. Try and get it reasonably on time. We do use that.

Part of the reason why we choose the November 30th date is because then we can get this data together so that if there is an interesting story to tell, we can talk about it in our annual report to congress when we start pulling everybody's data together and find something interesting. So that date has a little bit of leeway, but try and get it to us relatively on time because we do actually have it in this time of year for a reason. So we appreciate that.

My final comment is, there is a teams AMA in November which it's not going to be recorded, it's just an open format for questions. You guys if you got the invite for this, you should have gotten the billing (sp) to that as well. So there is a dedicated time for follow-up questions. Obviously, that doesn't mean you can't just email me whenever. So you absolutely can but there is also that carved out time for us to go through any other questions as people kind of get up towards that deadline.

All right, I'm going to give you guys two minutes of silence to prompt questions before we wrap up. But hang on, don't hop off because we also are going to have some closing thoughts.

(END)