

# WIPA FAQ #2

## (Questions 19-55)

February 25, 2015

**19. Question:** Should the Project Narrative be single-spaced or double-spaced? Do we have specific margin size requirements for our application documents?

**Response:**

We do not require specific margin width or spacing. Please refer to page 33 of the RFA.

**20. Question:** Is the applicant required to prepare the project narrative in accordance with the (a) Content and Form of Application Submission Guidelines on pages 25-30 of the RFA, or in accordance with (b) the application Review Criteria\* listed on pages 34-38 of the RFA?

**Response:**

These sections should offer complimentary instructions, and we advise applicants to read both sections carefully.

**21. Question:** How many letters of support are appropriate for me to submit with my application?

**Response:**

We do not evaluate programs based on the number of letters of support submitted with the application. At a minimum, however, your application should include letters of support from any partners you describe as integral to your services.

**22. Question:** Does our response to the “Appropriateness of the Budget” review criterion belong somewhere in the project narrative or is it meant to be in the Budget Narrative?

**Response:**

The budget should appear in the Budget Narrative section. The project narrative should be reasonable relative to the described expenditures. We will review the proposal according to the appropriateness of the budget as described in the narrative relative to the actual budget.

**23. Question:** Can you please confirm that we should prepare only a 1-year budget, not a 5-year budget?

**Response:** Yes.

You are requesting funding for one year, with the possibility of four years of additional funding.

**24. Question:** I noticed that the due date for the letter of intent was February 9, 2015. Will it hurt my chances of funding if I did not submit one?

**Response:** No.

The letters of intent are for informational and planning purposes.

**25. Question:** The RFA suggests that Social Security supports the use of technology like Skype, Face Time, or video conferencing to serve beneficiaries. Will Social Security provide cameras for the laptops and will Social Security allow software needed to run the cameras to be installed on the Social Security secure laptops? In addition, if the computers provided by Social Security do not have webcams because of security risks, how is distance communication more effective?

**Response:**

The laptops in use currently do not include cameras. We have not determined the features for future Government furnished laptops and, we will provide guidance on existing and future laptops in terms of add-ons and software. Increasing remote and virtual services in view of limited resources will permit projects to focus time and funding on staffing and direct services.

**26. Question:** Will SSA support the installation of the full version of Adobe on SSA-issued laptops to ensure that WIPA projects can create fully accessible documents for beneficiaries?

**Response:**

For security and logistical reasons, we have not permitted projects to load additional software on the secure laptops in the past. Whether we change this prohibition in the future will be subject to similar considerations. Regardless of the ability to load software on Social Security laptops, we require all cooperative agreement awardees to provide accessible documents.

**27. Question:** CWICs have no control over the security of internet connections that beneficiaries use. With the increased emphasis placed upon service delivery via distance-based methods, what will SSA require to preserve beneficiary privacy?

**Response:**

We require WIPA awardees to follow the guidance in appendix B. We cannot control what types of phone or internet services beneficiaries use.

**28. Question:** How do we find out if a database has been cleared by Social Security to be used as part of the WIPA program?

**Response:**

WIPA awardees shall use only the database we provide.

**29. Question:** Can Social Security provide guidance on what would be considered a 'compelling' justification to propose a different service territory than described in the RFA Appendix A.

**Response:**

We do not have specific parameters to determine "compelling." The applicant should explain why a change in the service area would benefit Social Security and be in the best interest of our beneficiaries.

**30. Question:** Can an applicant propose to serve portions of multiple service areas within one State? If so, how will this affect the amount of funding available to the applicant?

**Response:** Yes.

An applicant may propose to serve any area they wish and a budget to support their proposal as long as they provide sufficient justification. Applicants should understand that if awarded, their proposed service area might be subject to further negotiation.

**31. Question:** Could you please provide me with the allocation of WIPA funding by county.

**Response:**

We did not use county funding to determine the distribution. See the introduction to Appendix A and the first FAQ where you will find a link to county populations.

**32. Question:** On your website, there is a section with maps of states that are divided into areas. Are these states the only ones that organizations are eligible to apply to serve? If not, what is the significance of the maps?.

**Response:**

We developed the maps to assist projects in States with more than one WIPA to visualize the proposed service areas. If a State or territory does not have a map, it means the proposed service area is statewide; we propose one WIPA for that State.

**33. Question:** Are county governments eligible to apply? The RFA only states state governments.

**Response:** Yes.

Please refer to page 23 of the RFA for eligibility guidance.

**34. Question:** Are 501(c)(3) who operate Ticket to Work Employment Networks eligible to apply?

**Response:** Yes.

**35. Question:** Can you provide me a list of current WIPA grantees eligible to apply for the 2015 round of funding from Social Security, or give me a link to this information?

**Response:**

For a list of the current grantees see:

[http://www.usaspending.gov/search?form\\_fields=%7B%22cfda\\_num%22%3A%5B%2296.008%22%5D%2C%22spending\\_cat%22%3A%5B%22g%22%5D%2C%22fy ear%22%3A%5B%222014%22%5D%2C%22asst\\_type%22%3A%5B%2205%22%5D%2C%22dept%22%3A%5B%222800%22%5D%7D](http://www.usaspending.gov/search?form_fields=%7B%22cfda_num%22%3A%5B%2296.008%22%5D%2C%22spending_cat%22%3A%5B%22g%22%5D%2C%22fy ear%22%3A%5B%222014%22%5D%2C%22asst_type%22%3A%5B%2205%22%5D%2C%22dept%22%3A%5B%222800%22%5D%7D)

Keep in mind that eligibility to apply is open to any organization meeting the criteria described on page 23 of the RFA, even if the organization does not currently serve as a WIPA.

**36. Question:** How does WIPA define the Project Director's expected Scope of Work? Is the Project Director expected to assume a managerial or administrative role, or fulfill the day-to-day operations of the WIPA project?

**Response:**

We impose a requirement of 25% involvement for Project Directors to ensure they are fully engaged in WIPA, and that the CWICs they supervise have appropriate administrative and supervisory support. Some project directors also provide direct services.

**37. Question:** How does SSA define 'underserved populations' for WIPA cooperative agreements?

**Response:**

We intend for WIPA awardees to reach out to individuals or groups that are from a racial or cultural minority, who are transition-aged youth, veterans with disabilities, or otherwise are financially or physically underrepresented or disadvantaged in the awardee's service area.

**38. Question:** What is the number of individuals you expect will be served by a WIPA?

**Response:**

We do not have a specific number for the WIPA projects, since the populations and service areas vary greatly. Historical data demonstrates that each full-time CWIC will serve a minimum of one hundred beneficiaries annually for WIPA services.

**39. Question:** How does the Help Line decide to refer a caller to our WIPA in particular?

**Response:**

The Help Line will direct callers to the WIPA when their circumstances require more intense type of support and service such as the services provided by WIPAs. We have trained the Help Line staff to provide information and referral, and basic guidance.

**40. Question:** Why is the percentage of Information and Referral (I&R) limited as a requirement of the WIPA if the Help Line provides the service?

**Response:**

We anticipate that the Help Line will provide the majority of support and service classified as I&R. However, given the history of the WIPA program and the frequency with which beneficiaries call WIPAs for general questions, the WIPAs will continue to provide some I&R.

**41. Question:** Will you be recording and archiving both of the RFA Conference calls?

**Response:** Yes.

We also intend to post a transcript of the call on the application website. The second call will be a recording of the first call followed by a live question and answer session.

**42. Question:** State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies (VR) have a different structure from traditional Employment Networks (EN). For example, our State VR agency does not actively seek to assign tickets. Considering that difference, are State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies subject to the firewall considerations outlined in the RFA?

**Response:** Yes.

Although some VR agencies do not actively seek to assign a beneficiary's Ticket to Work, the WIPA must also ensure that the beneficiary receives information about all the ENs that may fit a beneficiary's needs. That conflict will not preclude awarding WIPA to State VR agencies, but the firewall considerations remain for VR as with other Employment Network organizations.

**43. Question:** I provide services to beneficiaries as staff for a State VR agency. Does that mean I have to choose between working for the WIPA or working for VR, since our VR is an EN?

**Response:** Yes.

We wish to establish clear boundaries between staff serving beneficiaries under the WIPA cooperative agreement and the Employment Network (EN) Blanket Purchase agreement. These programs may not share any direct service staff.

**44. Question:** Our parent agency recently became an Employment Network, and we hold a WIPA cooperative agreement. I am in management, and I no longer work with beneficiaries. I do supervise the staff, however, for both programs. Do I have to choose between working with the EN and working with the WIPA?

**Response:** Yes.

If you work directly with beneficiaries, or supervise CWICs, you may not have direct or supervisory involvement with the agency's EN.

**45. Question:** We have both an EN and a WIPA agreement with Social Security. I do not work directly with WIPA clients, and I do not directly supervise the individuals who do. I am in a higher-level administrative capacity in the agency, however, and I do manage the budget and supervise the supervisors that handle each program. We have a small staff, and we do not have other administrative staff to take on this supervisory role. May I request an exception to the prohibition for sharing staff across the two programs?

**Response:** Yes, you may request an exception to the prohibition regarding staff allocated to both the WIPA and the EN provided:

1. The shared staff does not work with beneficiaries under either program;
2. The shared staff does not directly supervise the individuals providing direct services to beneficiaries;
3. The agency develops a protocol for complaints that bypasses any shared administrative staff; and
4. The grantee provides, and Social Security approves, a conflict of interest agreement that clearly describes the structure of the organization, the protocol for complaints, and the justification to have the same staff person involved in any capacity with both programs. This request must include assurances that the WIPA and EN files are completely separate, and the WIPA will refer beneficiaries to all ENs serving the area that may offer appropriate services to the beneficiary—not just the hosting agency's EN.

**46. Question:** May we ask our local Field Office, AWIC, or WIL to write a letter of support for us?

**Response:** No.

These individuals are Social Security staff and may not provide letters of support due to the conflict of interest.

**47. Question:** The RFA states that agencies administering Medicaid may not receive WIPA funding. Can the state agency be a subcontractor? Can the state agency be an applicant if a firewall exists between the department housing Medicaid services and the department where the WIPA services would be housed?

**Response:** No.

P.L. 106-170, the statute authorizing the WIPA program clearly states that agencies administering Medicaid may not receive WIPA funding.

**48. Question:** I can't find a map for our state. Can you tell me how many possible WIPA grants are available?

**Response:**

We created maps for States where we propose more than one WIPA grantee. Please refer to State listings in Appendix A.

**49. Question:** Will there be a more efficient process by which WIPA Projects can access BPQY (Benefits Planning Query) Reports?

**Response:**

We are aware that obtaining BPQYs has been an ongoing challenge for projects, and we shall continue to explore options to facilitate verification of benefits via BPQY.

**50. Question:** I was wondering if a state public VR agency is considered a nonprofit for the purposes of the WIPA application?

**Response:** No.

A state VR agency is a government agency, not a private non-profit business.

**51. Question:** Our organization has four separate "division" offices located throughout the state. Could those offices apply separately to cover different parts of the state or could two of the offices combine to serve Area 1 and two offices combine to service Area 2 and receive the maximum amount allocated for each service area? There would also be a program manager assigned 10 hours a week (.25 FTE) for each area.

**Response:**

No one entity may receive more than \$300,000.00 in funding. If these are four distinct entities, they may apply for funding separately. Since you refer to a single staff person providing supervision for all four, however, it appears these are not separate entities.

**52. Question:** The RFA suggests that applicants include letters of support or references from award administrators on previous awards. Does this mean Social Security administrators who may have worked with our organization during the current cooperative agreement period, or does it refer to administrators of funding from other sources (e.g. state contracts)?

**Response:**

This refers to administrators of grants or contracts from sources other than Social Security.

**53. Question:** Should our organization win the competition, may we carryover funds from our current FY'14 award?

**Response:** Yes.

WIPA grantees may carry over up to 10% of this award to the following budget period with the following restriction: the funds must be used to provide benefits planning and assistance only for individuals who are within the caseload of the grantee organization from the previous budget period. Payment requests for carry over funds must include the full corresponding grant number including from the previous year. Failure to provide the proper grant number will delay the payment process.

**54. Question:** If my organization does not win an award in the 2015 WIPA Competition, may we request a 12 month no-cost extension?

**Response:** No.

Social Security has opted to allow those grantees who do not receive an award 90 days to liquidate all obligations incurred under the Federal award not later than 90 calendar days after the end date of the period of performance.

**55. Question:** Must organizations that do not hold non-profit (e.g. 501c3 status) fill out the Prospective Awardee's Pre-Award Risk Assessment?

**Response:** Yes.

The only question that you may skip is 1.a. Non-profit organizations must tell us when they received their 501c3 status.