WIPA FAQ #1
(Questions 1-18)

February 12, 2015

1. **Question:** What are the details of the Pre-Application Teleconference and are there any deadlines to submit questions applicable to the Teleconference?

   Response:

   Here is the announcement for the conference calls:

   The Social Security Administration will host two (2) two-hour conference calls to provide information about the following opportunity:

   Title: Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA)

   Funding Opportunity Number: WIPA-WIP-15-001

   Interested parties may listen to one or both calls. There will be a live question and answer period following the presentation on each call. The first call is on **Tuesday, February 24, 2015 at 1:30 pm Eastern, 12:30 pm Central, 11:30 am Mountain and 10:30 am Pacific time.**

   Call-in number: 866-454-4206
   Participant code: 826683

   The second call is a replay of the February 24 call, and is scheduled for **Thursday, March 12, 2015 at 1:30 pm Eastern, 12:30 pm Central, 11:30 am Mountain and 10:30 am Pacific time.**

   Call-in number: 888-500-6949
   Participant Code: 349709

   Please submit all questions to SSA-TA@grantreview.org. If you would like your question answered during one of the teleconferences, submit your question at least three (3) business days prior to the call (February 19 for the first call and March 9 for the second call). We will also post all questions to a regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document available at:

   http://www.ssa.gov/oag/grants/ssagrant_current.htm#sb=1

2. **Question:** I have a question concerning Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) WIPA-WIP-15-001. Our institution already is funded under this program, but our PI is not up for renewal at this time. Can one of our other PI's submit an application for this announcement?

    Response:

    The opportunity is a nationwide request for applications from any organization interested in being a WIPA project. If you are interested in the possibility of continuing to operate a WIPA project after the end of the current project year (7/31/2015), you would need to submit an application.

3. **Question:** If there are two projects designated for your State and one entity applies for both, would that awardee receive the awarded amounts for both projects, if there were no other applicants for the projects?

    Response: No.

    No WIPA grantee may receive more than $300,000.00. If a potential awardee wishes to cover the entire state for no more than $300,000.00, we may approve the request if the grantee offers sufficient proof that they will be able to cover the entire area for the maximum amount, submit a suitable and acceptable application and, we have no other acceptable applicants.

4. **Question:** Do current WIPA projects need to apply for funding under this solicitation?

    Response:

    The cooperative agreements for the current WIPA projects expire July 31, 2015. Any organization wishing to provide WIPA services after that date must apply consistent with the Request for Applications as published.

5. **Question:** Our parent organization is an Employment Network (EN). If we are successful, what are the requirements regarding a separation of WIPA staff and the EN program?

   Response:

   Any project that houses both a WIPA project and an EN must create a clear firewall between the EN and the WIPA. Subsequent to a successful application, the WIPA project must send a conflict of interest statement that clearly outlines staffing, how the organization separates files and workflow, and how the organization handles complaints. In addition, grantees must submit assurances that staff will offer referrals to all ENs available, and assurances that staff will inform beneficiaries of the use of all available work incentives—even if use of those work incentives delays payment to the EN. Unlike prior iterations of the WIPA program, we will not consider any exceptions to the firewall requirement between a WIPA and an EN. The WIPA must qualify as a stand-alone program.

6. **Question:** We house a Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security grant. If we are successful, will we have firewall requirements between the two programs?

   Response:

   The requirements to establish a firewall between a WIPA program and a PABSS grant are similar, but less stringent than the requirements outlined above for a WIPA and an Employment Network. WIPA and PABSS files and staffing must be separate, and the organization must have a clear path for beneficiary complaints against either program. Unlike the firewall between ENs and WIPA, however, Protection and Advocacy organizations supporting or proposing to support a PABSS and a WIPA program retain the ability to request an exception to the prohibition on sharing staff across the two programs. Social Security will require that grantees seek approval in advance. We will provide more information at the time we make the new awards.

7. **Question:** Can we opt to apply to cover a different area than the one listed in the appendix? For example, could we cover our entire state, or an area different from the proposed area?

   Response:

   We strongly encourage applicants to use the proposed service areas, however, applicants may include additional areas within the same State or another State, provided the applicant offer a strong justification and supporting statement. When preparing your application, please remember that no applicant may be awarded more than $300,000.00 under this Funding Opportunity. This includes any funding allotments planned for subcontractor arrangements.

8. **Question:** I noticed that the funding for the State has changed from the current funding level. Can you explain?

   Response:

   We are required by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-170) to distribute funding based on population. The last competition for WIPA funding occurred in 2006. The population of individuals with disabilities has shifted in the intervening years, requiring a recalculation of funding. We based the number of projects on the statewide funding available, and the funding cap required under the legislation.

9. **Question:** The number of available awards in our state has gone down. We only wish to cover the existing areas of our current award. Can we do that?

   Response: Yes.

   You may propose to cover certain areas. If applicants wish to cover portions of the state in a different way from the proposed service areas, applicants must include a justification in the application. No one organization may receive funding in excess of $300,000.00, as outlined in P.L. 106-170.

10. **Question:** I have submitted questions to the mailbox indicated in the RFA. When I do that, I get a "ticket number", but no answer. What is the process I need to follow to receive answers to my questions?

    Response: That is correct.

    You receive this 'ticket' to confirm that we have received your question. You do not receive an immediate answer. We will hold two identical conference calls, and we will answer all questions submitted as well as new questions during the open portion of the calls. We will post and update Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) in the FAQ section of the Grants Solutions site.

11. **Question:** Where did you derive the population figures you used for the distribution of projects in a state?

Response:

We used population figures from the most recent Social Security Annual Statistical Report to determine funding distribution across states and territories.

12. **Question:** We need to break out our State by county to determine funding for subcontracts. Are the county data you used available publically?

Response: Yes.

If you go to the links below you can access the 2013 annual statistical report. This offers tables by county of the disabled workers, SSI blind and disabled beneficiaries. Here are links to those tables:

For the OASDI Data from 2013, we used Table 4 in the spreadsheets for each State: http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/oasdi_sc/

For the SSI Data from 2013, the spreadsheets for each State held the relevant data: http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/

13. **Question:** Do you provide a template for our responses, or do we send a narrative to respond to the requirements in the RFA?

Response: No.

We do not provide a template. Please follow the guidance in the RFA for the narrative portions.

14. **Question:** The funding announcement (Funding Opportunity Number: WIPA-WIP-15-001) mentions an "Appendix A", which is described as map showing WIPA territories and maximum grant amounts per territory, but I have been unable to locate this appendix. I would appreciate guidance on where to find it

Response:

To review the appendices, please go to the following link located at: http://www.ssa.gov/oag/grants/ssagrant_current.htm. Towards the bottom of the page you will be able to review each document.

15. Question: In the RFA, on page 14, you state:

"Through our training and technical assistance contractor, we will provide expert training to all of the WIPA projects to ensure that staffs have a complete understanding of the Federal, State, and local benefits and services available in their service area as well as the use of the Summary software."

Does this mean that the Training and Technical Assistance contractor will now teach WIPA projects everything they need to know about State and local benefits?

Response: No.

The Training and Technical Assistance contractor will inform WIPA project staff about the Federal requirements for State-based programs such as Medicaid, subsidized housing, Temporary Aid to Needy Families, etc. that are available within each State or locality. In addition, the Technical Assistance provider will help Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) identify other resources that may be available in their area. CWICS must establish relationships with agencies and providers within their own service areas and acquire the necessary training and support to develop expertise in the specifics of State and local benefits for the areas they serve. We will require each WIPA project to collect the specifics of these programs for the contractor to use to customize and update the report-writing software. The CWIC preparing reports has the responsibility to ensure that any information provided to beneficiaries is complete, applicable to that person, and accurate in all areas, including State and local benefit information.

Please refer to page 18 of the RFA:

"In addition to training on Social Security and SSI work incentives, CWICs must become experts in researching and understanding Medicare, Medicaid, other Federal programs, and State and local programs that assist individuals with disabilities or individuals living in poverty. Our contractor provides information about the Federal benefits, but CWICs must take responsibility to learn the applicable State and local programs beneficiaries may access. It is the CWIC's responsibility to ensure that the information the beneficiary receives during benefits counseling, in the BS&A, and through other communications, is correct and complete".

16. Question: On page 18, the RFA states:

"In order to provide services under the WIPA cooperative agreement, CWICs must commit at least forty percent (40%) of their total work effort to direct services to beneficiaries, whether Social Security or another funder pays for those services."

What types of direct services to beneficiaries count towards this requirement?

Response: By "direct services", we mean that WIPA staff must spend at least 40 percent of their time providing WIPA services, or direct benefits counseling services. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that CWICs have enough routine practice with a variety of benefits situations to gain and retain in-depth and accurate knowledge and expertise.

17. Question: On Page 21, it states:

"In view of the reduced concentration on outreach and I&R by WIPAs, and the intensified focus on work-oriented beneficiaries, we anticipate enhancing the Help Line's role in outreach and for I&R for beneficiaries who, under prior iterations of the WIPA program, may have contacted the WIPA directly or been referred to a WIPA by service personnel in the community for assistance with I&R type questions. In fact, WIPAs may push those clear I&R inquiries to the Help Line for support from trained Help Line staff."

Can you explain what this means?

Response: In the past, when conducting outreach, WIPA projects have distributed their project phone numbers as a first contact. Typically, this results in increased calls for I&R. In order to reduce the I&R workload, WIPA projects will now be encouraged to publish the Help Line number as the primary contact number. The Help Line can provide basic information and guidance. The Help Line will refer beneficiaries to the appropriate WIPA project as needed.

18. **Question:** Regarding the letter of intent: what does Social Security mean by the following:

> “4. Names of the key personnel, if known, as well as partner institutions and agencies”?

Response:

Include the names of the Project Director, CWICs and other key personnel if known. Additionally, if you plan to collaborate with other agencies and include other organizations as part of your WIPA application; for example, subcontracting organizations and service providers. Please list these entities and indicate what role they will play.