



# Tier 3 Benefits Planning

## Request for Information

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 1.1. Washington State Benefits Planning System

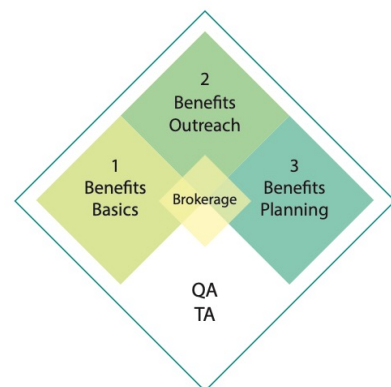
The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is implementing a statewide system to provide benefits information, outreach, and counseling to DDA-eligible residents of Washington State. This Benefits Planning System is designed to support individuals and their families with understanding their public benefits, utilizing available work incentives, and making informed decisions as they move toward their work goals.

The Benefits Planning System utilizes a network of service entities with different roles in order to provide the most effective, coordinated support to its customers. These service entities are as follows:

Service / Entity	Who Provides the Service	Service provided
Tier 1: “Benefits Basics”	DDA-Contracted Employment Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide basic benefit information</li> <li>• Dispel myths</li> <li>• Refer people to the Brokerage</li> </ul>
Tier 2: “Benefits Outreach”	County-contracted agencies providing information and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build community awareness</li> <li>• Conduct presentations/trainings</li> <li>• Resolve simple issues</li> </ul>
Tier 3: “Benefits Planning”	Independent Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits Analyses and Counseling</li> <li>• Work Incentive development</li> <li>• Resolve cash/medical benefit issues</li> </ul>
Brokerage	Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (Wise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and Referral Center</li> <li>• Holds contract with Tier 3 Planners</li> <li>• Payment manager for Tier 3 Planners</li> <li>• Info conduit between State, Planners, and customers</li> </ul>
QA/TA Entity	Wise	Technical assistance and quality assurance for Tiers and Brokerage

#### 1.2. Request for Information Objective

Wise is issuing this Request for Information (“RFI”) to all interested parties for the purpose of identifying individuals or entities with the interest and qualifications to provide contracted **Tier 3 Benefits Planning** services to DDA-eligible residents in Washington State.



### 1.3. Tier 3 Benefits Planning Services

Tier 3 Benefits Planning are direct services provided to DDA-eligible individuals and their families for the purpose of providing education, dispelling myths, and developing benefit strategies to assist in reaching work goals. Examples of Tier 3 services include:

- Accepting referrals from the Brokerage;
- Analyzing a customer’s entire benefit situation;
- Developing a written evaluation of a person’s benefits which is concise, accurate, and useful;
- Providing benefits counseling as it pertains to a customer’s work goals;
- Developing work incentives; and
- Addressing overpayment, loss of benefits, and other crisis situations.

To provide the most effective planning and support, Tier 3 Benefits Planners are required to have high level skills with the following:

- Researching policies and extracting accurate information;
- Communicating complex benefits in a manner that is meaningful to the customer;
- Understanding a person’s benefits landscape and identifying strategic paths forward;
- Developing working relationships with government entities, advocacy groups, and other benefit planners; and
- Advocating with State and Federal systems for proper application of available work incentives.

### 1.4. Credentialing Requirements

Benefit Planners must meet certain credentialing requirements to contract for Tier 3 services. The intent of this credentialing is to ensure Planners have a consistent foundation of benefits knowledge and the opportunity to learn and improve their skills. The credentialing requirements are as follows:

Initial Certification (Choose One)	Continuing Education Requirement	Ongoing Annual Training Requirement
Cornell / WA State Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 hours Continuing Education Units (CEU) over 5-year period</li> <li>• CEU logged in and approved by Cornell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend minimum 6 web trainings annually (these qualify as Cornell CEU requirements); <b>and</b></li> <li>• Annual 2½ day retreat</li> </ul> <p><i>Training requirements may be adjusted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic</i></p>
VCU Certification	18 Continuing Certification Credits annually (15 from VCU)	
Other recognized certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 45 of 60 hours CEU over 5-years</li> <li>• File review process if less than 60 Units</li> </ul>	

Benefits planners who acquired an initial certification but currently do not meet the continuing education requirements will be required to become re-certified. Such planners may begin providing contracted Tier 3 Benefits Planning with the written agreement that they will become re-certified by a mutually agreed-upon date.

Prior to receiving referrals from the Brokerage, Benefit Planners will also be required to meet certain training requirements, as listed in Addendum 1.

### 1.5. Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual or agency has competing interests or loyalties, financial or otherwise, because of their duties to more than one person or organization.

A person or agency with a conflict of interest may be perceived as unable to be objective in meeting the needs of a customer above the needs of their other interests or roles. Examples include:

- A customer referred through the Benefits Planning System may have needs specific to their benefits that may be in conflict with their support agency's preferences or goals for that client;
- Staff of a DDA-qualified employment and day agency may be perceived as having a conflict of interest in providing Benefits Planning services to their own customers or the clients of a competing agency;
- A Benefits Planner funded through a governmental entity may not be able to serve certain customers referred through the Benefits Planning System, given certain rules or regulations.

### 1.6. Quality Assurance and Technical Assistance

To ensure a high quality of benefit planning services across the state, Wise will provide technical assistance (TA) and quality assurance (QA) to Tier 3 Benefits Planners, the Brokerage, and other participating service entities. Tier 3 Benefits Planners may have their case notes and planning reports reviewed by Wise for the purpose of identifying support and training needs and gaps in services.

Monthly trainings on benefits-related topical areas as well as in depth training events will be offered on a regular basis to enhance skills and provide opportunities for networking and relation-building among Tier-3 Planners and other service entities.

### 1.7. Referrals and Payment for Services

Tier 3 Benefit Planning entities will contract directly with the Brokerage. Once contracted, Tier 3 Planners will be eligible to receive referrals from the Brokerage to serve DDA-eligible customers with benefit planning needs. Tier 3 Planners will submit monthly invoices to the Brokerage for services rendered.

Services will initially be paid for on an hourly basis. (An hourly rate has not yet been finalized.)

Contracting will be based around the hourly cost of services and the maximum amount of time that a Tier 3 Planner is available; however, referrals will guide the maximum hours available to bill per customer.

Over a period of time, service hours will be analyzed, and a new hourly and outcome payment structure may be implemented.

### 1.8. Timeframe

A number of factors will impact the startup timeframe and number of referrals a Benefits Planner may expect to receive. We are currently targeting June for starting up the referral system, although the rollout

of contracted services will ramp up according to need and availability of Tier 3 Planners. It is anticipated that Planners will have a growing workload. Tier 3 Planners may elect to work part or full time, as work is available.

## 2. RFI PROCESS

### 2.1. RFI Coordinator

All responses to this RFI and related communications concerning this RFI will be made through the following Single Point of Contact:

Name: Susan Harrell

Email: [susan@gowise.org](mailto:susan@gowise.org)

### 2.2. RFI Timeline

Event	Date
Issue RFI	May 1, 2020
Frequently asked questions are posted online: <a href="http://www.gowise.org/tier3-rfi/">http://www.gowise.org/tier3-rfi/</a> This document will be updated based on additional questions submitted to the RFI point of contact.	May 14, 2020
Responses due	May 21, 2020 by 5pm Pacific
Final selection of initial Tier 3 pool	May 29, 2020

Wise reserves the right to change the foregoing timeline at its sole discretion. Wise may also ask respondents for reference information in the future.

In the future, we may decide that the RFI will be open continuously, with review timelines to be determined based on need for benefits planning services.

### 2.3. Confidentiality / Non-Disclosure

Wise will not disclose or share any response to this RFI with other respondents. Wise may share the responses with Wise staff and contractors; WA DDA; County governments contracted with DDA to provide day program services; DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Ray Cebula with Cornell University; and other Washington State, County, and local government entities.

### 2.4. Submittal Instructions

Submit one electronic copy to the RFI Coordinator.

## 2.5. Submittal Maximum Size

The submitted response to this RFI must not be more than 4 pages, plus proof of credentialing. Please be as concise as possible in your responses.

## 3. INFORMATION REQUEST

*Please respond to all of the items below. If an item is not applicable, please mark it as N/A. Skipping an item may impact the scoring of your application.*

### 3.1. General Information

- 3.1.1. Benefit Planner (BP) name and contact information, including
  - Title
  - Address
  - Phone number
  - Email address
  - Web address, as applicable
- 3.1.2. Agency name and contact information, as applicable, including:
  - Address
  - Phone number
  - Email address
  - Web address, as applicable
- 3.1.3. Will the Benefit Planner or Agency be the holder of the contract?
- 3.1.4. Who should we contact for this RFI?
- 3.1.5. If contracted to provide Tier 3 services, how many hours per week or month do you anticipate being available to provide Benefits Planning?
- 3.1.6. Until Tier 3 work ramps up, are you willing to provide part time benefits planning services?
- 3.1.7. In what counties are you willing to provide benefits planning services?

### 3.2. Certification and Experience

- 3.2.1. Please provide information about your benefit planning certification, including:
  - Entity that provided the certification and certification date. Attach proof of certification unless previously verified by Wise.
  - Continuing education units (CEU) since initial certification. Include dates, training topics, and duration.
- 3.2.2. If you are not current with your CEU, are you willing to become recertified to meet the certification standards established for Washington State?
- 3.2.3. Describe your experience, including
  - How long you have you provided benefit planning services;
  - Approximately how many people you provide benefits planning services to annually;
  - Your experience developing work incentives; and

- Other experiences you bring to this work which will enhance the quality of your benefit planning services.

### 3.3. Conflict of Interest

3.3.1. Are you or your agency contracted to provide any of the following:

- a. DDA-funded employment or community inclusion services;
- b. Other work which may present a conflict of interest?

3.3.2. Briefly describe the services above which apply to you or your agency.

3.3.3. How do you propose providing Tier 3 Benefit Planning services in a manner that does not present a conflict of interest?

### 3.4. Rate Survey

3.4.1. We are determining a rate for Tier 3 services, which may include hourly and outcome payments. What would you propose specific to hourly rate and outcome payments?

3.4.2. What is the average total monthly payment you would need to focus on this body of work?

- Applicant
- Cornell Certification
- Tier 3 QA Training
- Brokerage referrals

