

Supporting Statement A for Ticket to Work Program Evaluation
OMB No. 0960-NEW

A. Justification

1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations

The Social Security Administration (SSA) requests clearance to collect the data necessary to conduct the Ticket to Work (TTW) Program Evaluation. The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (*Pub.L. 106-170, Ticket Act*), section 2(b)(4), established a return-to-work program to “allow individuals with disabilities to seek the services necessary to obtain and retain employment and reduce their dependency on cash benefit programs.” Furthermore, the *Ticket Act* in section 101(d)(4)(A) requires SSA to provide for ongoing, independent evaluation to assess (1) the effects of the program on work outcomes and self-sufficiency, and (2) their cost effectiveness. In compliance with *P.L. 106-170*, SSA is undertaking this evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the programs authorized by the *Ticket Act*, both in terms of program outcomes and cost (efficiency). On September 29, 2023, SSA awarded a contract to Mathematica, a research organization, to conduct the independent evaluation.

Background of Ticket Act Programs

The *Ticket Act* established supports designed to increase the availability of and access to employment services for adults with disabilities receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), hereafter referred to as Ticketholders.¹ Among the supports created by the *Ticket Act* were three programs:

- **TTW.** The *Ticket Act* established an alternative system for providing employment services to disabled SSI recipients and SSDI beneficiaries. Under TTW, Ticketholders can obtain vocational rehabilitation, employment services, or other support services from SSA-approved Employment Networks (ENs). SSA pays ENs if the Ticketholders they serve work and earn above specified amounts. Ticketholders can alternatively receive these services from state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies as was available prior the *Ticket Act*, under which SSA reimburses the VR agencies for successful employment outcomes. State VR agencies have the option, on a case-by-case basis, of serving Ticketholders under the traditional cost-reimbursement system or as an EN; they can also partner with ENs to provide services and share TTW payments. As of May 2025, SSA compensates 440 EN and VR agencies for providing services to Ticketholders.

¹ Throughout this document, “Ticketholders” broadly refers to working-age disabled SSI and SSDI beneficiaries who are eligible for services created by the *Ticket Act*.

- **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA).** SSA awards cooperative agreements to community-based organizations to provide expertise and counseling that helps disabled SSI recipients and SSDI beneficiaries understand how their earnings affect their disability benefits, with a goal of helping beneficiaries successfully transition to work. In 2025, 74 organizations operating in all states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories receive funding to provide WIPA services, conduct outreach to beneficiaries, and coordinate with other programs that serve SSI and SSDI beneficiaries.
- **Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS).** SSA awards grants to 57 Protection & Advocacy (P&A) agencies in states, territories, and tribal communities to provide legal-based advocacy services for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries who want to work. PABSS grantees offer services to help remove barriers to employment, including helping beneficiaries secure TTW and other employment-related services; helping beneficiaries understand issues with their disability benefits; and helping to protect beneficiaries' legal rights to employment, transportation, and housing.

Purpose of the Evaluation

To comply with *P.L. 106-170*, the evaluation will document the extent to which Ticket Act programs are effective, meaning that they achieve their legislative intent: to allow individuals with disabilities to seek the services necessary to obtain and retain employment and reduce their dependency on cash benefit programs. For Ticket Act programs to achieve those aims, (1) providers must be available to meet Ticketholder demand for services; (2) Ticketholders must be aware of Ticket Act programs and be able to access services; and (3) Ticket Act services must be salient to support Ticketholders in overcoming the challenges they face in returning to work and sustaining earnings. The evaluation findings on these components will support SSA's understanding of: (1) whether the programs achieve their legislative intent; (2) the factors contributing to this achievement or lack thereof, and (3) opportunities for improvement of the programs' efficiency and effectiveness. The evaluation will also document the cost effectiveness of Ticket Act programs as currently structured, identifying opportunities to deliver the same outcomes at lower costs or improve outcomes with additional investments.

SSA's last independent, comprehensive evaluation of the Ticket Act programs was in 2013. Given substantial changes to the programs and their approach to service provision since that time, previous evaluation findings are limited their applicability to current decision-making needs. For example:

- Remote service delivery is now far more prevalent than it was a decade ago, which may make services more broadly available to Ticketholders, but could

also reduce the effectiveness of services delivered. The proposed survey of Ticket Act service providers will inform SSA on the share of services offered in-person and remotely, and providers' perceived effectiveness of in-person and remote services. The qualitative interviews with Ticketholders will inform SSA of Ticketholders' experiences connecting to providers who can meet their needs and their perceptions of the usefulness of remote services.

- The number of ENs and their composition has changed since 2013 in ways that may mean today's service providers are more or less effective than they were a decade ago. The proposed provider survey and qualitative interviews with Ticketholders will collect information on perceptions of the relative effectiveness of specific services. That information, in combination with information on the characteristics of providers from SSA programmatic data, TTW outcomes in administrative data, and questions in the provider survey about the specific services provided, will help identify the characteristics and practices of providers that are delivering effective services.
- In the past decade, SSA also implemented changes that affect the programs' operations. For example, the process by which ENs report earnings has changed with the introduction of e-Pay, which allows SSA to pay ENs following an automated review process instead of requiring ENs to submit Ticketholders' paystubs for payment. In addition, the introduction of my Social Security accounts now allows Ticketholders to report earnings to SSA electronically. SSA also revised the types of organizations that can operate under Ticket to Work (adding administrative ENs as an approved provider model while discontinuing consumer-directed ENs). The WIPA program, with Congressionally mandated funding that has not increased since the program's inception, has experienced demand beyond what providers can offer with set funding. SSA has changed the structure of WIPA project catchment areas and has also made service prioritization decisions to focus the availability of services to beneficiaries who are working or about to work. The proposed survey of Ticket Act service providers will inform SSA of the challenges that providers experience to delivering services effectively in the current environment. We use this information to support relevant and solutions-oriented program improvements.
- In the past five years, SSA invested in a marketing program to support EN outreach to Ticketholders based on who providers expect will most likely benefit from services. This program did not exist in 2013 and therefore was not included in the prior evaluation.² The current evaluation includes a quantitative

² SSA conducted an internal review of the piloted version of the Marketing Program, but the planned Ticket to Work Program Evaluation will be the first to evaluate the Marketing Program within the holistic Ticket Act ecosystem.

analysis of outcomes of Ticketholders who assigned their Ticket after marketing program outreach using linked programmatic and administrative records. The survey of ENs will inform SSA about ENs' reasons for participating or not participating in the marketing program to support understanding of whether and how the marketing program is tied to program effectiveness.

Rationale for the Proposed Data Collection to Support Evaluation Objectives

The evaluation is necessary to comply with *P.L. 106-170* and to provide updated information regarding whether Ticket Act programs today achieve their legislative intent to allow individuals with disabilities to seek the services necessary to obtain and retain employment and reduce their dependency on cash benefit programs. To the extent that the Ticket Act programs are achieving their legislative intent, the evaluation will inform SSA of the factors contributing to this achievement, or, conversely, the factors that hinder this achievement. In addition to the data collection proposed in this package, the evaluation will rely on a range of information that SSA has on hand, including information that SSA routinely collects from Ticket Act program providers, beneficiary-level administrative records on program participation, earnings, and benefits, and surveys SSA previously conducted.

Much of SSA's existing data were collected to inform operational program monitoring and provides useful information to understand the outcomes of the program (who participates, whether they achieve sustained employment) but cannot explain the factors that contribute to these outcomes. As such, these data are not sufficiently robust to satisfy the requirements of this evaluation. For example, an existing Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey which SSA fielded asked TTW users to report on the most useful services they received, but did not ask them to list all services their EN provided to them. Separately, SSA annually presents a list of services to ENs and asks whether they offer each service to any Ticketholder. The proposed data collection will ask ENs to document the full list of services they offer and the share of Ticketholders they serve who receive them, so that the evaluation can document the share of Ticketholders offered the services perceived to be most useful to beneficiaries.

The results of the proposed new data collection activities, in conjunction with the analysis of existing SSA data, will identify underlying factors of program effectiveness or ineffectiveness. This analysis will provide the evidence base for potential programmatic changes or other proposals to maximize program effectiveness.

2. Description of Collection

This information collection request includes surveys of three types of Ticket Act providers and qualitative interviews of Ticketholders. SSA will oversee all data

collection activities. SSA and its contractor, Mathematica, will be the primary users of the data for evaluation.

Specifically, SSA is requesting clearance for the following data collection efforts to support the evaluation:

- **Surveys of the Ticket Act service providers (“provider surveys”).** Mathematica will field three concurrent surveys, each focusing on a specific type of Ticket Act service provider. The surveys will ask about provider decisions to participate in the program, provider decisions about service provision, and about challenges that ENs and VR agencies face in effectively serving beneficiaries. SSA does not routinely collect comprehensive and systematic information on EN service provision, nor does it collect detailed information from providers on their rationale for decisions or responses to SSA requirements; having this information may be key to program effectiveness. Attachments A1a-A1g, A2a-A2g, and A3a-A3g include the provider survey outreach materials, consent statements, and instruments.
 - **Purpose.** The purpose of the surveys is to collect quantifiable information that is not available in SSA’s administrative records and to gather it directly from service providers delivering Ticket Act services. Through the surveys, three types of Ticket Act service providers will share information about their organizations and approaches to service delivery, the challenges of operating as a service provider, and considerations for program improvement. Mathematica will synthesize findings based on provider surveys, qualitative interviews, and analyses of existing SSA data on Ticket Act providers and participants in its evaluation reports.
 - **Populations and mode.** Mathematica will field three concurrent surveys, each focusing on a specific type of Ticket Act service provider. Mathematica will field the EN-VR survey to the 441 ENs and VR agencies, the WIPA survey to the 74 WIPA projects, and the PABSS survey to the 57 P&A Agencies with PABSS grants.³ These organizations have existing agreements with SSA to deliver services. Mathematica will invite one staff member from each of these ENs, VRs, WIPA projects, and P&A agencies (totaling 572 organizations) to respond as a representative on behalf of the organization. Each organization’s representative will complete an interview via a self-administered online survey.

³ Organization numbers are as of 2024. To the extent that the universe of service providers changes between the time of drafting of this document and the survey fielding period, we will field the survey to the population of services providers as of a date as close to the beginning of survey fielding as practicable.

- o **Frequency and timing of the information collection.** Mathematica will administer each survey once over an eight-week period beginning within three months of receiving Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) approval.
- o **Voluntary participation.** All three surveys are voluntary. A service provider's decision to take part in the survey (or not) will not have any impact on its relationship with SSA or the funding it receives. SSA will use the survey results for research only, not for monitoring or auditing particular providers. The outreach materials include this information in a consent statement. The survey starts with a question to ask providers whether they consent to take the survey. Providers who do not consent will terminate the survey and Mathematica will conduct no further follow-up. If fewer than 80 percent of providers participate, we will conduct a non-response bias analysis to understand the extent to which responses are representative of all service providers.
- o **Notifications and access.** The outreach materials notify service providers about the Ticket to Work Program Evaluation. Some providers may already be aware of the evaluation as part of previous outreach inviting them to participate in listening sessions that occurred in 2024. Mathematica will identify the point of contact for each provider from SSA's administrative records. SSA and Mathematica will send an initial letter and follow-up emails to the points of contact inviting them to take part in the survey. Mathematica will place a telephone reminder call to nonresponding providers to ensure the point of contact is correct and to address any questions. Providers will access the survey through a personalized web link provided in the initial letter and follow-up emails.
- o **Psychological costs.** We do not foresee any psychological costs to participation in any of the three provider surveys. Although there will be questions about challenges the provider faces in service delivery, these questions are no more sensitive than the typical topics respondents discuss in their day-to-day roles. Further, respondents can skip any question they do not feel comfortable answering and consult with others if they prefer not to answer a question independently.
- **Qualitative interviews with Ticketholders (“qualitative data collection”).** Interviews with Ticketholders will provide a platform for open-ended, guided discussions in which interviewees can share their experiences with the Ticket Act programs, including their ability to find a provider at all; find a provider who could meet their employment service needs; and experiences with services affecting their employment outcomes. The findings from the qualitative interviews with

Ticketholders will identify barriers to service access and highlight any changes to service delivery that could potentially improve the effectiveness of Ticket Act program services. Attachments B1a, B1b, and B2 contain the outreach materials, screening questions, and interview topics.

- o **Purpose.** The purpose of the qualitative interviews is to collect qualitative information that is not available in SSA's administrative records from Ticketholders. Through the qualitative interviews, Mathematica will provide SSA with information that serves to answer the research questions in the evaluation. Specifically, the interview findings will help assess the extent to which Ticket Act programs are working effectively and efficiently and what opportunities may be available to improve the achievement of program outcomes. Mathematica will use the interview findings in combination with the survey data and SSA's existing data to create the evaluation reports.
- o **Populations and mode.** These qualitative interviews include Ticketholders. Mathematica will use existing SSA records to select a random sample of Ticketholders and invite them to participate in interviews. Mathematica will use an interview guide to structure the discussions. The Ticketholders interviewed will include TTW participants⁴ and non-participants (Ticketholders who are working but did not participate in the TTW program), and WIPA participants⁵ and non-participants (Ticketholders who did not use WIPA services). We will not specifically target PABSS service users or non-users because SSA does not maintain the data needed to identify PABSS service users. Mathematica will administer a brief screening questionnaire to all potential Ticketholder interviewees to confirm eligibility and to schedule interviews. Mathematica interviewers will follow an interview protocol while administering the interviews with the Ticketholders, conducting them remotely over the phone or via Microsoft Teams, a video-based meeting platform.
- o **Frequency and timing of the information collection.** Mathematica will administer the interviews once over a four-month period beginning within two months of receiving PRA clearance.
- o **Voluntary participation.** The qualitative interviews are voluntary. A Ticketholder's decision to take part in the interview (or not) will have no impact on any SSDI benefits or SSI payments they receive now or in the

⁴ “TTW participants” refers to Ticketholders who have received services from an EN or VR within the last three years.

⁵ “WIPA participants” refers Ticketholders who have received services from a WIPA project within the last three years.

future. The outreach materials include this information in a consent statement. At the start of each interview, we will confirm the Ticketholder's consent. If the Ticketholder does not consent to participate then we will end the interview with no further follow-up and recruit a different participant with similar characteristics or experiences. We will conduct outreach and recruitment until we have conducted 100 interviews. We do not intend the qualitative interviews to be representative. In evaluation reports, we will note the range of participants to provide context for our findings.

- o **Notifications and access.** The outreach materials notify Ticketholders about the evaluation of the Ticket Act programs. Some Ticketholders may already be aware of the evaluation as part of previous outreach inviting them to participate in listening sessions that occurred in 2024. For the Ticketholder interviews, Mathematica will identify the Ticketholders in SSA's administrative records⁶. SSA and Mathematica will mail an invitation letter and make follow-up phone calls to the Ticketholders. The outreach to Ticketholders will include a toll-free number they can call to schedule an interview. When Ticketholders call the toll-free number, Mathematica will administer a brief screening questionnaire to confirm eligibility and schedule the interview.
- o **Psychological costs.** We foresee few, if any, psychological costs associated with the Ticketholder interviews. Some Ticketholders might find it distressing to discuss their experiences seeking or receiving services, particularly if the process was difficult or had negative outcomes. The consent form clearly identifies the risks and benefits to participation. If Ticketholders become distressed, the professionally trained interviewers will pause the interview or remind them that they can stop at any time and skip any question they do not wish to answer. We have taken these psychological costs into account when calculating the burden estimate in Section A.12.

3. Use of information technology to collect the information

Mathematica uses numerous technologies to conduct and manage data collection efforts. For both the provider surveys and the qualitative interviews, the evaluation will offer a toll-free telephone number and email address hosted by Mathematica. In addition, Mathematica will use the following information technology for each type of data collection:

⁶ It is possible that a Ticketholder identified in SSA's administrative records could lose their Ticket eligibility in the time between identification and interview.

Provider surveys

- **Online questionnaire for the surveys.** Fielding the surveys online provides a low-burden way for respondents to self-report whenever it is most convenient for them. Mathematica will deploy the online survey using Confirmit® software,⁷ which allows respondents to complete the interviews using a tablet, computer, or mobile device connected to the online instrument. It offers all the advantages of computer-based administration, including range and logic checks, preprogrammed skips based on item responses or preloaded variables, dynamic text fills, and dynamic computation of summed responses. It also allows for breakoffs that enable respondents to pause the survey and resume later without having to re-populate answers already provided. Mathematica will send sample members a personalized link to launch the online survey in the initial letter and all email reminders (see Attachments A1a-A1f, A2a-A2f, and A3a-A3f).
- **Computer-based sample management system.** The sample management system will minimize respondent burden by ensuring that we direct nonresponse follow-up efforts only to applicable sample members. We will update the system in real time as provider survey respondents complete interviews. The system will also allow Mathematica to update respondent contact information, if needed.
- **Sending the survey link via email.** As noted above, all email reminders will include a personalized link to launch the online survey. Sending the link by email reduces burden because providers can click on the link to begin the survey instead of having to manually type it into their web browser.

Qualitative interviews

- **Computer-based sample management tool.** Mathematica will track responses to outreach efforts with a computer-based sample management system. This will streamline recruitment and scheduling efforts, ensuring we clearly document each potential interviewee's status and other staff do not duplicate efforts. After scheduling an interview, Mathematica will record the date, time, and interviewer assigned.
- **Recording interviews.** With participants' permission, Mathematica will audio-record the interviews. Mathematica will use the recordings to: (1) ensure the accuracy of interview notes, and (2) produce transcripts of the interviews.
- **Software to code interview transcripts.** Mathematica will use software to apply codes to the interview transcripts. These codes will build the foundation for identifying themes across interviews and support the analysis of the data collected.

⁷ Confirmit® is the computer-assisted interviewing system and survey-processing tool Mathematica uses for survey data collection. The software was developed by Confirmit® for the Windows® operating system and web browsers.

4. Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information

The nature of the information we will collect and the manner in which we will collect it preclude duplication. SSA will not use another collection effort to obtain these data. As described previously, changes to the programs since previous evaluations mean that Ticketholder outcomes and therefore program effectiveness may differ in the current context relative to what we documented in past evaluations, such that past evidence is insufficient to fully evaluate the programs today.

The provider survey and the qualitative interviews with Ticketholders will provide information Mathematica cannot obtain through SSA's existing programmatic data and administrative records. The information SSA proposes to collect in the new activities falls in two primary categories: (1) completely unique data elements, unavailable in existing SSA sources, and (2) data elements available in limited forms in existing sources, but insufficient to respond to evaluation research questions related to program experiences. In a few instances, data elements duplicate information that SSA already has available, such as the SSA-approved business model of an EN. We need these very limited instances to anchor survey responses that then determine important paths of data collection within the survey. This will allow the evaluation to analyze data of the highest quality and internal consistency.

The category of completely unique data elements includes questions such as provider decision-making. SSA currently has data on the outcomes of many decisions providers make (e.g., how many tickets get assigned, whether to start or stop operating, whether they participate in the TTW Marketing Program and/or Partnership Plus), but the agency does not have any systematic data on the “why” behind these decisions. The provider surveys will fill in these types of gaps, by asking questions about factors that influence these decisions. Qualitative interviews with beneficiaries will similarly offer context about the “why” of their decisions and “how” of their experiences, not simply whether they assigned their Ticket or worked above the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level. This contextual data is critical to SSA's consideration of modifications to the programs that could improve program effectiveness.

The category of data elements available but insufficient to answer evaluation research questions includes examples like the one offered in Section 1, where ENs indicate to SSA whether they make services available to any Ticketholder, but do not provide context about the share of Ticketholders who receive them. We will analyze the data collected in the provider survey in conjunction with SSA's existing administrative data on return-to-work outcomes at the provider level to shed light on the types of service provision that are most effective in supporting Ticketholders.

5. Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents

Some of the service providers included in the provider surveys might be small entities. Mathematica's survey imposes minimal burden on the providers involved. Each survey will take one hour or less to complete. The provider surveys will collect the minimum amount of data needed to achieve the evaluation's goals. Respondents can complete surveys at a time of their choice.

6. Consequences of Not Collecting Information or Collecting it Less Frequently

SSA collects and stores data for program oversight and administrative record-keeping, including characteristics of providers and characteristics of beneficiaries who (1) receive program services and (2) achieve return-to-work outcomes consistent with the program's legislative intent. That information, however, is insufficient to understand the reasons why Ticketholders and providers decide to participate in Ticket Act programs (or not), nor the barriers and facilitators to service provision and receipt that would result in Ticketholders sustaining work to ultimately cease benefits from federal disability programs. The proposed data collection in this package is necessary to inform potential programmatic changes of legislative requests to maximize the Ticket to Work program's effectiveness.

Provider surveys

The provider surveys are a one-time collection and necessary to understand service availability and provision as determinants of program effectiveness. The data the surveys will collect are neither available from SSA's existing programmatic data collected from providers, nor from administrative records or other sources.

Qualitative interviews

The qualitative interviews are a one-time collection and necessary to understand awareness of services, decisions to use services, ability to find providers and needed services, and the perceptions of beneficiaries about service value. The interviews will provide data to SSA that is not available from SSA's administrative records or existing surveys of Ticketholders.

Without the proposed data collection activities, the evaluation will not be fully able to provide SSA actionable steps it can take to improve the effectiveness of the Ticket Act programs. Drawing upon the proposed data collection, in conjunction with existing SSA data, we expect the evaluation will be able to consider mechanisms to improve program effectiveness such as: (1) increasing take-up by Ticketholders most likely to work; (2) considering alternatives methods for monitoring service providers and the services they deliver; and (3) process improvements aimed at reducing the administrative burden of providers and Ticketholders who participate in the programs.

7. Special Circumstances

The proposed data collection activities are consistent with the guidelines set forth in 5 CFR 1320.5 (Controlling Paperwork Burden on the Public, General Information Collection Guidelines). There are no circumstances that require deviation from these guidelines.

8. Solicitation of Public Comment and Other Consultations with the Public

Federal Register

The 60-Day advance Federal Register Notice published on September 3, 2025 at 90 FR 42667 and SSA received one public comment (see the attached Addendum for SSA's responses to the public comment).

SSA published the second Notice on February 2, 2026, at 91 FR 4776. If SSA receives comments in response to the 30-Day Notice, it will forward them to OMB.

Consultation with outside agencies

As a first step in the evaluation, SSA convened a technical advisory panel. The panel provided input on the evaluation criteria and research design. It consisted of the following experts in disability and employment, evaluation methods, and research methods to advise us on the evaluation design:

- Teresa Nguyen, M.P.H., Lurie Institute for Disability Policy in the Heller School for Social Policy and Management of Brandeis University;
- Emily Roessel, M.P.P., Social Security Advisory Board;
- Ari Ne’eman, Ph.D., Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; and
- Hirah Mir, Ph.D., New York Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Consultation with the public

An interdisciplinary group of the following economists, disability policy researchers, survey researchers, and information systems professionals at Mathematica contributed to the design of the overall evaluation and the information collection effort:

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|----------------------|--------------------|
| • Jody Schimmel Hyde | • Isabel Musse |
| • Gina Livermore | • Holly Matulewicz |
| • Sarah Croake | • Joanna Nevins |
| • Noémie Sportiche | • Diane Beaver |

Mathematica engaged a group of consultants knowledgeable about the Ticket Act programs. This included Ticketholders as well as EN, VR agency, WIPA project, and P&A agency providers, collectively representing a wide range of perspectives regarding the Ticket Act programs. This group includes the following people:

- John Connelly
- Ray Cebula
- Cheryl Bates- Harris
- Larrisa Cummings
- Gloria Freeney
- Amy Wallish
- Andrew Pulrang
- Adam Pinchuck

Finally, Mathematica convened eight exploratory listening sessions approved by OMB on December 30, 2023, under control number 0960-0788. The listening sessions provided a platform for attendees to share their experiences with Ticket Act programs. The 82 attendees included service users of Ticket Act programs, Ticket Act service providers, and disability advocates.

9. Payments or Gifts to Respondents

SSA believes that some compensation is important to engender a positive attitude about the data collection, obtain high response rates, and reduce the risk of biased estimates. Decades of research indicate monetary incentives increase response rates without compromising data quality and often reduce data collection costs (Mercer et al. 2015; Singer and Ye 2013; de Heer and de Leeuw 2002; Singer and Kulka 2000). There is also evidence that incentives bolster participation among those with lower interest in the survey topic (Jäckle and Lynn 2007; Kay 2001; Schwartz et al. 2006), resulting in more complete data. Accordingly, Mathematica will offer a \$40 check for completing the provider surveys and a \$40 Visa gift card to Ticketholders who complete the qualitative interviews.

10. Assurances of Confidentiality

The identity of providers and Ticketholders and the nature of the information collected require strict confidentiality procedures. SSA will protect the information collected in accordance with *42 U.S.C. 1306*, *20 CFR 401* and *402*, *5 U.S.C. 552* (Freedom of Information Act), *5 U.S.C. 552a* (Privacy Act of 1974), and OMB Circular No. A-130. Descriptions of the detailed plans for informed consent and data security procedures follow.

Informed consent for provider surveys

All Ticket Act service providers will be able to make a genuinely informed decision about participating in the survey. The initial letter will include a consent statement (see Attachments A1a, A2a, and A3a). This statement provides information on the purpose of the evaluation overall and the survey specifically, the topics covered in the survey, the risks and benefits of participation, how we will store and use the data, and the voluntary nature of participation. Mathematica will provide a toll-free telephone number that service providers can call with questions. When providers log into the online survey, the survey instrument will ask them whether they consent to participate. All providers must consent to progress to the survey questions.

Informed consent for qualitative interviews

All Ticketholders will be able to make a genuinely informed decision about participating in the qualitative interviews. The initial letter will include a consent form (see Attachments B1a, and B1b) that provides information on the purpose of the evaluation overall and the interview specifically, the topics covered in the interview, the risks and benefits of participation, and how we will store and use the data. This form also describes the voluntary nature of participation. Mathematica will provide a toll-free telephone number that Ticketholders can call with questions related to the data collection. In addition, at the start of each interview, the Mathematica interviewer will ask Ticketholders whether they have any questions about the information provided and collect verbal consent before initiating the interview questions.

Data confidentiality protections

Mathematica will clearly state the assurances and limits of confidentiality in the consent statement for the provider surveys, the consent form for the qualitative interviews, and the materials used to conduct survey and qualitative data collection. The Paperwork Reduction and Privacy Act Statements will appear on all study documents (see Attachments A1a-A1g, A2a-A2g, A3a-A3g, B1, B2a, and B2b). The Privacy Act Statement provides assurance that we will keep all information collected confidential unless required by law and will not use the information in any way that would affect SSA benefit eligibility or payments. After collecting and analyzing the survey and qualitative data, neither SSA nor Mathematica will attribute responses to specific people in any public documents. Mathematica will securely destroy all data at the completion of the evaluation.

Data storage and handling

Mathematica takes seriously the ethical and legal obligations associated with the collection of confidential data and has procedures in place to appropriately safeguard data from unauthorized use and disclosure, including the use of passwords and encryption. Mathematica uses several mechanisms to secure data, including obtaining suitability determinations for designated staff, training staff to recognize and handle sensitive data, protecting computer systems from access by staff without favorable suitability determinations, limiting the use of personally identifiable information in data, limiting access to secure data on a need-to-know basis and to staff with favorable suitability determinations, and creating data extract files that exclude identifying information.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The purpose of this evaluation is to better understand the extent to which Ticket Act programs are working effectively and efficiently and what opportunities might be available to improve the achievement of program outcomes. As such, some

respondents might perceive certain aspects of the information collection as sensitive, as described below.

Provider surveys

We do not anticipate the provider survey respondents to perceive any of the items as sensitive. Mathematica confirmed this assumption during post-interview debriefing with survey pretest respondents. Nonetheless, the survey consent statement and survey instruments inform providers that the information they provide is confidential and we will only use it for research purposes. The statement and instruments also inform providers that the survey is voluntary and that they can skip any questions they do not wish to answer.

Qualitative interviews

Ticketholders might find it sensitive to discuss their experiences with service receipt or barriers they encountered in accessing services. As such, these interviews may have psychological costs pertaining to collection of data on these topics. Still, the data we are collecting on these topics are critical to understanding how Ticket Act programs are working and to identifying service delivery issues related to efficiency and effectiveness. Qualitative interviews will not collect data that is available from other sources (such as from SSA administrative records). The consent form describes that (1) the information the respondents provide in the interviews is confidential and we will only use it for research purposes and (2) interviewees can decline to answer questions they find too sensitive. Before collecting data, Mathematica will train interviewers on how to administer the instrument and probe on sensitive items.

12. Estimates of Public Reporting Burden

The chart below provides the annual time burden for this information collection. We also include our considerations of financial opportunity costs, travel costs, and learning costs potentially associated with this information collection. We provide a summary of the burden estimates by calendar year, type of collection, and respondent type in the table below:

Estimated total annual burden by respondent type

Modality of completion	Number of respondents	Frequency of Response	Average burden per response (minutes)	Total annual burden (hours)*	Average theoretical hourly cost**	Total Estimated annual opportunity cost***
Provider surveys						
TTW survey	353	1	38	224*	\$40.10**	\$8,982***

Modality of completion	Number of respondents	Frequency of Response	Average burden per response (minutes)	Total annual burden (hours)*	Average theoretical hourly cost**	Total Estimated annual opportunity cost***
WIPA survey	59	1	38	37*	\$40.10**	\$1,483***
PABSS survey	46	1	28	21*	\$40.10**	\$842***
<i>Subtotal - surveys</i>	458			282*		\$11,307***
Qualitative interviews						
Ticketholder: TTW users	70	1	51	60*	\$16.22**	\$973***
Ticketholder: TTW non-users	10	1	41	7*	\$16.22**	\$114***
Ticketholder: WIPA users	20	1	51	17*	\$16.22**	\$276***
<i>Subtotal - qualitative interviews</i>	100			84		\$1,363***
Totals						
Surveys	458			282*		\$11,307***
Qualitative interviews	100			84*		\$1,363***
Total	558			366*		\$12,670***

* To show annual burden, we multiplied the number of respondents by the number of responses annually by the average respondent burden per response. We allocated the number of planned responses by year based on the timing of the provider survey and the planned distribution of the qualitative interviews over the two calendar years.

** Opportunity cost estimates for Ticket Act providers assume a wage rate of \$40.10 per hour, the average national wage reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the employment category of “Social and Community Service Managers” (accessed at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes119151.htm> on October 22, 2024). Opportunity cost estimates for SSA Ticketholders assume a rate of \$16.22 per hour, corresponding to the average wage for employed SSDI and SSI beneficiaries in 2019 (\$12.92,

<https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/nbs/2019/job-characteristics.html>) adjusted for inflation using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic's Inflation Calculator (https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

*** This figure does not represent actual costs that SSA will impose on survey respondents or participants in the qualitative interviews. They are theoretical opportunity costs for the time that respondents will spend participating in data collection activities. There is no charge to respondents for participating in data collection activities. We calculated these costs by multiplying the total annual burden in hours by the average theoretical hourly rate. Because the table presents rounded total annual burden hours, this rounding may affect the revisions needed to replicate these estimates. **There is no actual charge to respondents to complete the tasks.**

13. Annual Cost to the Respondents (Other)

There are no direct costs to respondents for any of the data collection activities, other than their time to participate in the study, as described above. Mathematica will not ask respondents to maintain any new records. Mathematica will collect and maintain all data and is responsible for all costs associated with collecting, storing, processing, and other functions related to these data. Section 14 summarizes these costs, which are costs to the federal government under an SSA contract.

14. Annual Costs to Federal Government

The cost to SSA for conducting the provider surveys and qualitative interviews is approximately \$1,167,011. This estimate accounts for costs by activity. Mathematica budgeted the labor costs by estimating the number of hours for required staff at the various wage levels, multiplying by the applicable wage rates, and multiplying the resulting subtotals by factors to cover fringe benefits and burden expense. The other direct costs include operational expenses such as information technology, postage, and respondent payments. The basis for estimating other direct costs varies with the type of cost. Mathematica summed the total of labor costs and other direct costs and multiplied them by a factor to cover general and program expenses.

Total costs of designing and conducting the provider survey and qualitative data collection

Description of Cost Factor	Methodology for Estimating Cost	Cost in Dollars*
Designing and Printing the Form	Design Cost + Printing Cost	\$174,021

Description of Cost Factor	Methodology for Estimating Cost	Cost in Dollars*
Distributing, Shipping, and Material Costs for the Form	Distribution + Shipping + Material Cost	\$1,717
SSA Employee (e.g., field office, 800 number, DDS staff) Information Collection and Processing Time	GS-9 employee x # of responses x processing time	\$0*
Full-Time Equivalent Costs	Out of pocket costs + Other expenses for providing this service	\$0*
Systems Development, Updating, and Maintenance	Costs to develop the Confirmit instruments and to maintain the data inventory	\$80,123
Quantifiable IT Costs	Any additional IT costs	\$63,210
Other	Provider survey system administration (data collection)	\$237,928
Other	Qualitative interviewee recruitment and interviews, including transcription (data collection)	\$610,010
Total		\$1,167,011

* We have inserted a \$0 amount for cost factors that do not apply to this collection.

15. Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection Request

This is a new information collection that increases the public reporting burden. See #12 above for updated burden figures.

16. Plans for Public Information Collection Results

The evaluation will analyze, tabulate, and report the data collected for the evaluation, in conjunction with analysis of existing SSA programmatic and administrative data. SSA may publicize these findings after we review them.

Time schedule for analysis and reporting

The table below shows the timing of analysis and reporting, which will depend on the receipt of PRA clearance.

Data collection	Timing
Provider surveys	About 8 weeks beginning within 3 months after receiving PRA clearance
Qualitative interviews	About 4 months beginning within 2 months after receiving PRA clearance
Reports (dates first drafts are due)	
PABSS evaluation report	14 months after receiving PRA clearance
WIPA evaluation report	17 months after receiving PRA clearance
TTW evaluation report	19 months after receiving PRA clearance
Ticket Act programs summary	21 months after receiving PRA clearance
Data Files (dates first drafts are due)	
Administrative and survey data guide	18 months after receiving PRA clearance
Documentation and restricted access file for provider survey	21 months after receiving PRA clearance

Analytic techniques, tabulations, and reporting

The survey and qualitative interview findings will address the evaluation questions and identify promising practices and challenges to program effectiveness, service provision, and service access. The survey and qualitative interview findings will also provide context for interpreting findings from the analyses of SSA administrative records and inform suggestions for improving the Ticket Act programs.

Analyzing data from the provider surveys. Mathematica will produce descriptive statistics to describe the experiences and perspectives of providers in each program separately (that is, TTW, WIPA, and PABSS). Analyses will also compare statistics across groups of providers within each program (as sample sizes allow) based on characteristics such as provider type, geographic service area, tenure in the program, number of clients served, and other measures derived using administrative data. Statistical analyses will document differences in means and distributions across provider groups, as necessary. The survey will also gather information from providers via open-ended questions, such as suggestions for improving the program. Here, Mathematica will review and analyze the open-ended responses using a similar approach to the planned analysis of the qualitative information collection (that is, by categorizing and coding the responses and identifying key themes across them). The findings from the provider survey data analyses will contribute to the reports and briefs. They will complement the qualitative and administrative data analyses to develop a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of providers in the TTW program and develop suggestions for ways to improve the program.

Analyzing the qualitative interview data. After completing all qualitative interviews, Mathematica will systematically code transcripts and analyze the data. Mathematica will not use quantitative techniques to analyze the qualitative data from these

collections. When analyzing the qualitative data, Mathematica will use the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) to guide findings about factors that influenced implementation of the Ticket Act programs. CFIR is a conceptual framework for assessing implementation and identifying factors that might influence effectiveness (Damschroder et al. 2009). It reflects the evidence base of factors most likely to influence program implementation. To apply the CFIR framework to the qualitative analysis, Mathematica will record and transcribe interviews and then code interview transcripts to identify information relevant to intervention components and CFIR constructs. Mathematica will then populate analytic matrices and identify themes corresponding to the research questions.

17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date

SSA is not requesting an exception to the requirement to display the OMB approval expiration date. Mathematica will display the OMB expiration date on the survey consent statement, the qualitative interview consent form, and all materials used for surveys and qualitative data collection. _

18. Exception to Certification Statement

SSA is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements at *5 CFR 1320.9* and related provisions at *5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3)*.

References

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- Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. Pub. L. No. 106-170, 113 Stat. 1860. 1999.

List of Attachments

Attachment A1a: EN-VR Provider Invitation Letter Packet

Attachment A1b: EN-VR Provider Survey Invitation Email (Week 1.5)

Attachment A1c: EN-VR Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 3)

Attachment A1d: EN-VR Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 4.5)

Attachment A1e: EN-VR Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 6)

Attachment A1f: EN-VR Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 7.5)

Attachment A1g: EN-VR Provider Survey Instrument

Attachment A2a: WIPA Provider Invitation Letter Packet

Attachment A2b: WIPA Provider Survey Invitation Email (Week 1.5)

Attachment A2c: WIPA Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 3)

Attachment A2d: WIPA Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 4.5)

Attachment A2e: WIPA Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 6)

Attachment A2f: WIPA Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 7.5)

Attachment A2g: WIPA Provider Survey Instrument

Attachment A3a: PABSS Provider Invitation Letter Packet

Attachment A3b: PABSS Provider Survey Invitation Email (Week 1.5)

Attachment A3c: PABSS Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 3)

Attachment A3d: PABSS Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 4.5)

Attachment A3e: PABSS Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 6)

Attachment A3f: PABSS Provider Survey Reminder Email (Week 7.5)

Attachment A3g: PABSS Provider Survey Instrument

Attachment B1a: Qualitative Outreach to Ticketholders – Program Participants

Attachment B1b: Qualitative Outreach to Ticketholders – Program Non-Participants

Attachment B2: Qualitative Interview Topics