

Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) Performance Reporting Instructional Sheet: Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS) Invalid Column Error Caused by Blank Final Columns

This instructional sheet is to help you troubleshoot an Invalid Column Number error in WIPS that occurs due to blank columns at the end of your Excel data file.

What is an Invalid Column Error?

The Invalid Column Number error is a format error generated when WIPS detects that the data file has less than or more than the required number of columns. The number of columns must correspond with the number of data elements in the current Demonstration (Demo) Grant Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL).

The current 2021 Demo Grant PIRL **has 136 data elements and requires 136 columns to be in your data file.**

Why Do Blank Columns Result in an Invalid Column Error?

When one or more data elements at the end of the Demo PIRL are left blank in your data file, the empty columns may not be recognized (i.e., counted) when you convert your Excel document to a .csv or .txt file. WIPS will conclude your upload does not have the required 136 columns.

Below are the final columns in the 2021 Demo PIRL:

2118	2119	2120	2122	2124	2126	2700
Date Entered Employment (Discretionary Grants)	Incumbent Workers Retained Current Position	Incumbent Workers Advanced into a New Position with Current or New Employer in the 1st Quarter after Completion	Incumbent Workers Advanced into a New Position with Current Employer or New Employer in the 2nd Quarter after Training Program Completion	Incumbent Workers Advanced into a New Position with Current or New Employer in the 3rd Quarter after Training Program Completion	Entered Training-Related Employment After Training Program Completion	Social Security Number
Required, if applicable	WOR Grantees do not need to capture this data.	WOR Grantees do not need to capture this data.	WOR Grantees do not need to capture this data.	WOR Grantees do not need to capture this data.	Required, if applicable	Required Code Value
YYYYMMDD	0		0	0	0	If Unknown 999999999
					1	123456789
20250112					0	987654321
20250209					9	999999999
						912837465
20250217					0	361752159
20250302					1	999999999

Several of the last data elements may not be applicable to your grant and are left blank in your data file. While WORC grantees must ask participants for their Social Security Number (PIRL 2700), grantees **cannot** deny individuals services if they decline to provide their Social Security Number.

WIPS requires that your data file contains no column headers. Without column headers, the file looks like this:

					1	123456789
20250112					0	987654321
20250209					9	999999999
						912837465
20250217					0	361752159
20250302					1	999999999
					1	123456789

There should be no data in the columns after PIRL 2700: Social Security Number. Your upload file will only have 136 columns. If you have any additional columns, you will receive an invalid column error.

These instructions are to help you convert an Excel spreadsheet into one of the required formats (.csv or .txt) and ensure blank columns are recognized.

Fixing the Error: How Do I Ensure WIPS Will Recognize 136 Columns and Accept My Data File?

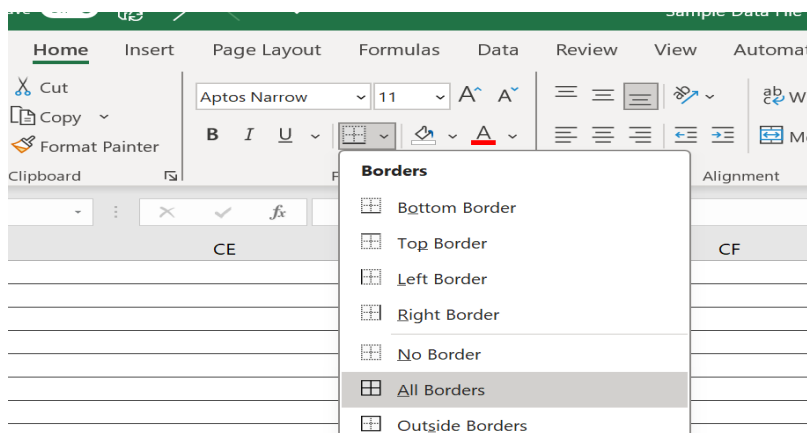
There is more than one way to adjust your Excel spreadsheet so that when you convert it to .csv or .txt, WIPS will recognize the correct number of columns.

One quick and simple method to fix the issue is to add **borders** to your columns in your Excel sheet. The borders result in the recognition of blank columns when you convert your file.

1. Select the columns (all 136 columns, A:EF to be included). EF column (the column for PIRL 2700: Social Security Number) should be the 136th column. If it isn't, check to ensure you don't have an extra column before PIRL 0: OBS Number.

	DY	DZ	EA	EB	EC	ED	EE	EF	EG
1									
2		20250112					1		
3		20250209					1		
4									
5		20250217					0		
6		20250217					0		
7		20250302					1		
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									
21									

2. On the Home ribbon in the Font Section, select the Border tool and All Borders.



- Now there are borders around the relevant cells. **Do not add borders to extra rows or columns.**

	DY	DZ	EA	EB	EC	ED	EE	EF	EG
1									
2		20250112					1		
3		20250209					1		
4									
5		20250217					0		
6		20250217					0		
7		20250302					1		
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									
21									

Save the spreadsheet as a .csv file. This file is ready to upload with the required 136 columns.

Remember, if you have a code value in the final column in your data file in any row, then the system will recognize the columns at the end of the PIRL and you will not need to complete these steps.

This step is only necessary when you have one or more columns at the end of your data file with no data in any of the rows.

[Can I Just Add Dummy Data to the Final Column to Get WIPS to Accept the File?](#)

No, you should not add data that you know is not correct just so the final column is not blank. When you certify your Quarterly Performance Report, you are certifying that the data you submit is accurate and you have documentation of what you submit.

Adding miscellaneous data to a column may also result in logic errors if the data you entered does not align with the rest of the code values for that participant.