

**Memorandum**

**Date:** September 7, 2007

**To:** Karen Matsuoka, OMB Desk Officer, Food and Nutrition Service

**Through:** Dawn Wolfgang, Food and Nutrition Service, Information Clearance Officer

**From:** Judy Wilson, Staff Director, Nutrition Services Staff  
USDA – Food and Nutrition Service

**Re:** Under Approved Generic OMB Clearance No. 0584-0524  
Request Approval to Perform Formative Research –  
FNS Core Nutrition Messages Concept Testing

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The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services is requesting approval for formative research under Approved Generic OMB Clearance No. 0584-0524. The following information is provided for your review:

1. Title of Project: FNS Core Nutrition Messages Concept Testing
2. Control Number: 0584-0524
3. Public affected by this Project:
  - Low-income mothers with at least one child 2-10 years old who reside in households whose income falls at or below 185% of the poverty line will be asked for feedback on concepts for nutrition education messages. A total of six focus groups will be conducted in Rochester, NY, Baltimore, MD, and Dallas, TX.
  - Low-income children, 8 to 10 years old, who reside in a household whose income falls at or below 185% of the poverty line will be asked for feedback on concepts for nutrition education messages. FNS has selected to target this age range of children since this is a formative time during which children are exercising food choices and influence family food purchases. Previous research has shown that kids within this age range are more likely to respond to similar motivating factors in messages. A total of 6 focus groups will be conducted in Rochester, NY, Baltimore, MD, and Dallas, TX.
4. Number of respondents:

**Screener\***

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Number of Persons</i>
Low-income mothers	1080
Low-income children (8-10 years)	900
Parents of Low-income Children	900
Total	2880

\*Includes non-responders. Generally, for every 15 respondents, 14 will not complete the entire screener (may terminate after introduction or after one of the other questions).

### Focus Groups

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Number of groups</i>	<i>Number of participants per group</i>	<i>Total number of participants</i>
Low-income mothers	6	8	48
Low-income children (8-10 years)	6	6	36
Total	12	Not Applicable	84

### 5. Time needed per response:

#### Time Needed Per Screening Questionnaire

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Time (hours)</i>
Low-income mothers*	0.25
Low-income children (8-10 years)	0.08
Parents of Low-income Children*	0.17

\*The time per response is associated low-income mothers and parents of low-income children is an estimated average of the response per respondent. Respondents may be terminated by FNS due to the response to a question or respondent may choose to terminate at any point during the screening.

#### Time Needed Per Focus Groups

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Time (hours)</i>
Low-income mothers	1.5
Low-income children (8-10 years)	1

### 6. Total Burden Hours on Public:

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Total Burden Hours</i>
Screener: Low-income mothers	270
Screener: Low-income children (8-10 years)	72
Screener: Parents of Low-income Children	153
Focus Groups: Low-income mothers*	72
Focus Groups: Low-income children (8-10 years)*	36
Total	603

\*Includes burden for completing confidentiality agreement and parental consent form.

## 7. Project Purpose, Methodology and Design:

### Background

The mission of FNS is to provide children and needy families better access to food and a more healthful diet through its nutrition assistance programs. FNS works to define and coordinate nutrition education across the nutrition assistance programs and to translate nutrition research into information materials for program participants and service providers.

As part of the Agency's effort to improve the nutrition of children and low-income families, FNS is developing a core set of nutrition education messages based upon the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid*. These messages will be designed for low-income mothers and children 8-10 years old, taking into consideration the literacy skills, lifestyles and limited food resources of FNS program participants. These core messages will be implemented across FNS nutrition assistance programs, strengthening the Agency's ability to communicate nutrition information consistently and with greater intensity to program participants. The developed messages and supporting content will have applications for use in printed materials, public service announcements and other channels for communicating nutrition education to low-income Americans and children.

### Project Purpose, Methodology and Design

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of the proposed focus groups is to obtain feedback from low-income mothers and children 8-10 years old on concepts for core nutrition education messages that will be used in FNS' nutrition assistance programs. FNS programs will incorporate the core messages into their nutrition education communications (e.g., printed nutrition education materials, public service announcements, electronic media), as appropriate, to help low-income families meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

More specifically, the focus groups will provide FNS with information on the thoughts, beliefs and feelings of the target audience regarding concepts designed to:

- Encourage the consumption of fruits, vegetables, and low-fat and non-fat milk and milk products as specified in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Emphasize balance between food and physical activity
- Promote healthy feeding practices for young children

This information will assist FNS in deciding which concepts to use as a basis for developing core nutrition messages that are memorable, appropriate for and appealing to the target audience. Focus group findings will help ensure that the developed messages are clear, credible, easily understood and considered actionable, important and useful by the intended audience. The core messages that are developed based on this focus group research will assist FNS nutrition assistance programs in communicating dietary guidance to low-income Americans and children in a manner that resonates with the target audience and is delivered consistently across programs. FNS anticipates submitting a future package for focus group testing of the developed messages and supporting content.

## Methodology

The Contractor will conduct six focus group interviews with each target audience (i.e., low-income mothers and children 8-10 years old from low-income households) to get input on three to five nutrition message concepts. A professional recruitment facility will identify and screen potential participants for the testing using a random selection technique from their databases of area residents willing to participate in research. A Screener Guide (Attachments A and B) will be used to ascertain that participants are representative of those participating or eligible for FNS programs. This Screener Guide covers all questions to be used in the selection process. The Focus Group Moderator's Guide (Attachments C and D) will serve as a tool to guide the group conversation during the discussion sessions.

## Design/Sampling Procedures

Low-income mothers will be recruited as women with at least one child 2-10 years old in a household whose income falls within 185% of the poverty line. Groups will be segregated by age of child. Mothers with at least one non-school aged child (i.e., 2-5 years of age and not yet in kindergarten) will be in one group, and those with at least one child in elementary school, up to 10 years of age, will be in another. A mix of races/ethnicities will be recruited to ensure representation that approximates demographics of persons participating in FNS programs.

Children 8-10 years of age who live in households within 185% of the poverty line will also be recruited. Participants will include boys and girls and a mix of races/ethnicities to the extent possible.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Target Audience</i>	<i>Number of Focus Groups</i>
Rochester, NY	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	1
	Low-income Moms with Children 5-10 Years Old	1
	Children 8-10 Years Old	2
Baltimore, MD	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	1
	Low-income Moms with Children 5-10Years Old	1
	Children 8-10 Years Old	2
Dallas, TX	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	1
	Low-income Moms with Children 5-10Years Old	1
	Children 8-10 Years Old	2

## Site Selection

The formative research will be conducted in three cities—Rochester, NY, Baltimore, MD, and Dallas, TX . To most efficiently conduct the research, all four groups in each city (2 among mothers, 2 among children) will be conducted concurrently so that they can be completed in one day. All respondents will be of different families.

## Recruitment of Participants

A professional recruitment facility will screen and identify potential participants for the focus groups using a random selection technique from their databases of area residents willing to participate in research. A Telephone Screener Guide (Attachment A) will be used to identify participants. This screener guide covers all questions to be used in the selection process. To recruit participants for the focus groups with 8-10 year old children, the interviewer will use the recruitment Screener Guide (Attachment B) with the parent and the child to determine that participants meet the eligibility criteria and to obtain parental and child consent to participate in the focus group.

Participants will receive a \$75.00 cash stipend to reimburse for expenses such as transportation and childcare costs. The amounts are standard for the locations.

Persons participating in the focus groups with low-income mothers will sign a confidentiality agreement (see Attachment) ensuring that the participants name will not be divulged in any focus group reports. Parents of children participating in the focus groups with 8-10 year olds, will sign a confidentiality statement and a parental consent form (see Attachments F and G).

## Focus Group Sessions

Each focus group with low-income mothers will last 90 minutes. In these sessions, a trained moderator will facilitate discussion as described in the Focus Group Moderator's Guide (Attachments C and D).

## Data Analysis

Focus groups will be audio-recorded using professional equipment and the information collected will be used to inform the final report. Respondents will be informed that the sessions are recorded. Recordings will be transcribed, with no names being associated to individual respondents' comments. Notes taken while watching all focus group sessions and transcripts of audio recordings will serve as the primary methods of data collection. Focus group transcripts will be reviewed for recurring themes stated across multiple focus groups and respondents.

Differences across group location and audience will be noted when appropriate, but given the qualitative nature of this research, findings will be considered descriptive and directional but not definitive. No names will be associated with individual respondents' comments in the final report. No attempt will be made to generalize the findings to be nationally representative or statistically valid.

## Outcome

Information and formative input gathered from the specific target audiences will help to understand the key themes and messages that are most effective at motivating the target audience to take

action. FNS may decide to publish summary findings of the focus group research either electronically or in print, but such document will not include information that personally identifies focus group participants.

8. Participants will be informed of confidentiality and privacy act provisions before the interview (see Appendices C & D).
9. Federal Costs: Contract costs, formative research task (for low-income mothers and children 8-10 years old): \$139,822.48
10. Requested Approval Date: October 15, 2007
11. Formative Research Tools:
  - Attachment A: Focus Group Screening Questionnaire for Low-Income Mothers
  - Attachment B: Focus Group Screening Questionnaire for Children 8-10 Years (and Parents) from Low-income Households
  - Attachment C: Focus Group Moderator Guide for Low-income Mothers
  - Attachment D: Focus Group Moderator Guide for Children (8-10 years old) From Low-income Households
  - Attachment E: Confidentiality Statement for Low-income Mothers
  - Attachment F: Confidentiality Statement for Parents of Children (8-10 years old)
  - Attachment G: Parental Consent Form