

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM WEB-BASED PRE-SCREENING TOOL

OMB No: 0584-0519

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A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary

Under the authority of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, 7 CFR 273.9 Section 5, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) initiated the Food Stamp Program (FSP) pre-screening tool to enable potential low income people to learn their potential eligibility for food stamp benefits and how much they could receive. The pre-screening tool also enables advocates to help their clients determine potential benefit eligibility. The pre-screening tool helps the FSP fulfill its role as a means-tested program in accordance with the Food Stamp Act.

Recent studies show that 67 percent of potential eligible food stamp beneficiaries participate in the program. The pre-screening tool is offered in efforts to increase participation in the FSP.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used

The pre-screening tool helps the users determine their eligibility for food stamps. Once the user enters household size, income, expenses and resource information, the tool provides an estimate of eligibility and benefit amount. It may also be used by organizations acting on behalf of individuals or households.

The pre-screening tool is accessible to the public as an on-line at www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov. No personal identifiers such as last names, social security numbers, or birthdates are collected or retained. The computer processor, memory and web-browser requirements are minimal to ensure accessibility to the widest possible audience. The system is compliant with

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended and is accessible to people with disabilities.

Since food stamp eligibility and benefit amount may vary by location, FNS states that the tool provides only an estimate. Users need to contact their local agency to determine actual eligibility and the benefit amount.

FNS does not retain any data entered by applicants who use the tool.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical or the technological techniques

FNS complies with the E-Government Act of 2002. To make the pre-screening tool available to the widest possible audience, it is a web-based system with minimal requirements imposed on the end-user's personal computer. It does not require the user to install any plug-ins or java applets. The interface is straightforward and simple, requires only the minimal computer literacy, and makes maximum use of drop down menus, selection lists and radio buttons. All of the data is collected electronically.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication

To prevent duplication, users of the pre-screening tool are first asked to indicate their State of residence. If that State has its own pre-screening tool, the user is notified and routed to the State's tool. Currently, 17 States have their own tools (Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia). State pre-screening tools are more specific to State policy options and therefore may provide a better estimate of eligibility.

5. Impact of the collection on small businesses

This information collection does not affect small businesses or other small entities. The collection is limited to what is necessary to comply with statutory requirements and to provide potential applicants with information regarding their potential eligibility for food stamp benefits. No undue burden is associated with this data collection. Information requested is the minimum required for its intended use.

6. Describe the consequences to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently

FNS offers the pre-screening tool to help low income people assess their potential eligibility for food stamp benefits and how much they could receive. Without the pre-screening tool, there is no way for people to estimate potential eligibility without a visit to a local office. Research shows that the number one reason that people do not apply for food stamp benefits is that they don't know they are eligible. People may be more likely to apply after using a pre-screening tool. As such, the pre-screening tool helps FNS meet strategic objectives to increase food stamp participation.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner that is inconsistent with 5 CFR 1320.6

There are no special circumstances that require information collection inconsistent with 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. Comments in response to the Federal Register Notice and efforts to consult outside agency.

A Notice regarding FNS' intention to request Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval for the revision of a currently approved information collection was published in volume 73, page 33971 of the Federal Register on June 16, 2008. No comments were received. Existing data show that 95 percent of the general public support the pre-screening tool and that it is easy to use. Informal discussions with State agencies indicate that they support the national tool. The advocacy community also supports this activity as it provides them a way to help their clients estimate potential eligibility for food stamp benefits in a private, secure way.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents

No payments or gifts to respondents are provided under this information collection.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents

FNS is not providing assurance of confidentiality for this data collection since no information is collected or saved. The Privacy Act does not apply. Personal identifiers are not collected or used to retrieve information.

11. Provide any justification for any question of a sensitive nature

There are no questions of a sensitive nature included in this clearance.

12. Estimates of the hour burden including annualized cost to respondents

FNS burden estimates are as follows: *Affected Public* is potential food stamp applicants and

those using the tool on their behalf; *Estimated Number of Respondents* is 264,000 per year, *Number of Responses per Respondent* is one, *Total Number of Annual Responses* is 264,000, *Estimated Time per Response* is approximately 10 minutes or .167 and the *Estimated Total Annual Burden* is 44,000 hours

Therefore, the Estimated Total Annual Burden can be calculated as follows:

For the Pre-Screening Tool:

$$\begin{aligned} &= (1 \text{ Response}) \times (264,000 \text{ Respondents}) \times 0.1666667 \text{ hours} \\ &= 44,000 \text{ hours} \end{aligned}$$

Total Annual Burden = 44,000 hours

The Total Annual Burden Cost is estimated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 44,000.000 \text{ hours} \times \$6.55 \text{ per hour (Minimum Wage}^1) \\ &= \$288,200 \end{aligned}$$

13. Estimate of other total annual cost burden to respondents or record.

There are no capital, start-up and/or ongoing maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government

The estimated annual cost to the Federal government is \$31,512.00 for maintenance, operating, and hosting tasks.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments

¹ The \$6.55 per hour is the current minimum wage as per the Department of Labor Employment Standards Administration. We are using this amount because potential Food Stamp Program applicants (many of whom are unskilled) are usually able to secure employment only at or near the minimum wage

A survey component was initially used to evaluate the tool. It was removed because it was no longer needed. Accordingly, FNS decreased the estimated annual burden hours from 48,183 to 44,000 which reduced the prior estimates by 4,183.

16. For collection of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication

FNS has no plans to publish any statistical data about the number of system accesses, State of residence, and other aggregate data.

17. If seeking approval not to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why that display would be inappropriate

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on the pre-screening tool.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in 5 CFR 1320.9

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.