

Formative Data Collection (OMB Number 0970-0356)
Supporting Statement Part A for OMB Approval

TANF Research Synthesis

September 9, 2009

A. JUSTIFICATION

The purpose of the “TANF Research Synthesis” project is to inform research and planning and to support evidence-based decision making related to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) programs. The project will identify important areas and topics where research is needed to inform policy and practice related to TANF and CCDF; synthesize and summarize the existing knowledge base on issues identified as important, timely, and relevant; and develop recommendations for future research related to TANF and CCDF program operations and administration.

ACF requests permission to conduct semi-structured discussions and focus groups with experts on the TANF and CCDF programs for the purpose of identifying relevant research questions to inform the research synthesis and recommendations for future research.

Permission to collect information for this limited purpose is requested under ACF’s generic clearance for Formative Data Collection for Informing Policy Research (OMB Number 0970-0356). The information collected will be used for internal purposes only and will not be released to the public.

A.1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

In order to have up-to-date research information that can inform evidence-based decision making, it is necessary to complete an updated synthesis and assessment of TANF and CCDF research. This updated synthesis and assessment is necessary to examine new questions that have likely arisen as a result of the changed economic, social, and political context for these programs. Since the TANF and CCDF programs’ creations, numerous changes have taken place that make different research questions more or less relevant. For example, the welfare caseload has declined from almost 5 million families in 1996 to fewer than 2 million families in 2006. States increasingly spend TANF dollars on services as opposed to cash assistance. The economic context for TANF and CCDF operation has gone from strong economic growth to economic stagnation and, more recently, strong economic downturn. State and local governments have seen their fiscal conditions worsen, possibly affecting their decision making around TANF and CCDF. The political environment has changed. All of these changes and more mean that it is necessary to undertake an updated review of what is known about TANF and CCDF in light of the questions that are now most relevant.

Consultation with experts is crucial to achieving ACF’s goals for this project. Conducting semi-structured discussions and focus groups with experts on the TANF and CCDF programs will help ACF identify policy and program relevant research questions for the research synthesis and research recommendations and ensure that the final products are useful to stakeholders.

A.2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

In order to understand what research questions will be most useful to TANF and CCDF stakeholders it will be important to engage experts from a variety of disciplines, organizations, and institutions that represent key perspectives on the TANF and CCDF programs and are able to contribute unique insights as to research questions that are most likely to be relevant.

ACF will use multiple consultation strategies in order to capture information from experts in an efficient manner that minimizes time and cost to experts and to the government. ACF will conduct semi-structured conversations via conference call with groups of experts who live outside of the Washington DC area. ACF will also conduct semi-structured conversations and focus groups with experts who work in and around Washington DC or who are already coming to Washington DC for other events such as the Association for Public Policy and Management (APPAM) conference and the annual meeting of the Child Care Research Consortium. Appendix A presents the *TANF and CCDF Discussion Guides* which will guide the semi-structured conversations and focus groups. TANF experts will be asked the TANF questions and CCDF experts will be asked the CCDF questions.

A.3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

Conference call technology will be used so that experts outside of Washington DC can be reached with minimum burden. The semi-structured discussions and focus groups are not conducive to other information technology such as computerized interviewing.

A.4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

Because this information collection is a timely effort to gather the most up-to-date information, no other information could serve as an adequate substitute.

A.5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

No small businesses are impacted by the data collection in this project.

A.6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

This is a one-time project.

A.7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5

There are no special circumstances requiring deviation from these guidelines.

A.8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency

The first Federal Register notice for ACF's generic clearance for information gathering was published in the Federal Register, Volume 73, page 19072 on April 4, 2008.

The second Federal Register notice was published in the Federal Register, Volume 73, page 34753 on June 18, 2008.

A.9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

No payments to respondents are proposed for this information collection.

A.10. Assurance of Privacy Provided to Respondents

Participants will be told that their conversations are not confidential, but will be assured that the information they provide will not be publicly released in a form that identifies them.

A.11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

There are no sensitive questions.

A.12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

The proposed information collection does not impose a financial burden on respondents. Respondents will not incur any expenses other than the time spent in conversation with ACF.

The estimated annual burden for experts is listed in Table A.1. The total annual burden for this information gathering activity is expected to be 72 hours.

Survey respondents will be researchers, practitioners, and policy analysts and policymakers. To compute the total estimated annual cost, the total burden hours were multiplied by the average hourly wage, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey (\$29.81/hour). The total estimated annual cost is \$2,146.32.¹

TABLE A.1
ESTIMATED ANNUAL RESPONSE BURDEN AND ANNUAL COST

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden Hours per Response	Total Burden Hours	Average Hourly Wage	Total Annual Cost
TANF and CCDF Discussion Guide	72	1	1	72	\$29.81	\$2,146.32
Estimated Total	72	1	1	72	\$29.81	\$ 2146.32

A.13. Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents and Record Keepers

The information collection does not place any other cost burden on respondents.

A.14. Annualized Cost to Federal Government

¹ Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey, 2005. Average hourly wage of college teachers, social scientists, legislators, and public administration officials.

The annual cost to the federal government will be approximately \$75,000. This is also the total cost as this is a one time collection that will take place during only one year.

A.15. Explanations for Program Changes or Adjustments

This is a new project.

A.16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

All contacts with experts will occur between October 2009 and February 2010. Notes will be taken during each consultation and a brief summary of each consultation will be written. This information will not be published. It will be used internally for research planning purposes, particularly to develop the list of pertinent research questions for the research synthesis and the recommendations for future research. The research synthesis and recommendations for future research will be completed in spring 2010.

A.17. Display of Expiration Date for OMB Approval

The OMB number and expiration date will be displayed at the top of any handouts given in conjunction with consultation. We will offer to read the OMB number and expiration date at the start of any conversation.

A.18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.