

Memorandum

Date: June 7, 2016

To: Stephanie Tatham, OMB Desk Officer

Through: Ruth Brown, United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Chief Information Office

From: Lynnette Thomas
Food and Nutrition Service, Branch Chief, Planning & Regulatory Affairs

Re: Generic OMB Clearance No. 0584-0524 – Request for A Change to Original Approval on Performing Formative Research for Educational Technology Environmental Scan

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is requesting a change to the original approval for formative research under Approved Generic OMB Clearance No. 0584-0524.

This request is to acquire clearance to expand the recruitment methodology, timing, and allow for the provision of compensation to cover childcare and transportation expenses for grade K-12 teachers participating in formative research. The purpose of the research is to obtain feedback about their experiences and perceptions of educational technology. This research will explore audience perceptions, attitudes, ownership, and usage in order to inform future FNS Team Nutrition initiatives. The following information is provided for your review:

1. **Title of the Project:** Team Nutrition Educational Technology Environmental Scan
2. **Control Number:** 0584-0524, Expires 06/30/2016
3. **Public Affected by this Project:**
State and Local/Tribal Employees
 - Grade K-12 educators
 - Principals of elementary, middle, and high schools.

See section 7, *Project Purpose, Methodology & Formative Research Design*, for a description of the number of participants for each audience (K-12 educators and health educators) by research methodology (focus group interviews and surveys).

MCG Progress to Date with Focus Group Interviews – May 20th 2016

This memo outlines MCG progress to date in recruiting and conducting focus group interviews for the FNS contract #AG-3198-D-15-0090. The deliverable for this contract includes recruiting and conducting thirty-one (31) focus groups with K-12 educators (twenty-nine [29] focus groups distributed across seven US regions and two [2] focus groups conducted at the SHAPE conference in April, 2016). Specifically, seven (7) target states were selected as representatives of each FNS region.

To date, MCG has recruited a total of 14 groups out of 31. Of those 14 focus groups, 7 focus groups have been successfully conducted in 4 schools and at the SHAPE conference. Five (5) of the remaining recruited focus groups are scheduled to be fielded by Memorial Day (in FL and CA). The two (2) remaining focus groups are scheduled to be fielded in July (in NM). The total number of teachers participating in the seven (7) focus groups conducted to date is 49 (out of a target sample of 155). MCG estimates an additional 28 to 35 teachers will participate in the seven recruited focus groups scheduled for fielding (for an overall sub-total of approximately 77-84 participating teachers). Attached is an Excel file summarizing the current status.

Recruitment Process

MCG has been actively recruiting for this study for over three months. An experienced team of recruiters has sent out emails and made follow-up calls. To date, MCG efforts include the following, and have resulted in the successful recruit of 14 focus groups:

- Total number of schools contacted: 848
- Total number of emails sent: 2,291
- Total number of completed follow-up calls: 235

The recruiting process includes the following. Lists of qualified schools are drawn from U.S. Department of Education listings of U.S. Public Schools (specifically, the National Center for Education Statistics) to meet specific qualifying criteria (i.e., schools with 30% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, representing a distribution of elementary, middle and high schools in urban, suburban and rural/town locations). Recruiters use these lists and email teachers and administrators directly (when emails are provided) and/or go to the school website to locate and identify email addresses of the principal, teachers (with a focus on health and nutrition teachers) and/or librarians, as well as phone numbers for the school. Initial emails are sent and followed up with phone calls. In several cases, where MCG is familiar with a qualifying school, teachers, etc., they are called directly.

Issues Encountered with Focus Group Recruit and Scheduling

Overall, the vast majority of the recruitment emails sent (describing the study and requesting participation) have received no response. Few teachers or administrators have responded with questions, interest or a declining 'no, thank you.' Follow-up phone calls by recruiters are rarely answered directly and voice mails are left, but there is seldom a response. In cases where a call is answered at a school, a message is usually taken and passed on (most often with no returned call). In the few cases when a teacher or administrator is willing to consider the possibility of participation, they often explain patiently that teachers have no time during the school day, that testing is going on or, occasionally, that other research is being conducted at the school

(e.g., standardization of the DIBELS). The most common issue reported that negatively impacts recruitment is teachers' lack of time during the school day. A few individuals contacted have agreed to speak to other teachers and the principal. These receptive individuals have occasionally resulted in a fully recruited group, but more often the initial willingness is discouraged by lack of interest on the part of the other teachers or the principal. The lack of incentives has also been reported as inhibiting teachers' and school administrators' interest in study participation.

In the few cases where a school is responsive and willing to participate, the incidence rate of finding time and/or enough teachers to fill two focus groups at one school is further decreased. As a result, MCG has proceeded with conducting only one group at a school, typically at lunch or in the hour immediately following the end of the school day. Several of the focus groups conducted so far include as many as eight participating teachers. This dynamic accounts for the discrepancy between the number of recruited schools, groups, and participants.

Feedback From Potential Participants Regarding Lack of Incentives/Compensation

Feedback regarding non-participation provided by potential participants include: 1) "*Teachers do not have time during the day. They are all busy and under pressure;*" "*we are overwhelmed with testing and other requirements;*" 2) '*How does participation in this project benefit the teachers or the school?*' Free lunch for participating teachers and a \$150 incentive for school participation, and an appeal to the gratification of sharing knowledge and experience to support the development of new materials is reported as insufficient. Response is expressed as a lack of interest and/or a repetition of the "*we are too busy*" or "*not now.*" Other responses include: "*spring is particularly difficult because we are testing and under pressure to wrap up the year;*" "*there is already research being conducted in the school*"; and/or "*try again in the summer or fall.*" Specifically, schools in New Mexico that end the school year in late May refused to consider participating during the current session, but have agreed to participate during the school prep period in July before the next school year officially begins.

Suggestion for alternative approaches to recruiting teachers

Given the issues encountered, we propose expanding the recruiting effort and timing of the groups in several ways:

- 1) An option to conduct the groups outside of school, and/or during non-school hours; and,
- 2) An incentive for teachers that, at minimum, covers transportation and childcare (see section below).

Justification for teacher focus groups compensation

The compensation for teacher participation should be based on a combination of car-fare and childcare costs that the teacher would incur for attending a focus group later in the day or on a weekend rather than during the working day at their school.

Several sources were consulted in order to estimate the average cost of hourly childcare for potential research participants. The website Urbansitter.org conducts annual surveys of parent

members. The 2013 UrbanSitter.org study surveyed 6,000 parents from 12 metropolitan areas about the hourly rates they provide babysitters for caring for one, two, and three 3 children. The average hourly rate was \$13.06 per hour, and across all locations and number of children (see table 1). In 2014, the survey was repeated with 7,500 parents across 9 metropolitan areas (St. Louis, Dallas, and Philadelphia were dropped without a justification). For this sample, the average hourly rate was \$14.93, again across all locations and number of children (see table 2). It is possible that these rates are inflated by the inclusion of metropolitan areas with a high cost of living (e.g. San Francisco, New York City, and Boston).

Table 1 - 2013 Study of 6,000 Parents on UrbanSitter.org

	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	Mean
Boston	\$12.00	\$13.75	\$15.50	\$13.75
Chicago	\$12.00	\$12.50	\$15.00	\$13.17
Dallas	\$10.00	\$11.25	\$12.25	\$11.17
Denver	\$10.25	\$11.25	\$14.25	\$11.92
Los Angeles	\$12.50	\$13.75	\$16.25	\$14.17
NYC	\$13.50	\$14.75	\$16.50	\$14.92
Philadelphia	\$10.25	\$10.75	\$11.50	\$10.83
San Francisco	\$14.00	\$16.75	\$14.50	\$15.08
San Diego	\$10.25	\$12.50	\$19.25	\$14.00
Seattle	\$10.25	\$13.25	\$15.00	\$12.83
St Louis	\$9.75	\$11.50	\$12.50	\$11.25
DC	\$12.25	\$13.50	\$15.00	\$13.58
		Full Sample Mean		\$13.06

Table 2 - 2014 Study of 7,500 Parents on Urbansitter.org

	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	Mean
Boston	\$13.64	\$15.66	\$16.77	\$15.36
Chicago	\$11.91	\$14.07	\$15.00	\$13.66
Denver	\$10.84	\$12.26	\$14.24	\$12.45
Los Angeles	\$13.53	\$15.87	\$17.94	\$15.78
NYC	\$15.34	\$16.76	\$18.74	\$16.95
San Francisco	\$14.99	\$17.68	\$19.46	\$17.38
San Diego	\$11.11	\$13.28	\$14.82	\$13.07
Seattle	\$12.80	\$14.83	\$15.47	\$14.37
DC	\$13.83	\$15.27	\$16.95	\$15.35
	Full Sample Mean			\$14.93

In addition, we consulted Care.com, an international web-based service that matches care providers with families seeking care. Care.com has a membership of over 14 million and provides suggested hourly rates for babysitters by postal code varying by the number of children. In order to capture a sample of potential participants, 10 postal codes were selected within a 30-minute drive of the planned research sites, based on a concentration of summer food service sites (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/summer-food-rocks/>). The average hourly rate for these 10 postal codes for one, two, and three children was \$16.32 (see Table 3).

Table 3 - Mean hourly rate for babysitters by postal code, provided by Care.com

Location	Zip Code	\$ per hour 1 child	\$ per hour 2 children	\$ per hour 3 children	Mean \$ per hour
Prairie Village, MO	66208	\$13.50	\$14.50	\$16.00	\$14.67
Mission, KS	66202	\$13.00	\$14.50	\$16.00	\$14.50
Roeland Park, KS	66205	\$13.50	\$14.50	\$16.00	\$14.67
Overland Park, KS	66204	\$13.50	\$14.50	\$16.00	\$14.67
Kansas City, MO	64130	\$13.50	\$14.50	\$16.00	\$14.67
Passaic, NJ	07055	\$16.50	\$18.00	\$19.50	\$18.00
Clifton, NJ	07013	\$16.50	\$18.00	\$19.50	\$18.00
Belleville, NJ	07109	\$16.50	\$18.00	\$19.50	\$18.00
Lodi, NJ	07644	\$16.50	\$18.00	\$19.50	\$18.00
Garfield, NJ	07026	\$16.50	\$18.00	\$19.50	\$18.00
	Full Sample Mean				\$16.32

Taken together, the available data provides a range of mean hourly wages from \$13.05 to \$16.32 per hour. Given the range of figures provided by the available data sources, we propose using a conservative estimate of \$15 per hour for childcare, in order to insure that the cost of childcare and various family circumstances will not prohibit teachers from participating. Parents will also be compensated \$5 for incidental expenses incurred during their transportation to and from the focus group facility. This figure is derived from the GSA contractor rates for daily per diems.

The total amount of time parents may require childcare is estimated at 3 hours, including travel to and from the facility, participation in the 45 to 60 minute focus group, and an early arrival

time. We therefore strongly advise a \$50 stipend to cover the cost of childcare and travel necessary to participate in the focus group.

STATUS TO DATE WITH FNS FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS
5/20/2016

PROPOSED # SCHOOLS, FGIS, EDUCATORS					COMPLETED TO DATE OR SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION				
REGION	TYPE OF AREA	PROPOSED # & TYPE OF SCHOOLS	PROPOSED # OF GROUPS	PROPOSED # EDUCATORS (5/FGI)	STATE	TYPE OF SCHOOL RECRUITED	# COMPLETED GROUPS/[TARGETED]	# EDUCATORS IN GROUPS	DATE COMPLETED / [SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION]
Mid-Atlantic	Suburban	1 ES, 1 MS	4	20	NJ	MS	1	4	5/4/2016
Midwest	City	1 ES, 1 MS	4	20					
Mountain Plains	Rural	1 HS, 1 K-12	5	25					
Northeast	City	1 MS, 1 HS	4	20	CT	HS	1	7	4/19/2016
Southeast	Rural	1 ES, 1 MS	4	20	KY	1 ES, 1 MS	2	14	5/2/2016
					FL	1 ES, 1 MS	[2]	tbc	week of 5/23/16
Southwest	Town	1 ES, 1 HS	4	20	OK	HS	1	9	5/10/2016
					NM	ES	[2]	tbc	week of 7/4/16

Western	Suburban	1 ES, 1 HS	4	20	CA	3 ES	[3]	tbc	week of 5/23/16
Other: SHAPE Conference	n/a	Mixed	2	10	various	n/a	2	15	4/6/2016
TOTALS:		14 (5 ES, 4 MS, 4HS, 1 K-12)	31	155	7	9 (6 ES, 3 MS, 2 HS)	7 completed, 7 upcoming	49, additional 28 - 35 anticipated	