

**Supporting Statement A for Paperwork Reduction Act Generic Information Collection  
Submissions for  
“ASPE Generic Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative Research and Assessment”**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary**

Executive Order 12862 directs Federal agencies to provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is requesting a generic clearance for purposes of conducting qualitative research to gain a better understanding of emerging health policy issues, develop future intramural and extramural research projects, and to ensure HHS leadership, agencies and offices have recent data and information to inform program and policy decision-making. We seek to obtain OMB approval of a generic clearance to collect qualitative data on HHS programs and policy issues. By qualitative feedback we mean information that provides useful insights on perceptions and opinions, but are not statistical surveys that yield quantitative results that can be generalized to the population of study.

This collection of information is necessary to enable HHS/ASPE to garner feedback in an efficient, timely manner, in accordance with our mission to identify health and policy issues from key external stakeholders. ASPE’s mission is to advise the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services on policy development in health, disability, human services, data, and science, and provides advice and analysis on economic policy. ASPE leads special initiatives, coordinates the Department's evaluation, research and demonstration activities, and manages cross-Department planning activities such as strategic planning, legislative planning, and review of regulations. Integral to this role, ASPE conducts research and evaluation studies, develops policy analyses, and estimates the cost and benefits of policy alternatives for HHS related programs.

Policy research and assessment are the main objectives of the activities included in this clearance. The goal of developing these activities is to identify emerging policy issues and research gaps to ensure the successful implementation of HHS programs. The participants will include policy experts, national, state, and local health representatives, healthcare providers, and representatives of other health organizations.

**2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection**

The information collected for qualitative policy research and assessment will be used by ASPE to develop future intramural and extramural research projects and to shape emerging health policy issues for HHS leadership, agencies, and offices. The end purpose is to obtain broad and diverse perspectives on public health, human service, and health care issues to understand emerging issues, promising practices by innovative programs or organizations funded by HHS,

or examining health or human service policy issues that have as yet gone unanswered. The data collected under this clearance will be published only if it is of methodological interest; it will not be presented as findings on the substantive topic under study.

ASPE will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered through this generic clearance to identify strengths and weaknesses of current programs, policies, and services. Under this clearance a variety of qualitative methods will be used, and the exact nature of the questions and samples is currently undetermined, and ASPE expects that they will include but not be limited to policy issues related to healthcare reform such as, the implementation of the insurance exchanges, prevention, human services issues, health information technology, public health issues, and the healthcare workforce. The qualitative methods employed will vary based on the issue being examined. The qualitative methods employed will vary based on the issue being examined. The information collected will provide insights into stakeholder perceptions, experiences and expectations, provide an early warning of policy issues, or focus attention on areas where communication, training or changes in operations might improve delivery of services or program implementation. These collections will allow for ongoing, collaborative and actionable communications between HHS/ASPE and its appropriate stakeholders. If this information is not collected, vital feedback from stakeholders on the HHS policy and program issues will be unavailable or available in a very limited way (fewer than ten respondents).

The Agency will only submit a collection for approval under this generic clearance if it meets the following conditions:

- Information gathered will be used internally for generating and identifying policy issues and research gaps to ensure successful implementation of HHS programs. Some information may not be for release outside of the agency, and if information is released, procedures outlined in Question 16 will be followed in accordance with HHS policy;
- Information gathered may be used for the purpose of informing policy decisions; however, not influential policy decisions as defined by OMB <sup>1</sup>;
- Information gathered will yield qualitative information; the collections will not be designed or expected to yield statistically reliable results or used as though the results are generalizable to the broader population ;
- The collections are voluntary;
- The collections are low-burden for respondents (based on considerations of total burden hours, total number of respondents, or burden-hours per respondent) and are low-cost for both the respondents and the Federal Government;
- The collections do not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies;
- Any collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the near future; and
- With the exception of information needed to provide remuneration for participants of focus groups and cognitive laboratory studies, personally identifiable information (PII) is collected only to the extent necessary and is not retained.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in OMB and agency Information Quality Guidelines, “influential” means that “an agency can reasonably determine that dissemination of the information will have or does have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or important private sector decisions.”

If these conditions are not met, the Agency will submit an information collection request to OMB for approval through the normal PRA process.

To obtain approval for a collection that meets the conditions of this generic clearance, a standardized form will be submitted to OMB along with supporting documentation (e.g., a copy of the focus group guide). OMB will respond to the submission with questions or approval within 5 business days.

The types of collections that this generic clearance covers include, but are not limited to:

- Interviews
- Small discussion groups
- Focus Groups of stakeholders
- Questionnaires
- Other qualitative methods: other qualitative methods that ASPE typically uses such as, document studies, performance assessments, and case studies

HHS/ASPE has established a manager/managing entity to serve for this generic clearance and will conduct an independent review of each information collection to ensure compliance with the terms of this clearance prior to submitting each collection to OMB.

### **3. Consideration Given to Information Technology**

If appropriate, agencies will collect information electronically and/or use online collaboration tools to reduce burden.

### **4. Duplication of Information**

No similar data are gathered or maintained by the Agency or are available from other sources known to the Agency. To the extent possible, ASPE collaborates with internal and external partners to ensure there is not duplication of information collected.

This information collection does not duplicate any other qualitative research methods being conducted by ASPE or at HHS in general. ASPE typically looks at cross-cutting issues that may involve several agencies within HHS to provide a departmental view and coordination. This clearance will improve the quality of ASPE's policy research and assessment as well as providing a more efficient means for conducting more rigorous qualitative policy research and assessment. To the maximum extent possible, we will make use of previous information by reviewing results of previous qualitative research projects on relevant policy issues before we attempt to revise interview guides, questionnaires, and other tools using additional field work sought under this clearance.

### **5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities**

Small business or other small entities may be involved in these efforts but the Agency will minimize the burden on them of information collections approved under this clearance by sampling, asking for readily available information, and using short, easy-to-complete information collection instruments.

## **6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection**

This clearance involves the use of qualitative research to inform policy research and assessments for public health, human service, and healthcare issues that will likely emerge from the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, changing trends in population health, and new health threats. If this project is not carried out, ASPE will continue to be limited in its ability to solicit feedback from broad and diverse policy experts and stakeholders, impacting our ability to provide current and high quality policy research and assessment.

## **7. Special Circumstances**

There are no special circumstances. The information collected will be voluntary and will not be used for statistical purposes.

## **8. Consultations with Persons Outside the Agency**

In accordance with 5 CFR 1320.8(d), on December 22, 2010, a 60-day notice for public comment was published in the *Federal Register* (75 FR 80542). No comments were received.

## **9. Payment or Gift**

The Agency will not provide payment or other forms of remuneration to respondents of its various forms of collecting feedback.

## **10. Confidentiality**

If a confidentiality pledge is deemed useful and feasible, the Agency will only include a pledge of confidentiality that is supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, and that does not unnecessarily impede sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use. If the agency includes a pledge of confidentiality, it will include a citation for the statute or regulation supporting the pledge.

## **11. Sensitive Nature**

No questions will be asked that are of a personal or sensitive nature.

## 12. Burden of Information Collection

A variety of instruments and platforms will be used to collect information from respondents. The annual burden hours requested (747) are based on the number of collections we expect to conduct over the requested period for this clearance. To calculate the annualized burden to respondents, we assume that 160 contracts will be issued over a 3-year period. This assumption is based on the number of contracts ASPE issued for FY 2010-FY 2013. We chose to calculate the average number of contracts over a three year period since the number of contracts varies from year to year. Since the majority of our work is to inform policy issues, we estimate that 70% of our contracts (112) will use one of the types of qualitative research methods included in this clearance request. We estimate that there will be 20 respondents per instrument totaling 2,240 estimated respondents over a three year period. Therefore, we anticipate 747 estimated respondents annually.

Estimated Annual Reporting Burden				
Type of Collection	No. of Respondents	Annual Frequency per Response	Hours per Response	Total Hours
Interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and other qualitative methods	747	1	1	747
<b>Total</b>	<b>747</b>			<b>747</b>

## 13. Costs to Respondents

No costs are anticipated.

## 14. Costs to Federal Government

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$600,000 annually, for a total of 1.8 million over the period of three years. These costs are comprised of: operational expenses (e.g., equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), contractor payments and any other expense that is necessary to collect the information approved under this generic clearance.

## 15. Reason for Change

Not applicable. This is a new request for a generic ICR.

## 16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, Analysis Plans

Information collected under this generic clearance provides useful information, but it does not yield data that can be generalized to the overall population. Findings may be disseminated when

appropriate, strictly following the HHS "Guidelines for Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public," and will include specific discussion of the limitation of the qualitative results discussed above. ASPE may also receive requests to release the information (e.g., congressional inquiry, Freedom of Information Act requests), and we will comply with those requests as appropriate.

**17. Display of OMB Approval Date**

We are requesting no exemption.

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

These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.