

Models of Coordination and Technical Assistance to Achieve Outcomes in Communities

ASPE Generic Information Collection Request
OMB No. 0990-0421

Supporting Statement – Section A

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Program Official/Project Officer

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Section A – Justification

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

Background

The federal government and other large institutions or intermediaries (e.g. state agencies or philanthropic organizations) often undertake initiatives to help communities try to increase cross-sector collaboration. This is done in the interests of greater program efficiency and effectiveness. Such entities have a number of policy levers available to help them encourage, promote, or support localities in such collaboration. For example, federal agencies can use their convening power, ability to draw attention to an issue, ability to provide or encourage funding, or on-the-ground staff assistance to aid these local efforts. However, very little research exists on the relative advantages of these various policy levers under different circumstances. One lever in particular, technical assistance (TA), is often intended to be tailored to community needs. We define TA as transferring knowledge or building participants' skills, and it comes in different forms (e.g. face-to-face interactions, toolkits, webinars, etc.). Little is known, however, about effective TA strategies, including approaches to assessing needs and then designing/delivering TA to meet those needs.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks to identify emerging issues and research gaps related to promoting effective collaboration among local social service providers. Specifically, ASPE is interested in exploring how policy levers available to the federal government can better support such collaboration, and how TA can be better matched with community needs. These goals are consistent with ASPE's mission to advise the HHS Secretary on policy development in human services, health, and other related areas.

In support of these goals, ASPE has contracted with Mathematica to undertake the Models of Coordination and Technical Assistance to Achieve Outcomes in Communities project. This project will begin to assess how the federal government (and other intermediaries such as philanthropy) can use policy levers (including TA) to better support collaboration at the local level across social-service sectors. As part of this project, we request a generic clearance to collect qualitative data through the Generic Information Collection mechanism, ASPE – OMB No. 0990-0421. By qualitative data, we mean information that provides useful insights on perceptions and opinions, not statistical surveys to yield quantitative results that can be generalized to the population of study.

Data will be collected from the following types of respondents acting in their official capacities:

- (1) *Participants in initiatives using policy levers to promote cross-sector collaboration efforts*: Approximately 17 non-federal staff respondents who designed, funded, implemented, or participated in recent federal or philanthropic efforts using policy levers to enable local cross-sector collaboration (see *Attachment A: Key informant semi-structured discussion guide on using policy levers to enable local cross-sector collaboration*). The contractor will also conduct semi-structured discussions with about 13 additional respondents in this category who are current federal staff – see #14 below for more information.
- (2) *TA recipients*: Approximately 30 representatives of local public or nonprofit social-services organizations that have received or have attempted to receive federally-funded TA to improve service delivery (see *Attachment B, Focus group semi-structured discussion guide on experiences receiving TA*).

This data collection is authorized by Section 301 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 241).

This research builds on and fills in gaps from previous ASPE work that provided *descriptive* information about initiatives that used policy levers to try to enable local cross-sector collaboration, as well as other relevant ASPE research. This research will provide additional exploratory information about the perceived relative advantages of different policy levers under different circumstances and about the perspectives of TA recipients about ways to maximize the ability of TA to meet their needs.

Overview of the Data Collection System – This data collection consists of two activities: (1) key informant semi-structured interviews with participants in initiatives using policy levers to try to promote cross-sector collaboration, and (2) semi-structured focus groups with TA recipients. The data collection instruments (Attachments A and B) will be administered virtually (over the telephone and/or a videoconference system).

Data collection with these two respondent groups will help to achieve multiple study objectives. First, key informant interviews with participants in initiatives using various policy levers (Attachment A) will be used to better understand the perceived relative advantages of policy levers available to the federal government and philanthropy to promote local cross-sector collaboration, including barriers or challenges to their use, circumstances under which such levers may be more or less useful, and key lessons learned in the implementation of such levers. Second, focus groups (Attachment B) conducted with key staff, such as executive directors or program managers, from organizations that have received (or tried to receive) federally-funded TA will be used to

better understand recipients' experiences accessing and leveraging federally-funded TA, and the suitability and usefulness of the TA that was received.

Items of Information to be Collected – First, semi-structured interviews with participants in initiatives using policy levers to promote local cross-sector collaboration will be one hour long. Key informants will be asked to discuss the following broad topics:

- (1) Respondent and initiative background;
- (2) Use of levers (such as perspectives on the relative advantages, cost, or speed of levers);
- (3) Outcomes/ perceptions of outcomes (from the initiative);
- (4) Lessons learned (from implementing the initiative, and recommendations for designing future initiatives); and
- (5) Concluding thoughts.

The semi-structured discussion guide, which includes all questions to be asked of these key informants, is included as Attachment A.

Second, the focus groups with TA recipients will be 1.5 hours long. The contractor will recruit up to 30 focus group participants, organized in up to 15 groups of 2-5 respondents each. Focus group participants will be recruited purposively as representatives of diverse types of organizations that have received (or attempted to receive) TA from federally-funded TA providers. During these focus groups, respondents will be asked to discuss:

- (1) Individual/agency background;
- (2) How they determine organizational TA needs (such as when and why they are most likely to seek out or access TA that supports collaboration across service sectors);
- (3) How they locate TA offerings;
- (4) Feedback on their TA experiences (perceptions of how well certain types of TA meet their organization's needs);
- (5) General questions (including ways in which federally-funded TA could be improved).

The focus group discussion guide for TA recipients, which includes all questions to be asked, is included as Attachment B.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The ultimate goal of this project is to help ASPE better understand the ways the federal government and other similar entities, such as state agencies and philanthropic organizations, can use policy levers available to them (including TA) to enable collaboration at the local level across social service sectors. In particular, the project aims to address the following goals:

- (1) Explore various ways for the federal government and other entities to support collaboration at the local level across social-service sectors.
- (2) Understand the perceived relative advantages of various levers the federal government and other organizations have used to encourage states and local communities to improving collaboration, breaking down silos across sectors.
- (3) Gain more in-depth knowledge about how one lever in particular, the provision of TA, may be better matched with community needs.

We are seeking approval for 1-hour interviews with up to 17 key informants involved in initiatives using various policy levers and for 1.5-hour focus groups with up to 30 TA recipients. The project will use qualitative data collection to address the project goals. This work is not intended to inform policy decisions; it is exploratory in nature. The findings from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews will not be generalizable—they are based on a purposive and not representative sample. Through the interviews and focus group discussions, the contractor will be able to collect more nuanced and detailed information about the experiences and perspectives of a sample of individuals involved in their official capacity in designing, implementing, and/or receiving assistance from initiatives that use policy levers (including TA) to enable stronger local cross-sector collaboration.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

All interviews will be conducted over the telephone or through a videoconference system at a time convenient for the respondents in order to reduce burden on them. The contractor will take notes and audio-record the interviews (with respondent consent). To avoid asking questions that can be answered through publicly available information and to minimize burden on respondents, the contractor will conduct research online in advance about each initiative.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

To our knowledge, no information has been or is currently being collected like those described. We are not aware of past primary information collection efforts addressing the advantages of federal and philanthropic local cross-sector collaboration efforts, nor the provision of levers such as TA to improve these efforts. This is an exploratory study to inform future research and answer questions for which we currently do not have the data to answer.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

No small businesses will be impacted or involved in this data collection. Some data collection participants may work for small public or private agencies, such as nonprofit recipients of federally-funded TA. However, this information collection will not have a significant impact on these entities.

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

This request is for a one-time data collection where data have not been previously collected elsewhere.

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

There are no special circumstances with this information collection package. This request fully complies with the regulation 5 CFR 1320.5 and will be voluntary.

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

This data collection is being conducted using the Generic Information Collection mechanism, ASPE – OMB No. 0990-0421.

9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

We will not provide payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

The Privacy Act does not apply to this data collection. Respondents will be speaking from their official roles and will not be asked, nor will they provide, sensitive personally identifiable information. The agency will not be including a pledge of confidentiality; therefore, it is unnecessary to include a citation for the statute or regulation supporting a pledge. Most of the information collections under this mechanism have not collected personally identifiable information or information of a personal or sensitive nature.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

No information will be collected that are of personal or sensitive nature.

12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

This study will explore policy levers for cross-sector collaboration utilized under several federal initiatives; thus, some interviews will be conducted with current federal staff. These costs to the federal government appear under Section 14 below. The estimate for burden hours resulting from interviews with non-federal staff respondents is based on conducting the following data collection activities:

- 17 one-hour interviews with participants in initiatives using policy levers to enable local cross-sector collaboration (Attachment A),
- 1.5-hour focus group discussions with 30 TA recipients (Attachment B).

The estimate for the average hourly wage for all non-federal respondents is based on the Department of Labor (DOL) Occupational Employment and Wages estimates for social and community service managers (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes119151.htm>).

Based on DOL data, an average hourly wage of \$34.46 is estimated for the 17 non-

federal key informant interview respondents and 30 focus group interview respondents. Table A-12 shows estimated burden and cost information.

Table A-12: Estimated Annualized Burden Hours and Costs to Non-Federal Respondents – Models of Coordination qualitative data collection

Type of Respondent	No. of Respondents	No. of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden per Response (in hours)	Total Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate	Total Respondent Costs
Participants in initiatives using policy levers (Attachment A)	17	1	1	17	\$34.46	\$585.82
TA recipients (Attachment B)	30	1	1.5	45	\$34.46	\$1,550.70
TOTALS	47	1		62		\$2,136.52

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

There will be no direct costs to the respondents other than their time to participate in each data collection (interview) activity.

14. Annualized Cost to the Government

Table A-14: Estimated Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

Government costs for this project include personnel costs for two federal staff managing the project, as well as interviews with about 13 current federal staff who were involved in initiatives using policy levers to promote local cross-sector collaboration. The average hourly rate for GS-level respondents is calculated using an average of all steps within the GS-level for the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The average hourly rate for the senior executive service (SES) respondents is calculated using an average of all SES salary levels.

Staff (FTE)	Average Hours per Collection	Average Hourly Rate	Average Cost
GS-14 staff - project management	80	\$49.94	\$3,995.20

GS-13 staff key informant interview respondents	4	\$42.26	\$169.04
GS-14 staff key informant interview respondents	4	\$49.94	\$199.76
GS-15 staff key informant interview respondents	3	\$58.74	\$176.22
SES staff key informant interview respondents	2	\$87.05	\$174.10
Estimated Total Cost of Information Collection			\$4,714.32

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

This is a new data collection.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

The contractor will identify and categorize key themes that emerge in interviews and focus groups, and assess how prevalent the themes are. It will help inform ASPE, its federal partners, and its state and philanthropic partners about the perceived relative advantages of various policy levers . It may also provide useful information on potential ways to strengthen the ability of the government and others to better assess TA needs and design and deliver TA to meet recipient needs.

Depending on the findings, information from these data collection efforts and other research may be synthesized to help inform written briefs on the perceived relative advantages of various policy levers and potential strategies for better addressing TA needs. Any findings would not be reported in a manner that could be linked to individual respondents.

Project Time Schedule

Completion Date	Major Tasks/Milestones
January 2020	Submit request for OMB approval under an existing generic PRA clearance for the key informant interviews and focus groups.
February 2020	Receive OMB approval under an existing generic PRA clearance.
March-May 2020	Conduct outreach and scheduling for key informant interviews and focus groups Conduct key informant interviews and focus groups.
May-June 2020	Conduct qualitative data analysis on interviews.
July 2020	Summarize relative perceived advantages of federal levers for local cross-sector collaboration and matching TA to recipient needs

17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate

We are not requesting an exemption.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification. These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS – Section A

Note: Attachments are included as separate files as instructed.

Attachment A: Key informant semi-structured discussion guide on using policy levers to enable local cross-sector collaboration

Attachment B: Focus group semi-structured discussion guide on experiences receiving TA

Attachment C: Template recruitment email for key informants on using policy levers to enable local cross-sector collaboration

Attachment D: Template recruitment email for focus groups on experiences receiving TA

Attachment E: Template follow-up email for key informants on using policy levers to enable local cross-sector collaboration

Attachment F: Template follow-up email for focus groups on experiences receiving TA