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# Supporting Statement Part B

OMB No. 0584-XXXX

## *Modernizing Channels of Communication With SNAP Participants*

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## Part B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

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### B.1. Respondent Universe and Selection Methods

**Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection had been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.**

#### *Respondent Universe*

According to a 2018 national scan of States' use of mobile communication strategies (MCS) for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), most States and U.S. territories ( $n = 38$ ) had optimized their websites for mobile devices. Only a few States ( $n = 3$ ) had fully implemented a comprehensive MCS (fully operational mobile applications [apps], text messaging [SMS], and mobile-optimized websites). Some States had implemented mobile apps ( $n = 8$ ) or had apps under development ( $n = 7$ ). Some States had implemented text messaging ( $n = 15$ ) or had plans to implement text messaging ( $n = 7$ ).<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will select five States (i.e., State, county, or local municipality) that represent a mix of mobile technology features related to participant adoption and satisfaction, MCS functionality, and features. The proposed selection will also include States with a mix of SNAP caseload characteristics and geographic locations to ensure study findings are relevant to the range of States' circumstances. Of the five States selected, we will ensure they represent—

- ▶ Five of the seven FNS regions
- ▶ A range of MCS capabilities (e.g., at least one State that uses text messaging only, at least one State that uses a combination of text messaging and mobile app technology/a

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<sup>1</sup> See the memorandum "Task 2.1: National Scan of States' Use of Mobile Communication Strategies (MCS) to Enhance SNAP Participant Experiences" submitted February 15, 2019, by Insight to FNS.

mobile-optimized website, at least one State that employs multiprogram MCS technology)

- ▶ Functionality covering all five major pathways of the client experience: (1) application/recertification, (2) change reporting, (3) notifications, (4) client inquiries, and (5) benefits and electronic benefit transfer
- ▶ A variety of States whose MCS include other safety net programs
- ▶ Both early and recent adopters of MCS
- ▶ A variety of other demographic characteristics (e.g., one rural State facing broadband access challenges, one State with an older SNAP population)

When narrowing the list of States, FNS will work closely with the research team to identify the considerations of greatest interest for this study. After the States are sorted, the research team will select 10 States that represent a mix of characteristics and flag the 5 it recommends for inclusion in the study; the other 5 States will serve as potential alternatives. FNS and the research team will discuss each of the 10 States. After considering all factors, we will finalize the list of five States for recruitment and provide FNS with a memorandum describing the criteria and the process.

### ***Estimated Number of Respondents***

The study will gather data through site visits to five States with SNAP MCS. Data will be collected in each of the five study States through (1) interviews with the State SNAP director, State MCS leads and other staff involved in MCS implementation, local SNAP office staff, and State software developers or IT staff; (2) interviews with community partners; (3) interviews with for-profit organizations (e.g., software developers or IT staff); and (4) focus groups with individuals/households (i.e., SNAP participants) and surveys of SNAP applicants and waiting room visitors. These data will provide information on States' and program recipients' use of MCS and client satisfaction with and perspectives on MCS.

This new information collection will have 444 respondents (72 State and local government staff, 10 for-profit organization staff, 21 not-for-profit staff [staff from community partners], 169 SNAP participants, and 172 SNAP office waiting room visitors). It is anticipated that of the 444

contacted, 326 will be responsive and 118 will be nonresponsive. Table B.1.1 provides the breakout of respondents and nonrespondents by respondent type.

**Table B.1.1. Breakout of Respondents and Nonrespondents by Respondent Type**

Respondent Type		Total Contacted	Number of Respondents	Number of Nonrespondents
State and local government	State SNAP directors	6	5	1
	State staff involved in MCS	32	27	5
	State software developers or IT staff	7	6	1
	Local office staff	27	22	5
Business or other for-profit	Software developers or IT staff	10	5	5
Business or other Not-for-profit	Community partners	21	16	5
Individuals	SNAP participants/MCS users	169	123	46
	SNAP-eligible individuals	172	122	50

## B.2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

**Describe the procedures for the collection of information including:**

- ▶ **Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection**
- ▶ **Estimation procedure**
- ▶ **Degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification**
- ▶ **Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures**
- ▶ **Any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden**

FNS will send a letter to the State SNAP directors to inform them their States have been selected for the study and encourage their participation. Within 1 week of the delivery of the recruitment letters, the FNS research team will follow up with an email to the State SNAP directors to ask to schedule a call to discuss the study. These initial communications with potential States will clearly outline the expectations for participation, including requests for staff to participate in interviews, assist with recruiting focus group participants, and broker connections with a local office with space to hold the focus groups. The initial recruitment call will address the State’s questions, identify points of contact for staff at the SNAP office, and establish next steps. If any of the recommended States are either unwilling or unable to host

the case study, the team will contact the alternative States. Once the selected States have agreed to participate, the team will hold an informational onboarding webinar to orient the States to the project.

Once the selected States identify local offices to assist with the study, the team will conduct an additional 1-hour virtual training for the local office staff, which will include information on the following activities:

- ▶ Recruiting focus group participants using the designated screening instrument
- ▶ Tracking the recruitment process
- ▶ Protecting participants' privacy
- ▶ Reminding participants
- ▶ Hosting the focus groups

No statistical sampling methodology will be employed, no estimation of the number of data sources or systems used will be required, and no special sampling procedures will be used. Communication will occur via email, telephone calls, and in-person site visits.

No unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures have been identified. Because this is a one-time data collection, no periodic data collection cycles are applicable.

### **B.3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates and the Issue of Nonresponse**

**Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.**

The staff at each local office the study team visits will be responsible for assembling two groups of at least six individuals who meet the screening criteria (e.g., have installed and used MCS on their mobile devices) and can attend the group discussions at the designated date and location. To compensate for no-shows, 10–12 individuals will be recruited per focus group to ensure at

least 6 individuals attend. FNS research team will also ask the local office staff to remind participants of the upcoming focus group by telephone or text the day before the discussion.

To fully support the local offices in their recruitment efforts, the research team will provide the following recruitment materials and guidance to each local office:

- ▶ A 1-hour virtual training to provide a detailed overview and instructions for the recruitment process
- ▶ Screener documents local SNAP staff can use to identify eligible participants
- ▶ Recruitment scripts
- ▶ A log for tracking names and contact information of clients who have agreed to participate during each time slot
- ▶ A study overview handout that describes the purpose of the focus groups, planned topics of discussion, and incentive offered

The study team expects the planned methods of data collection will allow the team to collect the accurate and reliable data needed to satisfy the objectives of this study. Table B.3.1 shows the anticipated response rates.

**Table B.3.1. Expected Response Rates**

Respondent Type		Research Activity	Expected Response Rate
State and local government	State SNAP directors	Site recruitment	83
		Advance materials	100
		Onsite interviews	100
	State staff involved in MCS	Site recruitment	83
		Advance materials	100
		Onsite interviews	83
	State software developers or IT staff	Advance materials	100
		Onsite interviews	83
	Local office staff	Advance materials	100
		Onsite interviews	80
Business or other for-profit	Software developers or IT staff	Advance materials	100
		Onsite interviews	50
Business or other not-for-profit	Community partners	Advance materials	100
		Onsite interviews	75
Individuals	SNAP participants/MCS users	Advance materials	100
		Eligibility screener	100
		Reminder	72
		In-person focus group	54
	SNAP-eligible individuals	Onsite recruitment	100



		Onsite interview	70
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The FNS research team anticipate all the selected States will participate. However, in the event a State selected to participate is unable to do so, the study team will contact the alternative States.

#### **B.4. Tests of Procedures**

**Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions from 10 or more respondents. A proposed test or set of tests may be submitted for approval separately or in combination with the main collection of information.**

FNS pretested all the interview data collection instruments for the study to evaluate the clarity of the questions asked, identify possible modifications to the order or wording of the questions that could improve the quality of the data, and estimate respondents' burden. After completing the pretest interviews via telephone and in person, the team prepared a memorandum that summarized the pretest procedures and findings and addressed pretest respondents' understanding and ability to answer the interview questions or provide requested data. The memorandum also recorded the time required to complete each data collection activity and identified recommended changes to improve the clarity or flow of questions. Based on the results of the pretests and additional feedback from FNS and the research team, we finalized the data collection instruments.

#### **Pretest Findings and Changes to Interview Protocols**

The pretest findings are outlined in appendix C (Pretest Methods and Summary of Findings).

The pretest findings are summarized in table B.4.1.

**Table B.4.1. Summary of Pretest Findings**

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Summary of Findings</b>	<b>Resulting Changes to Instrument</b>
<b>Introductory Phone Call With State MCS Staff and Administrators Protocol</b>	Duration: 41 minutes (anticipated 60 minutes) Further clarification needed on research team approach to compiling State-specific understanding of MCS One probe was deemed unnecessary	Adjusted introductory text Removed one probe

Instrument	Summary of Findings	Resulting Changes to Instrument
<b>State MCS Staff and Administrators Interview Protocol</b>	Duration: 75 minutes (anticipated 90 minutes) Clarification needed on definition of MCS Further clarification needed on research team approach to compiling State-specific understanding of MCS Several questions appeared redundant Some confusion about definition of terms	Adjusted introductory text and added definition of MCS Removed redundant questions Added clarifying context to provide background
<b>Software Developers Interview Protocol</b>	Duration: 55 minutes (anticipated 60 minutes) Further clarification needed on research team approach to compiling State-specific understanding of MCS Wording of some questions was unclear	Adjusted introductory text Clarified wording in some questions
<b>Local Office Frontline Staff Group Interview Protocol</b>	Duration: 51 minutes (anticipated 60 minutes) Further clarification needed on research team approach to compiling State-specific understanding of MCS Further clarification needed on a few questions Even in States lacking a formal MCS, participants could use mobile communication for SNAP	Adjusted introductory text Added clarifying text and adjusted wording to a few questions Added two optional questions for States with no text messaging capabilities or mobile app to ask staff about presence of third-party or informal mobile communications
<b>Other Stakeholders/Community Partners Interview Protocol</b>	Duration: 27 minutes (anticipated 60 minutes) Further clarification needed on research team approach to compiling State-specific understanding of MCS Even in States lacking a formal MCS, participants could use mobile communication for SNAP Lack of general understanding about how community partners' clients use MCS	Adjusted introductory text Added two optional questions for States with no text messaging capabilities or mobile app to ask staff about presence of third-party or informal mobile communications Added an introductory question to assess whether, when, and how clients use MCS for SNAP
<b>SNAP Participant Focus Group Protocol</b>	Duration: 61minutes (anticipated 90 minutes) Lack of flow between introduction and icebreaker Some participants focused on third-party MCS Some participants may use MCS informally to communicate with their caseworkers Even in States lacking a formal MCS, participants could use mobile communication for SNAP Confusion around the wording of some questions	Adjusted ordering of icebreaker and introductory text Added clarifying text to focus conversation on State-sponsored MCS Added probe to assess informal MCS Added two optional questions for States with no text messaging capabilities or mobile app to ask staff about presence of third-party or informal mobile communications Adjusted wording in some questions to improve clarity
<b>SNAP Office Waiting Room Questionnaire</b>	Duration: 10-11 minutes (anticipated 5-7 minutes) Confusion around the wording of some questions	Deleted two questions to ensure completion within allotted time Adjusted wording in some questions to improve clarity
<b>SNAP Participant Focus Group Demographic</b>	Duration: 5-11 minutes (anticipated to be included as part of 90-minute focus group) Confusion around the wording of some	Adjusted wording in some questions to improve clarity Added additional response options in

Instrument	Summary of Findings	Resulting Changes to Instrument
Questionnaire	questions Additional response options needed in some questions	some questions

## B.5. Consultants

**Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.**

FNS consulted with a mathematical statistician from USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), who reviewed the study methodology and procedures (see table B.5.1).

**Table B.5.1 Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects of Design**

Name	Title	Organizational Affiliation	Contact Information
Sofiya Cherni	Mathematical Statistician	Sampling and Frame Development Section, Methodology Division, National Agricultural Statistics Service	(202) 690-2178

FNS has contracted with Insight Policy Research (part of our research team) to assist in conducting this study. The Project Officer for the contract providing funding for the evaluation, Mr. Andrew Burns, will be responsible for receiving and approving all contract deliverables.