Appendix I. Local Office Frontline Staff Group Interview Protocol

OMB No. 0584-XXXX

Modernizing Channels of Communication With SNAP Participants

March 2, 2020

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Modernizing Channels of Communication With SNAP Participants:
Local Office Frontline Staff Group Interview Protocol

PURPOSE: This protocol will be used to speak to frontline staff (e.g., case workers, greeters) at a local office about their awareness of and perspectives on MCS. The site visit team will also assess what training, if any, these staff have had on MCS implementation and the impact it has had on their workload. Finally, the team will assess high-level feedback staff have heard about MCS implementation from their clients, including perceived benefits and challenges. Insight will use a group interview format with three to six staff members to make the most efficient use of the team's time at the local office and ensure access to a diversity of perspectives. This will be a 60-minute interview.

Thank you for your willingness to speak with us. My name is [NAME], and I am from a company called Insight Policy Research. Insight is a research firm hired to talk to you and other stakeholders about the mobile communication strategies—or MCS—in [STATE]. For the purposes of this study, MCS include text messaging, mobile applications participants can download on a smartphone or tablet, and websites that are optimized for viewing on mobile devices. In collaboration with the sponsor of this data collection U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, we are conducting a research study to better understand States' use of mobile communication. During today's discussion, we would like to update what we know about your State's MCS and learn more about your experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

We are talking with many people in States around the country, so I would like to audiorecord this conversation to help me remember who said what so I don't need to worry about taking notes. Only people working on this study will have access to the recordings.

As a reminder, your participation is completely voluntary (not required) and will not affect your job in any way. If you chose not to participate or chose not to answer any questions, you will not be affected in any way. Would it be ok if I record our discussion?

A. Recap Background on State's MCS Implementation

1. Please start by telling me about your responsibilities related to mobile communication in the [LOCAL SNAP OFFICE] and experience with your State's MCS development and implementation of text messaging, mobile applications SNAP participants can download on a smartphone or tablet, and websites that are optimized.

    Probe: How long have you been in this role?

B. History and MCS Implementation Rollout

1. Tell me about the uptake of these mobile communication tools among SNAP participants.

    Probe: How popular are these tools among SNAP participants? Are they used often?

    Probe: Has the MCS been popular among participants? Has uptake varied over time?

2. How did you find out about these tools?

    Probe: Did you receive official notification? If so, from whom? Did you receive training?

3. What are some of the reasons you think SNAP participants may be hesitant to use a mobile device for SNAP-related activities?

    Probe: Are there data security concerns related to data plans or available memory/storage on your phone, slow access to internet in certain areas, limited coverage?

4. [IF APPLICABLE] Have you heard of any concerns SNAP participants have expressed related to data security or privacy issues when using their mobile phone for SNAP-related activities?

C. Functional Components of Each MCS

I want to learn a bit more about the specific MCS functions that are available to SNAP participants in your area.

As a reminder, this depiction of your State's MCS is based on information available from public sources. Our preliminary review was last updated in [INSERT DATE]. [SHOW STATE-SPECIFIC JOURNEY MAP HIGHLIGHTING AVAILABLE FUNCTIONS]

1. Can you confirm that this list of available functions is accurate?

    Probe [IF APPLICABLE]: What level of functionality does the app provide? Can clients only view information about their cases (view-only), or are they also able to upload documents, initiate changes, or submit recertification applications?

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1. *According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-xxxx. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the following address: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place Alexandria, VA 22314, ATTN: PRA (0584-xxxx). Do not return the completed form to this address.*

Probe: Is anything missing from this list?

2. How has your State's MCS and the features of different components evolved?

   Probe: Has the list of functions available to participants changed?

D. Effect of MCS Implementation on State Operations

1. How, if at all, has implementing these strategies influenced the way your local office conducts business?

   Probe: Has implementing the strategies influenced staffing, workflow, and/or workload? Has implementation influenced case management? Which areas were most affected?

   Probe [IF APPLICABLE]: If your State has any view-only functions in place, what value do those have to your State?

2. What portion of case management activities do you think clients can complete via their mobile devices?

   Probe: For example, was the processing of new applications, or the process for recertifying, conducting quality control, or other clerical activities, affected by SNAP participants using the MCS? If so, how?

3. How have these MCS influenced participants' experience with SNAP?

   Probe: Are there specific aspects of being able to manage their cases that would have positive impacts on clients? Are there potentially negative impacts?

4. Which areas of SNAP operations (within the local office) has MCS most greatly affected? Have the impacts varied over time?

E. Ease of Use: Text Messaging (if applicable)

Now I want to learn more about your opinions on how easy it is for SNAP participants to use the text messaging component, based on your experience working with SNAP participants.

1. What types of messages or notifications do SNAP participants receive from the SNAP office?

   Probe: What are the messages about?

   a. How easy do you think it is to understand the text messages?

   b. What, if anything, do SNAP participants say is confusing or unclear about the text messages? What could be done to improve them?

2. What, if anything, is missing from the text messages?

   Probe: Is there anything SNAP participants say they would change about the text messaging service?

3. [FOR STATES WITH NO TEXT MESSAGING CAPABILITIES:] Based on our understanding, there is no text messaging option available for communication between SNAP

participants and the State; however, do you or any other groups (outside of the State) use mobile communications (e.g., text messaging) to communicate with clients?

F. Ease of Use: Mobile App (if applicable)

Now I want to learn more about your opinions on how easy it is for SNAP participants to use the mobile app, based on your experience working with SNAP participants.

1. To the best of your knowledge, what functions do clients typically use on the mobile app?

   Probe [IF APPLICABLE]: What types of documents do they submit through each platform?

2. How easy is the mobile app for clients to use?

   Probe: How helpful are the features of the app?

3. Is the mobile app content well organized?

   Probe: Does the ordering or display of the app pages make sense?

4. What functions are missing from the mobile app?

5. What, if anything, do SNAP participants find to be confusing or unclear about the app? What could be done to improve it?

   Probe: Is there anything SNAP participants say they would change about the app?

6. What types of messages or notifications do SNAP participants receive from the SNAP office via the mobile app? What are they about?

   Probe: What is the content of the messages?

7. [FOR STATES WITH NO MOBILE APP:] Based on our understanding, there is no SNAP mobile app sponsored by the State; however, do you or any other groups (outside of the State) use mobile apps to communicate with SNAP clients?

G. Ease of Use: Mobile-Optimized Website

1. What have you heard from participants, if anything, about using the SNAP website on their mobile phones?

2. What challenges and/or benefits have SNAP participants identified about the website?

H. Lessons Learned and Best Practices

1. What were some of the challenges that arose during the implementation?

   a. What strategies worked best to address these challenges?

2. Have there been any unintended consequences of implementing these communication strategies in your State?

3. If another State was considering implementing an MCS approach similar to yours, what advice would you give that State?

   Probe: What types of infrastructure, stakeholder buy-in, and resources might a State without an MCS need to plan and implement an approach like this? What do you wish you had known before starting this initiative?

4. How could FNS help support successful MCS development and implementation in other States?