

Appendix H. Business Software Developers Interview Protocol

OMB No. 0584-XXXX

*Modernizing Channels of Communication
With SNAP Participants*

March 2, 2020

Project Officer: Andrew Burns

Office of Policy Support
Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.305.1091
Andrew.Burns@usda.gov

Modernizing Channels of Communication With SNAP Participants: Business Software Developers Interview Protocol

PURPOSE: This protocol will be used to collect critical information on each State's MCS from business software developers/IT staff, including the history and timeline of the project's rollout, the scope and goal of the project, and the functional components of the app. Participants will share insight into the integration of the project into existing State systems and the challenges and lessons learned during implementation. They will also share relevant administrative data on how they have evaluated their MCS implementation. If applicable, the study team will work with State SNAP agency staff to connect with the third-party software developers responsible for designing and programming the State's apps. 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. 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 strategies, or MCS. 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. 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. The time required to complete this interview is estimated to average 1 hour. 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 and experience with your State's MCS development and implementation.

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: How long have you been in this role?

B. History and MCS Implementation Rollout

1. Tell me about the planning and preparations for developing the MCS in the State.
 - a. How long did the planning and development process take? Do you use in-house developers?
 - b. What challenges did you encounter during the development phase?
 - c. How, if at all, did you test the tools before launching them?
 - d. How many staff were involved?

2. [SHOW JOURNEY MAP] How did you generate the list of functions to include?

Probe: Based on SNAP participant input? Staff requests? Best practices from other States? Limited resources?

3. How did you plan for potential data security or privacy issues when developing or implementing these tools?
 - a. [IF APPLICABLE] How do you obtain consent to participate in these communication mechanisms from clients in the State (e.g., electronic signature of terms and conditions)?

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

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

C. Functional Components of Each MCS

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

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 have your State's MCS and the features of different components evolved?

Probe: Has the list of functions available to participants changed throughout the testing period or implementation period? Did you decide to add or change any components or functions? What were the motivating factors?

D. Involvement of Community Partners (if applicable)

1. Were third-party vendors and/or other community partners involved in any phases of MCS development, testing, or ongoing improvements? If so, how?

Probe: What were their roles?

2. What has worked well in these partnerships? What has not worked so well?

Probe: Would you do anything to improve these partnerships?

Probe: What other partners should be involved with the implementation of your MCS, if any?

E. Marketing Strategies and Business Model

Now we want to learn a bit more about the licensing and marketing surrounding the app.

1. Do you create similar apps for other State or county SNAP agencies? Do you create similar apps for other programs (not SNAP)?
2. How do those agencies see the market for this type of software changing?
3. If you are willing to share the information, we would like to learn more about how you license each of your products.

Probe: What is your licensing structure?

F. Development of Software and Logistics

Now we want to learn a bit more about data storage, security, and suggestions for improvement.

1. Where do the data for [MOBILE APP OR TEXT MESSAGING] live?

Probe: Are the data in a cloud environment, or does the app interact directly with the State's servers?

Probe [IF APPLICABLE]: If the former, how (and how frequently) are data transferred from the cloud to the State eligibility system/State servers? If the latter, what was required to establish that arrangement?

2. What improvements do you have planned for the platform(s)?

Probe: App appearance, functionality, usability, processing, etc.?

3. What challenges did you encounter navigating data security requirements with this State?

4. What do you think SNAP agencies/FNS should do to improve access to account information for SNAP participants?

Probe: What are the things States/FNS are doing that get in the way of their apps' functionality?

G. Evaluation and Monitoring (if applicable)

[SUMMARIZE EVALUATION RESULTS/ DATA FROM INTRODUCTORY CALL, IF APPLICABLE]

1. What actions have resulted from these takeaways?
2. What has been your progress toward meeting your original program goals?

H. Lessons Learned and Best Practices

1. What were some of the challenges that arose during testing and implementation?
 - a. What strategies worked best to address these challenges?
2. Have there been any unintended consequences of implementing these MCS 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 that has not yet implemented 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?