

Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes

Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project

OMB Information Collection Request
New Collection

Supporting Statement

Part A

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Submitted By:
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Part A

Executive Summary

- **Type of Request:** This Information Collection Request is for a new collection. We are requesting three years of approval.
- **Description of Request:** The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is proposing data collection activities conducted for the Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project (NextGen Project). The project will include experimental impact, descriptive, and cost studies of about 10 programs. This request is for data collection to support these studies. We will use a two-phased approach for our information collection requests. This first phase includes instruments that will be uniform across programs selected for evaluation. The second phase will include materials that will be tailored to programs and therefore finalized after recruitment of specific programs. We do not intend for this information to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions.

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks approval for data collection activities conducted for the Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project (NextGen Project). OPRE contracted with Mathematica to conduct the NextGen Project.

A1. Necessity for Collection

OPRE has spent decades studying strategies to help low-income people find and keep jobs. Findings from these studies have been mixed, revealing variation in what works for whom and the duration and magnitude of impacts. Some studies have also demonstrated that certain programs are less accessible to individuals with complex challenges, such as low educational attainment or involvement with the criminal justice system, due to the program's eligibility requirements.

The NextGen Project is intended to build on the findings and lessons learned from these past and ongoing evaluations by identifying and rigorously evaluating the "next generation" of employment strategies for highly vulnerable populations with complex barriers to obtaining and retaining employment. These strategies may be enhancements or adaptations of previously evaluated strategies, or innovative approaches showing promise in the field and ready to be tested. Additionally, the project has a particular interest in the role of market-oriented, employment-focused programs, such as social enterprises and public/private partnerships, in assisting highly vulnerable populations obtain and retain employment. The current data collection request is necessary to conduct these rigorous evaluations.

A2. Purpose

Purpose and Use

The information collected through the instruments included in this Information Collection Request (ICR) will be used to evaluate innovative programs serving low-income individuals facing complex challenges to employment and economic independence to expand the evidence base in this area.

The NextGen Project is actively coordinating with another current project sponsored by OPRE, the Building Evidence on Employment Strategies for Low-Income Families (BEES) study (OMB #0970-0537). BEES may include impact and/or implementation studies of up to 21 employment-focused programs; these will not overlap with programs selected for the NextGen Project. The NextGen Project and BEES have a common goal to foster stronger understanding of the types of programs that can improve labor market outcomes for low-income individuals; however, the projects also maintain separate domains of focus. In addition, both projects are involved in a joint effort with the Social Security Administration (SSA). SSA has provided demonstration program funds to ACF to support the addition of a disability focus in both projects; specifically, to identify and evaluate employment-related programs for potential SSI applicants. This is intended to assist SSA in better understanding the types of early interventions that effectively connect or reconnect potential SSI applicants to work before they apply for SSI. See Section A4 for information about coordination and efforts to not duplicate activities.

Data collection instruments for the NextGen Project **impact studies** will provide baseline and outcome data about study participants, which the project team will use to estimate the effectiveness of each program. The project team will use data collection instruments for the **descriptive studies** to describe each program’s design, staffing, service provision, partnerships, and other details necessary to understand the nature of and context for the programs, and for other organizations to replicate them. The instruments will also help inform the interpretation of impact findings. Finally, the project team will use data collection for the **cost studies** to estimate the costs of implementing each evaluated program and to estimate the cost-effectiveness of the programs. The results will provide policymakers and practitioners with high-quality information on the effects, design and implementation, and the cost of the programs. Having this information will help strengthen policy and practice to better serve individuals facing complex challenges to employment and economic independence. Study findings may also inform future studies in this area.

The information collected is meant to contribute to the body of knowledge on ACF programs. It is not intended to be used as the principal basis for a decision by a federal decision-maker and is not expected to meet the threshold of influential or highly influential scientific information.

Research Questions or Tests

The questions this evaluation will answer are in Table A.1.

Table A.1. Research questions for the NextGen Project

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| Impact studies |
| Did the program affect the amounts and types of services participants receive? |
| Did the program improve participants’ employment outcomes (employment, earnings, job retention and advancement, and quality of job) and economic independence (income, public assistance receipt)? |
| Did the program improve outcomes relevant to the challenges faced by the target population, for example reduce substance abuse; reduce criminal justice involvement; or increase education, credentialing, and training? |
| Did the program improve participants’ physical health, mental health, and well-being? |
| Was the program more effective for some groups of participants than others? |
| Did the impacts of the program change over time? If so, how? |
| How did the program’s costs compare to the benefit of the impacts it generated? What were the net benefits for participants and society as a whole? |
| Descriptive studies |
| How was the program designed and implemented? |
| What contextual, organizational, and other factors impeded or facilitated implementation? |
| What were the challenges faced, solutions, and lessons learned? |
| What were the characteristics of study participants? |
| What services were participants offered, and what were the participation and outcome patterns? |
| What role did employers play in the program? How do local labor market conditions affect the program |

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| design, implementation, and employers' and participants' involvement? |
| Which program services or implementation features appear to be related to program impacts? Which components or services do participants and staff perceive to be helpful? |
| What were the backgrounds and experience of program staff and program leaders? |
| How did staff spend their time, and how many participants did they work with? |
| How did program leaders spend their time? |
| How did participants perceive the program? What were the most helpful elements? How did the program affect their lives? |
| Cost studies |
| How was the program funded? What were its costs? Was the program sustainable? |

Study Design

The NextGen Project will include experimental impact, descriptive, and cost studies of about 10 programs. It will study programs that include a wide range of supports designed to serve individuals with multiple challenges to employment and that might be delivered by public–private partnerships, interagency collaborations, government initiatives, nonprofit agencies, or social enterprises. In addition to these studies, the project will include case studies of employers and social enterprises using novel strategies to serve the target population of interest. These case studies will not include programs or employers that participate in the impact, descriptive, or cost studies for the broader evaluation.

The impact studies are intended to produce internally valid estimates of the program’s causal impact, not to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations. The descriptive and cost studies are intended to present internally valid descriptions of the service population, implementation, and cost of the programs in the chosen sites, not to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations. See Section B.1 of this ICR for further information about the appropriateness of the design and its limitations.

The NextGen Project is currently identifying and assessing innovative programs for inclusion in the NextGen Project; these activities are approved under the generic clearance for Formative Data Collections for ACF Research (OMB #0970-0356). The programs will be assessed to determine if they meet three general criteria: (1) the program addresses the research priorities of this project; (2) the program is well implemented, or could be after some technical assistance; and (3) a rigorous evaluation of the program is feasible, using an experimental design, or could be after the program receives some technical assistance. Additionally, programs should have some evidence that they might be effective, and an evaluation of the program should build on existing evidence and be valuable to the field. Some programs to be selected will also address SSA’s research interests. The programs to be studied are not national programs, and the study is not designed to be nationally representative, nor will the project team attempt to generalize the evaluation results beyond the programs and target populations under study.

Phased Approach to Data Collection Approval

As noted in the Executive Summary, the NextGen Project will use a two-phased approach for OMB approval of this ICR.

Current Request: Phase 1

In Phase 1, the project team will begin to formally recruit the programs being identified and assessed through the approved generic IC (discussed above). We are seeking approval for the project team to administer the informed consent form and baseline survey, and to collect identifying and contact information for study participants. We intend for these data collections to be uniform across programs selected for evaluation and do not anticipate that they will need to be tailored to a specific program. They are marked in this ICR as “final.”

Future Updates: Phase 2

Under Phase 2, we will request approval of the remaining instruments, which we expect will require some revisions to tailor to each program selected for the evaluation. We have included drafts of these instruments and burden estimates for initial review and informational purposes (Appendices F and H – O), but are not seeking approval at this time. Phase 2 instruments were also included in the Federal Register Notices, allowing for public comment on the current versions. These are marked as “drafts” in this submission.

Once programs are selected for the evaluation, we will submit updated materials and burden estimates as either a non-substantive change request or a revision with abbreviated public comment time, dependent on the level of changes and guidance provided by the OMB Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.

Impact studies. The experimental impact studies will provide rigorous evidence on whether each program is effective, for whom, and under what circumstances. Participants eligible for the programs will be asked to consent to participate in the study (Appendix A) and, if they provide consent,¹ will be randomly assigned to one of at least two groups: one or more treatment groups offered the program or a control group not offered the program. Members of all study groups will continue to have access to other services offered in the community. Individuals who do not consent to participate in the study will not be randomly assigned, will not participate in the data collection efforts, and will not be eligible to receive the intervention (until after the second follow-up survey has been fielded).

The project team will collect information from study participants for the impact studies at three points: (1) at program entry before random assignment occurs (baseline); (2) at about 6 to 12 months after random assignment via the first follow-up survey; and (3) at about 18 to 24 months after random assignment via a second follow-up survey. (Note that the timing of the follow-up

¹ Some interventions might involve participants under the age of 18. In these cases, informed consent will also be collected from the participant’s parent or guardian. Some interventions might also involve adults or youths with cognitive disabilities. For these interventions, the NextGen Project will rely on determinations, screenings, or assessments made by site staff to ensure the potential participants are capable of understanding the consent process and implications of participating in the study. If site staff determine that a potential participant is unable to understand, that individual will be exempt from the NextGen Project and will not be included in any data collection.

surveys might vary depending on when each program’s theory of change suggests impacts might be expected.) Table A.2 presents the data collection activities for the impact studies.

Table A.2. Data collection activities for the impact studies

| <i>Data Collection Activity and Associated Instrument</i> | <i>Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection</i> | <i>Mode and Duration</i> |
|--|---|--|
| Proposed Phase 1 Instruments | | |
| <p>Baseline data collection</p> <p>Instrument 1 (final): Baseline survey</p> <p>Instrument 2 (final): Identifying and contact information</p> | <p>Respondents: All consenting study participants.</p> <p>Content: Baseline survey includes information on demographics, receipt of Social Security Administration benefits, employment history, and challenges to maintaining employment. Identifying information includes name, Social Security number, and date of birth. Contact information includes physical and electronic addresses and social media information for participants and up to three friends or relatives.</p> <p>Purpose: Baseline survey data will be used to describe the study sample and check that the characteristics of the study participants are similar on average across groups. The data will also be used to define subgroups, as covariates in regression models, and for weighting for nonresponse. A question-by-question justification for the items included in the baseline survey is presented in Appendix B.</p> <p>Identifying information are used before random assignment to make sure participants have not already been enrolled in the study. The project team will use this information later to match study participants to their administrative data records to assess outcomes. In addition, the team will collect detailed contact information to locate participants to complete follow-up surveys. A question-by-question justification for the items included in the identifying and contact information is presented in Appendix C.</p> | <p>Mode: Baseline survey will allow for multiple administration options: by program staff, self-administered by study participants via the web, or by NextGen Project staff via telephone.</p> <p>RAPTER® identifying and contact information will be provided verbally by study participants and entered into RAPTER® by program staff.</p> <p>Duration: 25 minutes (total to complete the baseline survey and provide identifying information)</p> |
| Proposed Phase 2 Instruments | | |
| <p>Follow-up data collection</p> <p>Appendix F. Instrument 3 (draft): First follow-up survey</p> <p>Appendix H. Instrument 4 (draft): Second follow-up survey</p> | <p>Respondents: The project team will attempt to survey all study participants.</p> <p>Content: The follow-up surveys collect data on outcomes of interest, including service receipt, employment, earnings, economic independence, well-being, health status, substance use, involvement in the criminal justice system; perceptions of the usefulness of the program being evaluated (for treatment group only); and updated contact information (on first follow-up survey only). The exact questions asked could</p> | <p>Mode: Participants will self-administer via the web. Alternatively, administered by NextGen Project staff via telephone</p> <p>Duration: 50 minutes per follow-up survey</p> |

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| | <p>vary by site depending on the site’s target population.</p> <p>Purpose: The project team will use survey data to estimate program impacts on outcomes of interest; estimate the program impacts on the services the study participants receive; describe treatment group members’ perceptions of the usefulness of the program being evaluated; and describe the study sample. The updated contact information from the first follow-up survey will be used to assist in locating study participants for the second follow-up survey. A question-by-question justification for the items included in the follow-up surveys is in Appendix D.</p> | |
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Descriptive studies. The descriptive study for each program will describe the following: (1) the community, economic, and program context in which the program operates; (2) the characteristics of the program model, including the target population, services offered, role of partners and employers, theory of change, and plans for sustainability and replication; and (3) the implementation and cost drivers of the program, such as leadership, organizational culture and structure, staffing and staff development, and service delivery. The data collection period for the descriptive study will vary by participating program, typically around 4 to 8 months after the study begins enrolling participants. Table A.3 summarizes the proposed data collection activities for the descriptive studies. If respondents consent to being recorded, the interviewer will audiorecord discussions with program administrators, supervisors, staff; key partner staff, including employers; and participants.

Table A.3. Data collection activities for the descriptive studies

| <i>Data Collection Activity and Associated Instrument</i> | <i>Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection</i> | <i>Mode and Duration</i> |
|--|--|---|
| Proposed Phase 2 Instruments | | |
| <p>Treatment group service receipt</p> <p>Appendix I. Instrument 5 (draft): Service receipt tracking</p> | <p>Respondents: Program staff</p> <p>Content: Information about the treatment group members’ participation in the program. In programs that also provide services to control group members, program staff might also record information on receipt of services of control group members.</p> <p>Purpose: To describe the service receipt of treatment group members, including type of service, duration, and mode.</p> | <p>Mode: Program staff will enter information about services received by study participants through the program in RAPTER®. If a program already collects data on service receipt through its own database, the study will use the information the program already collects.</p> <p>Duration: 5 minutes per entry</p> |
| <p>Characteristics of program staff and leaders</p> <p>Appendix J. Instrument 6 (draft): Staff characteristics survey</p> | <p>Respondents: Program staff and leaders.</p> <p>Content: Staff members’ and leaders’ professional backgrounds, skills, experience, credentials, and perceptions of the program. Leaders’ resource investments and decision-making processes.</p> | <p>Mode: Program staff and leaders will self-administer the surveys via the web.</p> <p>Duration: 25 minutes for staff survey; 15 minutes for leadership survey</p> |

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| <p>Appendix K. Instrument 7 (draft): Program leadership survey</p> | <p>Purpose: To provide insight into how program structure, staffing, and leadership might affect implementation of the program. Compared with the semi-structured interviews, described below, the surveys will enable the collection of information (1) in a more structured format, (2) on topics that staff and leaders might be uncomfortable talking about in a group setting, and (3) from a broader set of staff and leaders than would have the time to participate in a semi-structured interview.</p> | |
| <p>Discussions with program staff, partners, and employers</p> <p>Appendix L. Instrument 8 (draft): Semi-structured program discussion guide</p> <p>Appendix M. Instrument 9 (draft): Semi-structured employer discussion guide</p> | <p>Respondents: Program administrators, supervisors, staff; key partner staff, including employers</p> <p>Content: Semi-structured discussions with program administrators, supervisors, direct service staff, community partners, and specialized treatment providers will provide information about the program’s design and implementation. Semi-structured discussions with employers will collect information about their involvement in developing and executing the programs of interest.</p> <p>Purpose: To describe each program’s design, staffing, service provision, partnerships, and other details necessary to understand the nature of and context for the programs, and for other programs to replicate them. Also to help inform the interpretation of impact findings.</p> | <p>Mode: The interviews will be conducted in person during site visits, either individually or in small groups.</p> <p>Duration: 90 minutes per administrator; 60 minutes per program supervisor, key partner staff, or employer; 45 minutes for direct service staff</p> |
| <p>In-depth participant interviews</p> <p>Appendix N. Instrument 10 (draft): In-depth participant interview guide</p> | <p>Respondents: Select study participants</p> <p>Content: Participants’ background and goals, experiences and challenges finding and retaining employment, experiences with the program, including reasons for disengaging from the program, if applicable.</p> <p>Purpose: To provide the “stories” that will make the findings from the implementation and impact studies more meaningful. They might also inform the understanding of whether the program was implemented as planned and suggest possible refinements.</p> | <p>Mode: The interviews will be conducted in person during site visits.</p> <p>Duration: 120 minutes</p> |

Cost studies. The cost study for each program will (1) provide descriptive information about the amount, sources, and types of its funding, and (2) produce an estimate of the average cost of the program per participant. The average cost of the program per participant will be used in the benefit-cost analysis. In that analysis, the benefits that accrue to program participants such as increased earnings and reduced receipt of public benefits will be compared with the cost of

providing program services. Data collection for the cost studies will ideally take place around the same time as the data collection for the descriptive studies. They are summarized in Table A.4.

Table A.4. Data collection activities for the cost studies

| <i>Data Collection Activity and Associated Instrument</i> | <i>Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection</i> | <i>Mode and Duration</i> |
|---|---|--|
| Proposed Phase 2 Instruments | | |
| Cost data collection Appendix O. Instrument 11 (draft): Cost workbook | Respondents: Program leader (or a designee) Content: Excel-based cost workbook to record information on the expenditures associated with the program for a recent 12-month period. Purpose: To estimate the costs of implementing each evaluated program and to estimate the cost-effectiveness of the programs. | Mode: The project team will ask program leaders for their accounting records or financial reports and obtain as much information as possible from these records. If additional information is needed after review of financial records, the project team will ask the programs to complete the workbook in part or in full, depending on the information required. Duration: 32 hours |

Other Data Sources and Uses of Information

The NextGen Project will collect administrative records data for outcomes of interest; this information is already being collected and represents no additional burden for participants or program staff. The project team will collect administrative data on quarterly earnings, receipt of unemployment insurance, and new hires on all study participants from the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH), which is maintained by the Office of Child Support Enforcement at ACF. If applicable, the project team will also collect records for study participants on the receipt of TANF program data from state or local TANF agencies. For some programs, administrative data will be collected from SSA on annual taxable earnings and receipt of SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance. In addition, as applicable and informative to the programs’ theories of change, data might also be collected on receipt of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits; receipt of benefits from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; state records on child support owed or payed; health care outcomes (Medicare enrollment and claims) from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; involvement with the criminal justice system from court records; educational attainment and completion from school districts; and receipt of housing benefits (such as participation in a housing choice voucher program) from housing authorities.

The project is using information collected or expected to be collected under the generic clearance for Formative Data Collections for ACF Research (OMB #0970-0356), including information collected to gather feedback from stakeholders, identify sites, and assess activities and characteristics.

A3. Use of Information Technology to Reduce Burden

This project will use multiple applications of information technology to reduce burden. As described below, information technology will be used to collect baseline data and participant identifying and contact information; conduct the two follow-up surveys; collect information on service receipt; conduct surveys with program staff and leaders; and collect cost information from the programs. The semi-structured staff discussions and in-depth participant interviews will be audiorecorded, if respondents consent to being recorded; otherwise they will not involve information technology.

RAPTER®. RAPTER® is a secure, web-based system that program staff will use to administer consent to participants, collect their identifying and contact information, conduct random assignment, and enter information on the services received by study participants. The use of check boxes and drop-down menus and response categories will minimize data entry burden.

Baseline, follow-up, staff, and leadership surveys. All surveys will have the capability to be hosted on the Internet via a live secure web-link. To reduce burden, the surveys will employ (1) secure log-ins and passwords so respondents can save and complete the survey in multiple sessions, (2) drop-down response categories so respondents can quickly select from a list, (3) dynamic questions and automated skip patterns so respondents only see those questions that apply to them (including those based on answers provided previously in the survey), and (4) logical rules for responses so respondents' answers are restricted to those intended by the question.

Respondents also have the option to complete the baseline survey and first and second follow-up surveys using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). CATI reduces respondent burden, relative to interviewing via telephone without a computer, by automating skip logic and question adaptations and by eliminating delays caused when interviewers must determine the next question to ask.

Excel-based workbook for collecting cost data. A Microsoft Excel-based data collection tool will be used to collect cost data. To reduce respondent burden, the project team will ask program leaders for their accounting records or financial reports and obtain as much information as possible from these records to complete the workbook. If additional information is needed after review of financial records, the project team will ask the programs to complete the remaining sections of the workbook. Formatting, data checks, and layout built into the template will assist staff in completing it.

A4. Use of Existing Data: Efforts to reduce duplication, minimize burden, and increase utility and government efficiency

Information that is already available from alternative data sources will not be collected again for this project. For example, if a program in the study has an existing management information system that collects information needed for this project that is exportable and of sufficient quality, we will accept data from its existing system. In these cases, the project team will request the program only enter into RAPTER® data that the program is not already collecting.

Although information on employment will be collected from administrative records and via the survey, this information is not duplicative because the two sources differ in accuracy and coverage of jobs. NDNH administrative records will provide information on quarterly earnings

from jobs covered by unemployment insurance as well as new hires. The baseline survey and follow-up surveys will ask for information about all jobs held, including those not covered by unemployment insurance. The follow-up surveys will also collect information about the characteristics of the jobs (such as the wage rate, hours worked, and benefits offered) that are not included in the NDNH data.

The follow-up surveys will collect information on whether participants received assistance from public assistance programs such as TANF, SNAP, unemployment insurance, and other assistance programs. However, these surveys will not ask for details about the receipt of these benefits, which we will collect via administrative records. It is important to ask about receipt of benefits on the survey because administrative records will not be available for those respondents who do not provide their Social Security number.

As noted in Section A2, the NextGen Project is actively coordinating with OPRE's BEES study. OPRE is intentionally and strategically coordinating these projects in order to prevent duplication of effort; fully capitalize on the opportunity the projects afford for large-scale, rigorous evaluation; advance the knowledge base regarding effective employment strategies for low-income, vulnerable populations; and meet SSA's priorities across both projects. The projects intentionally included some common questions within instruments. Areas of overlap with the existing BEES data collection instruments are described in the question-by-question justifications for the baseline data collection and follow-up surveys (Appendices B, C, and D). The projects differ in that BEES is especially interested in evaluating programs for individuals struggling with opioid dependency, abuse of other substances, and/or mental health issues, while the NextGen Project is especially focused on evaluating interventions that are market-oriented and/or employer-driven. Additional domains of focus may emerge as both projects complete knowledge development and identify potential sites for participation.

A5. Impact on Small Businesses

Although we have not yet recruited the specific programs to be evaluated, small organizations, such as businesses or nonprofit organizations, might be involved in implementing a program to be evaluated. If small organizations are involved, we will minimize the burden for respondents by collecting data at times convenient for the respondents, and requiring minimal record keeping or written responses on the part of respondents.

A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

The project team will collect information only once for the baseline survey and identifying participant information, staff characteristics survey, program leadership survey, semi-structured staff discussions, semi-structured employer discussions, in-depth participant interviews, and the Excel-based workbook for collecting cost data.

The project team will administer two similar follow-up surveys. Collecting data at two points of time will allow an examination of whether the impacts of the program changed over time and whether changes in intermediary outcomes (such as health or skills) were associated with changes in longer-term outcomes (namely employment and economic independence outcomes). This also reduces the chance of recall error from respondents when collecting information on

their receipt of services and jobs held over a period of time, relative to collecting it only once at the end of the follow-up period. Similarly, updated contact information will be collected from respondents upon administration of the first follow-up survey to assist in locating them for the second follow-up survey.

Program staff will use the RAPTER® system or their existing management information system to record service receipt for each participant each time he or she receives a service. Staff will be asked to enter the information into RAPTER® immediately after the service is provided. Doing so less frequently would contribute to recall error and affect the quality of data collected.

A7. Now subsumed under 2(b) above and 10 (below)

A8. Consultation

Federal Register Notice and Comments

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), ACF published a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of this information collection activity. This notice was published on January 8, 2020, Volume 85, Number 5, page 906-907, and provided a 60-day period for public comment. A copy of this notice is attached as Appendix P. During the notice and comment period, no substantive comments were received.

Consultation with Experts Outside of the Study

Experts in their respective fields from OPRE and Mathematica were consulted in developing the design, data collection plan, and instruments for which clearance is requested. Select agency staff within SSA and HHS were also consulted. We also consulted with the BEES project staff to coordinate measurement of key outcomes across projects.

A9. Tokens of Appreciation

The proposed structure of tokens of appreciation for this study is designed to support the retention of respondents over the course of the longitudinal data collection and enhance the quality of information derived from in-depth interviews.

Study Enrollment

After finishing the study enrollment process, participants will receive a study packet designed to establish their engagement with the study. This packet will include a copy of the consent form, a one-page study flyer that describes upcoming data collection activities (see Appendix G), and a small study-specific item (valued between \$1-\$3) such as a magnet, keychain, or screen cleaner, that contains the study logo and contact information for our call center. The purpose of these materials is to establish positive association with the study and support familiarity when respondents are contacted to participate in an interview.

Longitudinal Surveys

To increase survey participation following successful contact, we propose that respondents to the

first follow-up survey receive a \$40 gift card and that respondents to the second follow-up survey receive a \$50 gift card. While both surveys are estimated to take 50 minutes, the increase in amount between the first and second survey reflects an expectation that respondents, particularly control group members and treatment group members who may have been less engaged in program services, may perceive the study as less salient over time. The risk of biased impact estimates increases with lower overall survey response rates or larger differences in survey response rates between key research groups (What Works Clearinghouse 2017). Continued high rates of participation in the study, through the second follow-up, are necessary to produce unbiased estimates of the program impacts and maximize the utility of survey data in this multipart study.

In some study sites, respondents may be offered a small gift instead of a gift card as appreciation for survey participation. The project team will discuss with program staff whether a gift or a gift card would be most effective at encouraging survey response among the population they serve. The gift would be selected with input from program staff and be of similar value to the gift card.

The dollar amount proposed here is based on observational information from recent randomized controlled trials with similar service populations. For each of four recent studies, Table A.5 presents information about the type of data collection, incentive offered, survey duration, timeframe, and response rates obtained in these studies. Three of these studies used tokens of appreciation of between \$40 and \$50, as proposed for NextGen, and achieved survey participation and non-response bias sufficient to estimate program impacts.

Emerging information from the fourth study, ACF’s Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Other Related Populations (Employment Coaching) suggests that lower dollar amounts may not be enough to support our targeted response rate. The Employment Coaching study currently offers \$35 to respondents for completing a 60-minute follow-up within the first four weeks (and \$25 after). Despite intensive outreach and notification efforts, similar to those planned for the NextGen study, in four of six Employment Coaching study sites, patterns of overall nonresponse and differences in nonresponse between the treatment and control groups indicate that estimates of program impacts are at higher risk of bias than expected.

Table A.5. Tokens of appreciation and response rates obtained in similar follow-up surveys

| Study | Instrument | Duration (minutes) | Data collection timeframe | Amount of token of appreciation | Response rate |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Other Related Populations, OMB # 0970-0506 | 6- to 12-month follow-up | 60 | 2018-present | \$35 first four weeks \$25 after four weeks | 41-81 percent depending on site, for cases that have been in the field for six months or longer 48 to 82 percent treatment 35 to 81 percent control |
| Enhanced Transitional Jobs | 12-month follow-up | 45 | 2012-14 | \$40 | 67 to 82 percent depending on site |

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| Demonstration, OMB #0970-0413 | | | | | 69 to 82 percent treatment 65 to 81 percent control |
| Self-Employment Training (SET) Demonstration, full sample, OMB #1205-0505 | 18-month follow-up | 20 | 2015-17 | \$50 first four weeks \$25 after four weeks | 80 percent overall 83 percent treatment 78 percent control |
| YouthBuild, full sample, OMB #1205-0503 | 12-month follow-up | 60 | 2012-14 | \$40 first four weeks \$25 after four weeks | 81 percent overall 82 percent treatment 79 percent control |

Note: Treatment and control groups in this table refer to the overall evaluation (that is, the original conditions to which sample members were assigned upon enrollment) and not any incentive experiment. The SET sample includes the full survey sample, including the time before and after the conclusion of the incentive experiments described in the text. The TANF Coaching response rates include only those cases that have been in the field for six or more months.

In-depth Interviews

Respondents to the in-depth participant interviews, which are estimated to take 120 minutes on average, will receive a \$60 gift card, intended to offset costs of participation in the study. Interview data will not be representative in a statistical sense, in that they will not be used to make statements about the prevalence of experiences for the entire service populations. However, it is important to secure participants with a range of background characteristics in order to capture a variety of possible experiences with these programs. Without offsetting the direct costs incurred by respondents for participating in the interviews, such as arranging child care, transportation, or time off from paid work, the research team increases the risk that only those individuals able to overcome the financial barriers to participate will agree to an interview, which would reduce the overall quality of the qualitative data collection.

A10. Privacy: Procedures to protect privacy of information, while maximizing data sharing

Personally Identifiable Information

The information provided by or about participants during the baseline data collection, follow-up surveys, service receipt tracking, and in-depth participant interviews will contain participant-level personally identifiable information (PII). This includes names, addresses, email addresses, social media accounts, phone numbers, birth dates, and Social Security numbers. This information is needed to ensure that: the prospective study participant has not already enrolled in the study; the project team can locate study participants to complete the follow-up surveys; and the project team can link participants to their corresponding administrative data. See Section A11 for further details. In addition, the project team will collect the names and email addresses about program staff in order to administer the staff characteristics and program leadership surveys.

Mathematica will share study participants' information with SSA, which will do additional research on how programs affect earnings and receipt of disability benefits. They will do this research through 2028. Mathematica will share information such as name, sex, date of birth, and Social Security number so researchers at SSA can locate participants' records. They will only use this information to do research. The information will not be used to make decisions about

benefits participants receive from the SSA, now or in the future. The sharing of information with SSA for these purposes and for the specified timeframe are described to participants in the informed consent form (Appendix A).

Information will not be maintained in a paper or electronic system from which data are actually or directly retrieved by an individuals' personal identifier.

Assurances of Privacy

Mathematica will protect respondents' privacy to the extent permitted by law and will comply with all Federal and departmental regulations for private information. Mathematica has developed a data safety and monitoring plan that assesses all protections of respondents' PII. Mathematica will ensure that all of its employees, subcontractors (at all tiers), and employees of each subcontractor who perform work under this contract are trained on data privacy issues and comply with the above requirements. All study staff with access to PII—including program staff who are entering information about study participants and their service receipt into RAPTER®—will receive study-specific training on (1) limitations on disclosure; (2) safeguarding the physical work environment; and (3) storing, transmitting, and destroying data securely. These procedures will be documented in training manuals for study staff, and refresher training will occur annually.

Respondents will be informed of all planned uses of data, that their participation is voluntary, and that their information will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. As specified in the contract, Mathematica (the Contractor) will comply with all Federal and departmental regulations for private information.

The project team will seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the Health Media Lab IRB and a Certificate of Confidentiality (CoC) from the National Institutes of Health. The CoC helps assure participants that their information will be kept private to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Data Security and Monitoring

The project team will use Federal Information Processing Standard compliant encryption (Security Requirements for Cryptographic Module, as amended) to protect all instances of sensitive information during storage and transmission. They will securely generate and manage encryption keys to prevent unauthorized decryption of information, in accordance with the Federal Information Processing Standard. They will ensure that it incorporates this standard into its property management/control system and establishes a procedure to account for all laptop computers, desktop computers, and other mobile devices and portable media that store or process sensitive information. Any data stored electronically, including audiorecordings of discussions with program administrators, supervisors, and staff, key partner staff, and participants, will be secured in accordance with the most current National Institute of Standards and Technology requirements and other applicable Federal and departmental regulations. In addition, the project team will submit a plan for minimizing, to the extent possible, the inclusion of PII and other sensitive information on paper records, and for the protection of any paper records, field notes, or other documents that contain PII or other sensitive information that ensures secure storage and limits on access.

Information shared with researchers at SSA (see discussion above) and exchanged between programs and Mathematica will be sent via a secure file transfer protocol.

At the end of the study, de-identified project data will be archived to make them available to other researchers. Mathematica will work with ACF to develop a comprehensive data archive plan and to produce an archive data file or files. Any restricted- or public-use files will be reviewed for appropriateness of public or restricted release, including appropriate masking techniques for each level of release. A non-disclosure review will also be conducted to ensure that the data cannot be used to re-identify study participants.

A11. Sensitive Information

To evaluate the effectiveness of employment programs for vulnerable populations, it is necessary to ask some sensitive questions. Before starting the baseline and follow-up surveys and the in-depth interviews, all respondents will be informed that their identities will be kept private to the extent permitted by law, that results will only be reported in the aggregate, that their responses will not affect any services or benefits they or their family members receive, and that they do not have to answer any questions that make them uncomfortable.

The sensitive questions in the data collection instruments and proposed data collection instruments relevant for this ICR include the following:

- **Respondents' Social Security numbers.** Respondents' Social Security numbers are necessary to collect administrative data used to estimate impacts on earnings, employment, and public benefit receipt. The consent form will inform study participants that the project team might collect administrative data about them. Social Security numbers will also be used to collect information through online databases containing information on the location of study participants for the follow-up surveys. Along with names, birthdates, and other data from baseline surveys, Social Security numbers will be used to verify respondents' identities for follow-up surveys. The project team did not want to rely on name and address matching (or similar techniques) for collecting administrative data because it leads to the inability to match administrative data for a high proportion of participants, an unacceptably high uncertainty in match success, or both. This would affect the study's ability to estimate impacts and draw conclusions for findings that rely on administrative data.
- **Wage rates and earnings.** It is necessary to ask about earnings because increasing participants' earnings is a key goal of these programs. The follow-up surveys ask about each job worked since random assignment, the wage rate, and the number of hours worked per week. This information will be collected on the first and second follow-up surveys.
- **Challenges to employment.** It is important to ask about challenges to employment both at baseline and at follow-up. The reported challenges at baseline can be used to define subgroups for whom the program might be particularly effective. It is important to ask about challenges to employment in the follow-up survey because the program might have addressed these challenges. Challenges measured through the two follow-up surveys

include problems with transportation, needing to take care of a family member, lack of clothes or tools, not having the right education or skills, and having a criminal record. These challenges might also be discussed during the in-depth participant interviews.

- **Economic hardships.** The follow-up surveys ask about economic hardships, such as food insecurity. These outcomes reflect a lack of economic independence and might be affected by the program. Economic hardships might also be discussed as part of the in-depth participant interviews.
- **Disabilities, mental and physical health, and substance misuse.** The baseline and follow-up surveys will collect information about disabilities, mental or other health problems, and substance misuse; the severity of those issues; and how much they impact the ability to work. These issues might also be discussed in the in-depth participant interviews. All of these are important potential challenges to finding or maintaining employment and could play a role in the effectiveness of the program.

Involvement in the criminal justice system. The baseline survey asks about prior involvement in the criminal justice system because such involvement often makes it harder to find employment. The two follow-up surveys will also ask about arrests, convictions, and incarcerations that occurred after random assignment because these outcomes might be affected by the program. Criminal history might also be discussed during the in-depth participant interviews.

A12. Burden

Explanation of Burden Estimates

Table A.6 reflects the burden and cost for information collection proposed in Phase 1 of this ICR. Estimated reporting burden and cost for the proposed data collection instruments for Phase 2 of this ICR are in Appendix E. These estimates will be revised and included in the requests for updates as part of Phase 2.

Details of the estimates for data collections in Phase 1 of this request are as follows:

- **Baseline data collection.** Baseline data collection involves both study participants and program staff. The burden estimates assume that program staff will assist study participants in baseline data collection, which includes collecting the baseline survey (Instrument 1) and using RAPTER® to collect participant identifying and contact information (Instrument 2).
 - We expect about 10,000 *study participants* (1,000 in each of 10 programs) will complete baseline data collection. We expect each baseline data collection (inclusive of the baseline survey and RAPTER® identifying and contact information) to last 0.42 hours, for a total of 4,200 burden hours. Annualizing over three years is 1,400 hours per year for study participants.
 - We assume that 200 *program staff* across all 10 programs (approximately 20 per program) will perform the baseline data collection. Each staff member will administer the baseline data collection (inclusive of the baseline survey and RAPTER® identifying and contact information) 50 times and each session is

expected to last 0.42 hours for a total of 4,200 burden hours. Annualizing over three years is 1,400 hours.

Estimated Annualized Cost to Respondents

The total annual cost for data collection instruments in Phase 1 of this request is \$34,258. The total estimated cost figures are computed from the total annual burden hours and an average hourly wage for staff and participants. The wage rate for program staff administering the survey is based on the May 2018 employment and wages from Occupational Employment Statistics survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm). The rate used for direct service staff, \$17.22, is the mean wage for social and human services assistants under SOC code 21-1093. The average hourly wage of study participants is estimated to be \$7.25, the federal minimum wage.

Table A.6. Burden and cost for information collection proposed in Phase 1

| Instrument | No. of respondents (total over request period) | No. of responses per respondent (total over request period) | Avg. burden per response (in hours) | Total burden (in hours) | Annual burden (in hours) | Average hourly wage rate | Total annual respondent cost |
|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Baseline survey & Identifying and contact information – participants | 10,000 | 1 | 0.42 | 4,200 | 1,400 | \$7.25 | \$10,150 |
| Baseline survey & Identifying and contact information – staff | 200 | 50 | 0.42 | 4,200 | 1,400 | \$17.22 | \$24,108 |
| Estimated annual burden total | | | | | 2,800 | | \$34,258 |

A13. Costs

There are no additional costs to respondents.

A14. Estimated Annualized Costs to the Federal Government

The total cost to the Federal government for the data collection activities under the first phase of this ICR will be about \$3,305,200. Annualized costs to the Federal government will be about \$1,101,733 for the proposed data collection. These estimates of costs are derived from Mathematica’s budgeted estimates and include labor rates, direct costs, and tokens of

appreciation for respondents. This current request is specific to Phase 1; Phase 2 costs are provided in Appendix E.

| Cost category | Estimated costs |
|--|------------------------|
| PHASE 1 | |
| Instrument development and OMB clearance | \$195,600 |
| Field work | \$1,889,800 |
| Analysis | \$527,400 |
| Publications/dissemination | \$692,400 |
| Total costs over the request period | \$3,305,200 |
| Annual costs | \$1,101,733 |

A15. Reasons for Changes in Burden

This is a new information collection request.

A16. Timeline

The beginning of participant intake and baseline data collection is expected to be staggered by program. We anticipate that the first programs will begin baseline data collection in spring of 2020, pending OMB approval. Other programs will begin intake in late 2020 or 2021. For each program, we expect intake and baseline data collection to continue for about 12 to 24 months. Data collection for the descriptive and cost studies will occur in 2020 and 2021. We anticipate that the first follow-up survey will take place in 2021 and 2022, and the second follow-up survey will take place in 2022 and 2023.

Findings from the project will be published throughout the study in technical reports and briefs. Reporting on the descriptive and cost studies will occur in 2021 and 2022. Reporting on the intermediate impact findings will take place in 2022 and 2023. Reporting on final impact findings will occur in 2023 and 2024.

We anticipate that data archives (restricted or public use) would become available in 2024 and hosted on a data archive platform such as the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

A17. Exceptions

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

Attachments:

Instruments

Instrument 1. Baseline survey

Instrument 2. Identifying and contact information

Appendices

- Appendix A. Informed consent form
- Appendix B. Question-by-question justification for baseline survey
- Appendix C. Question-by-question justification for identifying and contact information
- Appendix D. Question-by-question justification for follow-up surveys
- Appendix E. Reporting burden and cost for Phase 2 data collection instruments
- Appendix F. Instrument 3 (draft): First follow-up survey
- Appendix G. Follow-up survey reminders and notifications
- Appendix H. Instrument 4 (draft): Second follow-up survey
- Appendix I. Instrument 5 (draft): Service receipt tracking
- Appendix J. Instrument 6 (draft): Staff characteristics survey
- Appendix K. Instrument 7 (draft): Program leadership survey
- Appendix L. Instrument 8 (draft): Semi-structured program discussion guide
- Appendix M. Instrument 9 (draft): Semi-structured employer discussion guide
- Appendix N. Instrument 10 (draft): In-depth participant interview guide
- Appendix O. Instrument 11 (draft): Cost workbook
- Appendix P. Federal Register Notice

Supporting Statement A: References

What Works Clearinghouse. "Standards Handbook, Version 4." 2017. Available at https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/wwc_standards_handbook_v4.pdf.