
MEMORANDUM

TO: OIRA, OMB

FROM: MELANIE ALI, IES

CC: MARSHA SILVERBERG, IES
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SUBJECT: CHANGE REQUEST FOR 1850-0947: ASSESSING EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS IN ADULT EDUCATION

DATE: MARCH 25, 2020

This memo is in support of the attached 83-C, which requests an increase in the number of interviews conducted with adult education program directors under OMB clearance number 1850-0947. These interviews are being conducted as part of work to identify opportunities for rigorous impact studies of adult education strategies. The conduct of such studies will help to address a mandate within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to identify effective strategies for improving the outcomes of learners in adult education programs.

Background

The study team has conducted the data collection approved under 1850-0947, including 50 telephone interviews with adult education program directors. These interviews collected descriptive information regarding programs' implementation of one or more of a set of strategies of federal policy interest, in order to evaluate the feasibility of ED conducting national impact studies of the strategies. The strategies included integrated education and training (IET) programs, bridge classes, career navigation supports, and various forms of distance and blended learning.

Based on the information collected through these interviews, ED has determined that a study of IET programs *may* be feasible but that interviews with a larger set of IET programs is needed in order to more fully assess this. The set of interviews conducted thus far included conversations with program directors of approximately 20 IET programs, with the remaining interviews focusing on one or more of the other strategies. Interviews with a larger number of program directors whose sites provide IET programs are needed in order to determine whether a sufficient number of IET programs

and program applicants exist to support the sample size needed for an impact study, and to be better understand potential variation in services across programs.

Our Request

We are requesting clearance to conduct an additional 50 telephone interviews. These interviews will be conducted with a set of adult education program directors whose programs offer IET programs.

We believe that this change does not warrant the submission of a new data clearance package, given that the design, mode, and content of the collection has already been approved under 1850-0947. The respondents for these 50 interviews—adult education program directors—are the same respondent type approved under the current clearance. The interviews will focus on sites' IET programs, following the Feasibility Interview Protocol included in the approved clearance package. The interviews will be conducted beginning as early as Summer 2020 and will end no later than Spring 2021. This is within the current clearance period, which expires in September 2022.

Furthermore, submission of a new data clearance package would be detrimental ED's ability to respond to the congressional mandate to identify effective adult education strategies. ED has set aside funds for the conduct of impact studies and is awaiting the conclusions from the current feasibility work in order to move forward with its investment. Delaying the interviews for the six or so months that would be needed to receive clearance on a new package would prevent ED from launching an impact study in fiscal year 2021. Given that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was passed in 2014, further delaying a study is not in the government's best interest.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic also puts a premium on the timely conduct of this additional set of interviews. The pandemic is leading to a spike in unemployment, making it particularly important to understand whether IET programs can be effective in improving key outcomes for adult learners, including employment and earnings.