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

Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF)

Formative Data Collections for ACF Research

0970 – 0356

Supporting Statement

Part A

February 2020

Submitted By:
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Administration for Children and Families
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Part A

Executive Summary

- **Type of Request:** This Information Collection Request is for a generic information collection under the umbrella generic, Formative Data Collections for ACF Research (0970-0356).
- **Description of Request:** The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks approval to contact Responsible Fatherhood stakeholders, program staff, and program participants to gather preliminary information about the fatherhood field with a focus on implementation challenges, particularly related to recruitment, retention, and program completion for the project called Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF). This request includes semi-structured phone discussions with stakeholders and program staff (see Instruments 1 and 2), and semi-structured in-person or virtual discussions with select program staff (see Instrument 3) and with program participants (see Instrument 4). This request also includes a brainstorming exercise with program staff and participants (see Instrument 5). The information from these activities will inform the design of the overall SIRF study by identifying implementation challenges for which solutions could be tested in the future.

  We do not intend for this information to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions.
- **Time Sensitivity:** The end of ACF's current Responsible Fatherhood grant cohort is in September 2020. The data collection activities described in this request need to be completed before the grant period ends. For this reason, we would like to begin data collection by March 2020.

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A1. Necessity for Collection

There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate this collection. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency. Since 2006, Congress has authorized dedicated funding for discretionary grants from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to programs to promote healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood and conduct capacity- and evidence-building activities. In the current cohort, there are 85 grantees, and 40 of these are Responsible Fatherhood programs. Given robust data indicating the importance of father involvement for a child's well-being, and the continued federal funding of programs to promote father involvement, understanding which programs and service delivery practices are most effective is an important priority to ACF.

Capacity- and evidence- building efforts have produced a growing body of evidence on the effectiveness of federally funded Responsible Fatherhood programs. However, these activities have repeatedly shown that Responsible Fatherhood programs face challenges recruiting fathers, enrolling them in services, and keeping them actively engaged in services, which in turn makes obtaining rigorous evidence on program effectiveness more difficult. To address these challenges, the overall Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF) project will use an iterative learning method (i.e., rapid cycle evaluation) to identify and test promising practices to address critical implementation challenges in Responsible Fatherhood programs. To do so, researchers will identify common implementation challenges and potential solutions, select Responsible Fatherhood programs to undertake iterative learning activities, work with sites on iterative learning activities, and build stronger implementation and greater capacity for a summative evaluation.

This information request, described in more detail below, is necessary to inform the study design for evaluation activities planned to begin in 2021 for the next cohort of Responsible Fatherhood grants.

A2. Purpose

Purpose and Use

This proposed information collection meets the following goals of ACF's generic clearance for formative data collections for research and evaluation (0970-0356):

- inform the development of ACF research
- maintain a research agenda that is rigorous and relevant
- ensure that research products are as current as possible
- inform the provision of technical assistance

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.

This information collection request is to conduct the first phase of the SIRF project: contact stakeholders and programs (including federal grant recipients and other non-federally funded father serving

programs) to gather information about their current practices and ask for their input on potential research questions to test in SIRF. The implementation challenges that Responsible Fatherhood programs face vary by organization based on factors like whom they serve, how they structure services, and strategies they use to engage fathers. Moreover, these challenges can change over time due to circumstances like staffing, funding, and referral partnerships. This variability in fatherhood programs that are operating today - both those that receive OFA funding and those that do not - has implications for the research questions that SIRF will test and for SIRF's study design. This first phase of information collection will begin to provide necessary information for the SIRF project. These initial activities will inform the development of iterative learning methods and tests, which will be documented in a subsequent information request package.

The results from SIRF are intended to inform future large-scale impact evaluations of programs that adopt them. A future summative study will show sizable effects only if Responsible Fatherhood programs can achieve strong implementation in these areas and use effective approaches for employment, parenting, and healthy relationship services.

Research Questions or Tests

Study activities outlined in this information collection request seek to answer the following research questions through semi-structured discussions with stakeholders, program staff, and program participants.

1. What are the key implementation challenges facing Responsible Fatherhood programs?
2. What are successful or innovative efforts to solve implementation challenges that Responsible Fatherhood programs and participants face?

Study Design

With OMB approval, the study team will conduct outreach to fatherhood programs and stakeholders (i.e., relevant researchers, technical assistance providers (national, state, and local), curriculum developers, program funders, community leaders) to collect information about implementation challenges programs face as well as potential solutions.

These discussions will first occur through one-hour telephone or video conference calls with program staff from up to 25 programs. The study team will lead the telephone meeting using a semi-structured discussion protocol (see Instruments 1 and 2, described in Table 1 below). Each protocol is designed to collect the minimum information necessary to allow us to understand the variation of programming in the field, the range of perspectives on SIRF and to assess particular study design options that would be feasible given the structure of a range of fatherhood programs.

With a select group of approximately 16 programs, the study team will conduct follow-up in-person visits or virtual conference calls with organizations serving fathers for further discussion with program staff and fathers guided by semi-structured protocols (See, Instrument 3 and Instrument 4). If the follow-up is in person, the study team will email programs Appendix E: SIRF Site Visit Agenda in advance. The study team will also observe program activities to gain insight into how programs operate in practice and the strengths and potential areas of improvement for the program. Observations will not require any involvement from staff and do not impose burden. If the follow-up conversations are conducted as a conference call, program staff and fathers have the option to dial in by phone, or

connect to video and computer audio, depending on their technical capability. The calendar appointment with conference line log-in information will include the meeting topics found in Appendix E. After identifying program challenges from staff and participant perspectives, the study team will engage staff and participants to participate in a group brainstorming session about how to address the challenges. The discussion will be guided by Instrument 5. Through this process, the study team will potentially gather dozens of ideas from each site that participates in this exercise and will learn how much convergence there is for support for similar ideas across programs.

A limitation of this process is that the information will be gathered from only a selection of father-serving programs; however, the selection of programs will be prioritized in such a way to maximize the range of responses possible that may inform SIRF design and planning (See Supporting Statement B, Section B2, for additional information).

Table 1: Description of Instruments and Data Collection Activities

Data Collection Activity	*Instrument(s)*	*Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection*	*Mode and Duration*
Conference calls with Program Staff (one-on-one or in small groups when possible)	Instrument 1: SIRF Phone Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	**Respondents**: Program Staff (up to three staff per call, up to 75 staff total) **Content**: Meeting topics include: 1) Current affiliation, role, and organization 2) Structure of the program 3) Use of data and experience with evaluation 4) Referral sources and service partners 5) Program implementation challenges 6) Program approaches to address implementation challenges 7) Site visit preparation (if applicable) **Purpose**: Calls with programs will be used to verify our prior knowledge of the programs and collect initial information about implementation challenges and promising approaches. Based on the program's answers to our question we may also begin initial site visit planning with them.	**Mode**: Telephone **Duration**: 1 hour
Conference calls with Stakeholders (one-on-one)	Instrument 2: SIRF Phone Meeting with Stakeholder Protocol	**Respondents**: Stakeholders (i.e. relevant researchers, technical assistance providers (national, state, and local), curriculum developers, program funders, community leaders) (40 stakeholders total) **Content**: Meeting topics include: 1) Current affiliation and role 2) Experience with father-serving programs 3) Experience with iterative learning strategies 4) Program implementation challenges 5) Knowledge of existing promising	**Mode**: Telephone **Duration**: 1 hour

Table 1: Description of Instruments and Data Collection Activities			
Data Collection Activity	*Instrument(s)*	*Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection*	*Mode and Duration*
		approaches to address implementation challenges 6) Ideas for other innovative approaches to address implementation challenges **Purpose**: Learn about program implementation challenges, promising practices, and research expertise.	
Semi-structured Discussions with Program Staff (one-on-one or in small groups when possible)	Instrument 3: SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	**Respondents**: Program Staff (up to 3 staff in group discussions, up to 10 staff total from each site) **Content**: Meeting topics include: 1) About the respondent 2) About the program participants 3) Recruitment 4) Service delivery 5) Engagement and retention 6) Other challenges and innovative ideas 7) Capacity for participating in learning cycles **Purpose**: Learn about the key implementation challenges facing programs serving fathers and identify successful or innovative efforts to solve challenges that programs, and participants face.	**Mode**: In-Person or Virtual Conference call **Duration**: 2.0 hours
Semi-structured Focus Group with Program Participants (small groups)	Instrument 4: SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Participant Protocol	**Respondents**: Program Participants (up to 10 in a group) **Content**: Meeting topics include: 1) About the respondent 2) Learn how the father heard about the program (recruitment) 3) Experience in the program (program services) 4) Engagement and retention in program 5) Other challenges or innovative ideas **Purpose**: Learn fathers' perspectives on challenges with successfully participating in the program and ideas to improve the experiences of people in similar situations.	**Mode**: In-Person or Virtual Conference Call **Duration**: 1.5 hours
Brainstorming with Program Participants and Staff (in groups)	Instrument 5: SIRF Follow-up Brainstorming Discussion Protocol	**Respondents**: Program staff and participants **Content**: Activity Topics Include: 1) Summary of implementation challenges discussed on visit 2) Brainstorm how to solve challenges	**Mode**: In-Person or Virtual Conference Call **Duration**: 1.5 hours

Table 1: Description of Instruments and Data Collection Activities			
Data Collection Activity	*Instrument(s)*	*Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection*	*Mode and Duration*
		3) Vote on best ideas and discussion **Purpose**: After identifying challenges from staff and participant perspectives, the team could engage select staff (or staff and participants) in a group brainstorming session about the best ways to solve challenges. Doing this in a group would allow each person to build on others' ideas and leverage multiple perspectives to generate the most innovate ideas.	

Other Data Sources and Uses of Information

The study team will also conduct a detailed literature review regarding implementation challenges in fatherhood and similar social services to inform SIRF priorities, and will use information from nFORM, (Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management; OMB Control No.: 0970-0460) the management information system used by all federally funded Responsible Fatherhood programs, supported by an ACF contract. Aggregate data reports from information kept in nFORM will be used to inform the study team about current program service utilization patterns.

A3. Use of Information Technology to Reduce Burden

The study team plans to use information technology wherever possible to streamline communications (i.e. conference calling platforms for telephone meetings). When information is available from the internet about the program services and structure, it will supplement requests for information. To the extent possible, meetings will be done by telephone to reduce burden on respondents.

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

The study team has reviewed the list of current Responsible Fatherhood grantees, looked at their websites and social media and performance information from ACF, and spoken with experts in the field. The information provided a starting point but does not sufficiently address the study's research questions.

A5. Impact on Small Businesses

Most of the programs we connect with will be small, nonprofit organizations. Burden will be minimized for respondents by restricting the discussion length to the minimum required, by conducting telephone and in-person discussions at times convenient for the respondents, and by requiring no record-keeping or written responses on the part of the programs.

A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

The study team proposes a multi-staged process for gathering information from local programs. This preliminary step will provide critical information for designing the rest of SIRF. Without the information requested for this phase of the study, it would be difficult to move forward with the next stages (e.g. rapid cycle evaluations). The proposed approach limits the scope of discussions to the information needed for the current phase of the project. Further, we will avoid undue burden on discussion attendees by conducting initial telephone calls with a larger number of programs rather than follow-up visits or in-depth discussions.

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 the overarching generic clearance for formative information collection. This notice was published on October 11, 2017, Volume 82, Number 195, page 47212, and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. During the notice and comment period, no substantive comments were received.

Consultation with Experts Outside of the Study

A panel of experts in the fatherhood field (including both practitioners and researchers) will provide guidance to the study team and ACF. The purpose of engaging subject matter experts is to supplement the knowledge of the project team as it develops a list of priorities for implementation challenges to address and promising approaches to address them, as well as methodological issues related to the study design.

A9. Tokens of Appreciation

No incentives for respondents are proposed for this information collection.

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

Personally Identifiable Information

This information request will not collect personally identifiable information.

Assurances of Privacy

Information collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. 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, the Contractor will comply with all Federal and Departmental regulations for private information.

Data Security and Monitoring

As specified in the contract, the Contractor shall protect respondent privacy to the extent permitted by law and will comply with all Federal and Departmental regulations for private information. The Contractor, MDRC is committed to maintaining the security of sensitive data. MDRC adheres to FedRAMP and FISMA standards (per NIST SP 800-53 revision 4) regarding the collection, transfer, storage, access, monitoring, and sharing of data. MDRC is currently in the process of acquiring FedRAMP moderate accreditation and anticipates receiving a FedRAMP moderate Authorization to Operate (ATO) by summer 2020. MDRC conducts regular audits and reviews of the software, hardware, vendors, network configuration, and data stored on its network. MDRC systems primarily operate on the cloud and control implementation follows the guidance prescribed by FedRAMP for Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Cloud Service Providers (CSPs).

MDRC's security procedures include the following:

1. Access to information on a need-to-know basis, supported by multi-factor authentication factors
2. End-to-end encryption, in-transit and at-rest, using TLS 1.2+ and AES256 via FIPS 140-2 modules for systems integrity, systems and communications protection, and media protection
3. Continuous monitoring of application and transport-level traffic for inbound and outbound flows

These are supplemented by 1) employee nondisclosure agreements and annual data security training, 2) IT support teams well-versed in cyber security, and 3) policies for responding to data security incidents.

A11. Sensitive Information [1]

There are no sensitive questions in this data collection.

A12. Burden

Explanation of Burden Estimates

The estimated annual burden for this information collection request is 1155 hours. This effort includes semi-structured discussions and focus groups with a total up to 387 respondents, explained below in Table 2.

[1] Examples of sensitive topics include (but not limited to): social security number; sex behavior and attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close relationships, e.g., family, pupil-teacher, employee-supervisor; mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to respondents; religion and indicators of religion; community activities which indicate political affiliation and attitudes; legally recognized privileged and analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians and ministers; records describing how an individual exercises rights guaranteed by the First Amendment; receipt of economic assistance from the government (e.g., unemployment or WIC or SNAP); immigration/citizenship status.

Table 2. Respondent Information		
Respondent Type	**Number Interviewed**	**Description**
Stakeholders	Up to 40	Leaders in the fatherhood community and programming for fathers, such as researchers; national, state, and local program technical assistance providers and curriculum developers; program funders, and other programs serving similar populations.
Program Staff	Up to 187 (up to 27 by phone only, up to 48 by phone and in-person, up to 112 in-person only)	Staff from organizations representing a range of programs across urban, suburban, and rural geographies, such as those targeting young fathers, fathers with criminal-justice involvement, or those who speak English as a second language
Program Participants	Up to 160	Past or current recipient of services at the organization.
Total	Up to 387	

Estimated Annualized Cost to Respondents

This information collection request will include three types of respondents: program staff, stakeholders, and program participants. The hourly wage rate for each type of respondent was calculated using the following criteria:

- Program Staff: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey 2019, the median weekly earnings for full-time employees age 25 and over with a bachelor's degree is $1,281. We assume a full-time work week for program staff is 40 hours per week. Therefore, the estimated hourly wage is $32.03.[2]
- Stakeholders: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey 2019, the median weekly earnings for full-time employees age 25 and over with an advanced degree is $1,559. We assume a full-time work week for stakeholders to be 40 hours per week. Therefore, the estimated hourly wage is $38.98.[2]
- Program Participants: The average hourly wage of program applicants is estimated from the average monthly earnings ($600) of study participants in the Parents and Children Together Study.[3] We assume a full work week for fathers to be 40 hours per week. Therefore, the estimated hourly wage is ($3.75).

[2] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). *News Release: Usual Weekly Earning of Wage and Salary Workers Third Quarter 2019.* Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/wkyeng.pdf)

[3] Avellar, Sarah, Reginald Covington, Quinn Moore, Ankita Patnaik, and April Wu (2018). Parents and Children Together: Effects of Four Responsible Fatherhood Programs for Low-Income Fathers. OPRE Report Number 2018-50. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Table 3: Total Burden Under this Information Request							
Instrument	Respondent	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)	Average Hourly Wage Rate	Total Annual Respondent Cost
Instrument 1: SIRF Phone Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	Program Staff	75	1	1	75	$32.03	$2,402.25.00
Instrument 2: SIRF Phone Meeting with Stakeholder Protocol	Stakeholders	40	1	1	40	$38.98	$1,559.20
Instrument 3: SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	Program Staff	160	1	2	320	$32.03	$10,249.60
Instrument 4: SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Participant Protocol	Program Participants	160	1	1.5	240	$3.75	$900.00
Instrument 5: SIRF Follow-up Brainstorming Discussion Protocol	Program Staff	160	1	1.5	240	$32.03	$7,687.20
	Program Participants	160	1	1.5	240	$3.75	$900.00
Total					1155		$ 23,698.25

A13. Costs

There are no additional costs to respondents.

A14. Estimated Annualized Costs to the Federal Government

Cost Category	Estimated Costs
Instrument Development and OMB Clearance	$ 106,150
Field Work	$ 1,024,545
Publications/Dissemination	$ 0
Total costs over the request period	$ 1,130,695
Annual costs	$1,130,695

A15. Reasons for changes in burden

This is for an individual information collection under the umbrella formative generic clearance for ACF research (0970-0356).

A16. Timeline

Initial calls and follow-up discussions with local programs for the purpose of information gathering will take place following OMB approval for approximately 6 months. Plans for use of data collected later in the project will be explained in a subsequent package.

A17. Exceptions

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

Attachments

Appendix A_SIRF Phone Meeting Email Template

Appendix B_SIRF Project Description

Appendix C_SIRF Phone Meeting Topics for Program Staff

Appendix D_SIRF Phone Meeting Topics for Stakeholders

Appendix E_SIRF Site Visit Agenda