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Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

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Date: September 14, 2020

Subject: Non-substantive Change Request – Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project [Formative Data Collections for ACF Research] (OMB #0970-0356)

This memo requests approval of non-substantive changes to the approved formative data collection for Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project [Formative Data Collections for ACF Research] (OMB #0970-0356). We are proposing non-substantive changes to Attachment A. NextGen Site Assessment Discussion Guide to include topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

The Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies (NextGen) Project is intended to build on the findings and lessons learned from 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. 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) is sponsoring this study and Mathematica is conducting it under contract to OPRE.

In May 2019, OMB approved a generic information collection request (ICR) for formative data collection instruments for the NextGen Project. The purpose of the formative data collection is to inform the selection of interventions for the evaluations conducted for the NextGen Project. The approved instruments included a semi-structured discussion guide to be used during interviews with program staff (Attachment A. NextGen Site Assessment Discussion Guide) and a guide to facilitate a group brainstorming discussion about the purposes of the intervention and successes and challenges in its implementation (Attachment B. NextGen Brainstorming Meeting Guide). To date, these instruments have been used during site visits to programs that seem promising and evaluable and therefore are candidates for inclusion in the study.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on the delivery of human services, the shift from in-person to virtual services being primary among them. It is critical to understand these effects to inform the assessment and selection of interventions for evaluation under the NextGen Project. Therefore, this request is for non-substantive changes to the previously approved semi-structured discussion guide to include topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have also

added language to the Supporting Statements to indicate that site visits to programs being assessed may occur in person or virtually (via phone or video) according to COVID-19 restrictions.

Overview of Requested Changes

This memo requests the following non-substantive changes:

- Guidance for interviewers to probe about any changes that happened as a result of COVID-19 added to the semi-structured discussion guide (reflected in Attachment A. NextGen Site Assessment Discussion Guide_rev).
- COVID-19-related topics added to the semi-structured discussion guide (reflected in Attachment A. NextGen Site Assessment Discussion Guide_rev, Section H).

These proposed changes do not impact burden estimates for the site assessment discussion guide.

Time Sensitivities

The project team would like to begin collecting this information from sites being assessed for the NextGen Project as soon as possible and therefore appreciate a prompt response.