

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

Rapid-Cycle Learning Plan Template for Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Project Impact Grant Recipients

Formative Data Collections for Program Support

0970 – 0531

Supporting Statement

Part A

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Part A

Executive Summary

- **Type of Request:** This Information Collection Request is for a generic information collection under the generic umbrella of Formative Data Collections for Program Support (0970-0531).
- **Description of Request:** This request is to collect completed rapid-cycle learning plan templates from 16 recipients of the Project Impact: Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Rapid Cycle Impact Project grants awarded by the Office of Community Services (OCS). The project team will use the completed rapid-cycle learning plan templates to inform technical assistance given to grant recipients to build their capacity to conduct rapid-cycle learning. The project team will also use the completed plan templates to inform a summary of grant recipients' accomplishments and the lessons learned about providing technical assistance to these recipients. The completed plan templates are not intended to be generalized to a broader population and this information will not be used as the principal basis of public policy decisions.
- **Time Sensitivity:** The project team would like to distribute the rapid-cycle learning plan template as soon as possible—ideally beginning in December 2021—to give grant recipients enough time to complete the template as they plan for their rapid-cycle learning activities.

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A1. Necessity for Collection

Recognizing the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided additional funding to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), administered by the Office of Community Services (OCS) in the Administration for Children and Families. With this funding, OCS awarded 16 Project Impact grants in September 2021. The goal of Project Impact is to grow the capacity of grant recipients to use rapid-cycle learning to initiate and improve community-based projects that focus on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Project Impact grants must focus on CARES Act priorities, including addressing health outcomes, adapting to remote service delivery, reinventing the local safety net, providing job training for the post-COVID economy, supporting families affected by school and child care disruptions, and offering other services that strengthen individual and family resilience.

Project Impact grants also require that recipients develop and implement rapid-cycle learning, which will help recipients to build on lessons learned as they implement their projects and increase their long-term capacity to make evidence-driven decisions and address poverty in their communities. As stated in the funding opportunity announcement, grant recipients will develop individual plans for rapid-cycle learning. This proposed information collection would allow OCS to systematically collect plans for rapid-cycle learning from all grant recipients, which is needed for OCS to adequately support recipients to meet the goals outlined for Project Impact funding. The project team will provide a standardized template for grant recipients to use to document their rapid-cycle learning plans (Instrument 1: Project Impact Rapid-Cycle Learning Plan Template). There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate this collection. ACF is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency.

A2. Purpose

Purpose and Use

This proposed information collection meets the following goals of ACF's generic clearance for formative data collections for program support (0970-0531):

- Planning for provision of evaluation-related training or technical assistance (T/TA).

Grant recipients will complete the template (Instrument 1) to prepare for rapid-cycle learning and inform refinements to their CARES Act-focused projects over the grant period. The project team will use Instrument 1 to inform T/TA provided to recipients of Project Impact grants to build their capacity to conduct rapid-cycle learning. Specifically, the project team will use completed plan templates to: (1) give each grant recipient individual feedback on their plans for rapid-cycle learning and ways to improve their capacity to conduct rapid-cycle learning and (2) develop training content and tools that will support this set of grant recipients with conducting rapid-cycle learning.

After the 15-month grants end for recipients, the project team will use data from Instrument 1 to synthesize project learning and develop a public synthesis report that summarizes accomplishments of the grant recipients, highlights lessons learned from the grant projects and from providing TA to grant recipients, and offers recommendations for replication of successful rapid-learning projects. Project learning will inform dissemination products that may include grantee profiles, tip sheets, briefs, and presentations to other entities that receive CSBG funds. The synthesis report and other dissemination products will support ACF with sharing learning with CSBG state agencies and community action

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agencies receiving CSBG funds, as well as other human services agencies focusing on community-level poverty reduction.

The information to be 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.

Guiding Questions

The project team will use the completed rapid-cycle learning plans to answer three questions:

1. What individual feedback do grant recipients need on their rapid-cycle learning plans, including their goals, implementation plans, factors that may help or hinder implementation, and expected outcomes?
2. What capacities do grant recipients have as they begin to conduct rapid-cycle learning and what T/TA can strengthen these capacities?
3. What training and tools could be given to Project Impact grant recipients to support their efforts to conduct rapid-cycle learning?

Information Collection Procedures and Processes

The project team will collect completed rapid-cycle learning plans from the 16 Project Impact grant recipients at three points over the 15-month grant period. The initial collection will be early in the grant period (around Month 4). Then, the project team will collect updated plans in the middle (around Month 9) and near the end (Month 15) of the grant period. The project team will distribute the rapid-cycle learning plan template to grant recipients through an individual email sent to each recipient (Appendix A provides this email template). The project team will ask grant recipients to submit the completed template over email by a specific date. The project team will follow-up with grant recipients, as needed.

The project team will use the completed plans to inform T/TA given to recipients and to summarize recipients' accomplishments and lessons learned during the grant. Assessment of change in recipients' plans or capacities will be descriptive. Limitations of the project methodology will be clearly stated in published materials. Information will not support causal linkage between T/TA services and changes in recipients' plans or capacities. Results are intended to only represent the grant recipients.

| <i>Data Collection Activity</i> | <i>Instrument</i> | <i>Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection</i> | <i>Mode and Duration</i> |
|---|---|---|--|
| Complete rapid-cycle learning plan at three time points | Instrument 1: Project Impact Rapid-Cycle Learning Plan Template | <p>Respondents: Recipients of Project Impact: CSBG Rapid-Cycle Impact Project grants</p> <p>Content: Describe project goals and intended outcomes, assess rapid-cycle learning capacity, and identify rapid-cycle learning questions</p> <p>Purpose: Collect information on rapid-cycle learning plans in a standardized manner, allowing more efficient review and T/TA from the project team</p> | <p>Mode: Email</p> <p>Duration: 2 hours for the first completion of the plan template; 1 hour each for second and third updates to the plan template</p> |

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Other Data Sources and Uses of Information

In addition to information grant recipients will provide in Instrument 1, recipients described their plans for rapid-cycle learning in their grant applications. The project team will combine information from Instrument 1 and the grant applications to understand recipients' plans for and needs related to rapid-cycle learning.

A3. Use of Information Technology to Reduce Burden

The burden on grant recipients is minimal. The project team will send the Project Impact Rapid-Cycle Learning Plan Template to grant recipients via email. The project team will collect completed rapid-cycle learning plans via email and will not require any in-person follow-up.

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

The project team will provide T/TA support to recipients on how to fill out the rapid-cycle learning plans. To reduce the burden on grant recipients, the project team will ask grant recipients to update their initial rapid-cycle learning plan at two time points instead of asking for an entirely new plan. The project team will also encourage recipients to use information in their grant applications to complete the plan.

A5. Impact on Small Businesses

Most of the grant recipients are nonprofit organizations, some of which are small entities. The burden for grant recipients will be minimized by restricting the required elements within the rapid-cycle learning plan to those most important to begin rapid-cycle learning activities.

A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

Without a standardized template, the project team would be unable to review grant recipients' rapid-cycle learning plans or identify additional TA opportunities in a consistent way. If the project team were to collect information at only one time point, the team would not be able to systematically assess how grant recipients' learning plans and capacity to engage in rapid-cycle learning change over time.

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 two notices in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of the

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overarching generic clearance for formative information collection. The first notice was published on October 13, 2020, Volume 85, Number 198, page 64480, and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. The second notice published on December 28, 2020, Volume 85, Number 248, page 84343, and provided a thirty-day period for public comment. ACF did not receive any substantive comments.

Consultation with Experts

The project team does not expect to consult outside experts to develop or complete the rapid-cycle learning plan templates.

A9. Tokens of Appreciation

No tokens of appreciation for respondents are proposed for this information collection.

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

Personally Identifiable Information

This data collection effort does not include collecting personally identifiable information.

Assurances of Privacy

Information collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Grant recipients will be informed of all planned uses of data, including that some of the information they provide may be shared with OCS to help design and plan T/TA activities; 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

No information will be given to anyone outside of the project team. The rapid-cycle learning plans submitted by grant recipients will be stored on networks for the contractors providing T/TA to the recipients of Project Impact grants, who are part of the project team (Mathematica and Public Strategies). These networks are accessible only to staff on the project team.

A11. Sensitive Information¹

There are no sensitive questions in this data collection.

¹ Examples of sensitive topics include (but are not limited to): Social Security number; sexual 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 that 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.

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A12. Burden

Explanation of Burden Estimates

Grant recipient leaders will review instructions, which are included within the instrument, and complete the rapid-cycle learning plan template. The project team estimates it will take two hours to first complete the plan template and one hour for each update.

Estimated Annualized Cost to Respondents

To compute the total estimated annual cost, the total burden hours were multiplied by the estimated average hourly wage for local program directors (Table 1). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey 2020, the median hourly wage for full-time employees over age 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher is \$35.50. To account for fringe benefits, we multiplied the wage rate by 2, which is \$71.00.

Table 1. Cost and burden

| 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) | Average hourly wage rate | Total annual respondent cost |
|--------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Instrument 1 | 16 | 3 | 1.33 | 64 | \$71.00 | \$4,544 |

A13. Costs

There are no additional costs to respondents.

A14. Estimated Annualized Costs to the Federal Government

The total estimated cost to the federal government for the data collection activities under this current request will be \$30,000. This includes personnel effort plus other direct and indirect costs.

Table 2. Cost category table

| Cost category | Estimated Costs |
|--|------------------|
| Distribute and collect rapid-cycle learning plans from Project Impact grant recipients | \$ 25,000 |
| Publications and dissemination | \$ 5,000 |
| Total costs over the request period | \$ 30,000 |

A15. Reasons for changes in burden

This request is for an individual information collection under the umbrella formative generic clearance for program support (0970-0531).

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A16. Timeline

The information collected under this request will be used to strengthen the capacity of grant recipients to conduct rapid-cycle learning. Upon OMB approval, the dissemination of materials and the collection of rapid-cycle learning plans will take place through December 2022. Publication of grantee accomplishments and lessons learned will take place by September 2023.

A17. Exceptions

The instrument will display the expiration date for OMB approval. No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

Attachments

Instrument 1: Project Impact Rapid-Cycle Learning Plan Template

Appendix A: Project Impact Rapid-Cycle Plan Email (an email for sending the plan template to recipients)