

# **Request for Approval under the “FNS Fast Track Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback” (OMB Control Number: 0584-0611)**

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## **TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) Program Marketing/Outreach Support: Participant & Prospective Participant Discussions

## **PURPOSE:**

USDA/FNS places a priority on supporting the economic self-sufficiency of SNAP participants by connecting work-ready individuals to good jobs. The SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program, operated by all State SNAP agencies, helps participants gain skills and experience that will increase their ability to obtain employment. Since 2014, FNS has worked extensively with State SNAP agencies to expand their SNAP E&T programs, offer services closely tied to labor market needs, and improve their communications with SNAP clients. The goal of these efforts is to reach SNAP participants through E&T services to improve their employment outcomes.

In order to meet these important objectives, FNS must understand how best to meet the needs of current SNAP E&T participants, as well as those individuals who are receiving SNAP and eligible for SNAP E&T but do not participate (referred to as “prospective E&T participants” or “SNAP-eligible non-participants”). To improve the E&T program’s ability to effectively reach customers, FNS proposes to conduct a series of robust discussion sessions with SNAP E&T participants, as well as SNAP E&T prospective participants. A total of 4 discussion sessions will be held virtually, including 6 participants in each session, and each session will last 60 minutes. These focus groups will serve as a primary data collection method to inform the campaign branding approach, messaging, and creative development.

These discussion sessions will help FNS understand the perceptions of the SNAP E&T program and its national leadership; the value of the State SNAP E&T programs; the perceived benefits to States and SNAP E&T participants; and the effectiveness of current communications efforts to enhance the perception of the program and value to potential participants. The insights gathered will guide the communications and marketing strategy for SNAP E&T to State SNAP agencies and participants.

## **DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:**

In total, we intend to conduct 4 focus groups with 6 individuals in each. Individuals will either qualify for the SNAP E&T Participants focus groups, conducted among current SNAP E&T participants, or the Prospective SNAP E&T Participants focus group, conducted among SNAP recipients that are SNAP E&T-eligible non-participants.

All individuals will be recruited via a marketing list provider and all respondents will receive incentives for their time. Respondents will be recruited from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 2 territories that are served by SNAP E&T State Agencies.

**Table 1. Focus Group Distribution**

	SNAP E&T Participants At least 2 Focus Groups	SNAP E&T Eligible Non-Participants (Prospective) Remaining Focus Groups
Criteria for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Currently receiving SNAP</li> <li>● Currently participating in a job training/ development program as part of SNAP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Currently receiving SNAP.</li> <li>● Not currently participating in the TANF cash assistance program.</li> <li>● Currently eligible to be in a work program.</li> </ul>

Recruitment

Individuals will be identified for potential participation utilizing a marketing list provided by a sample provider, Marketing Systems Group, which includes individuals who are lower income levels across the United States. A random sample of individuals on the list will receive invitations to participate in the virtual discussions through email/text messages/calls (Attachment A).

Those who are interested in joining a focus group will complete a digital survey with screening questions (Attachment B). A group of communications, marketing, and social and behavior change specialists developed the screening questions to determine whether the respondents are current SNAP E&T participants or prospective SNAP E&T participants and ensure they meet the criteria for inclusion in the sessions.

Individuals qualify for the SNAP E&T Participants discussions if they are eligible for or are currently participating in a job training/ development program as part of food benefits support (SNAP E&T Participants).

Individuals qualify for the Prospective SNAP E&T participant discussions if they indicate they currently participate in a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); do not currently participate in the Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program; and answer questions to indicate they are currently eligible to be in a work program.

To ensure we have an inclusive and diverse sample of individuals to participate in the discussions, we plan to collect demographic information such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, and income.

Confirmation

After completing the screener, participants who qualify will be sent confirmation that outlines the purpose of the research, the fact that it is voluntary research, a consent form (Attachment C), the date and time of the virtual focus group, and log-in instructions.

Professional recruiters will be used to confirm and schedule the focus groups using a secured site and will follow up with the interested individual via text, email, or phone. The use of the secure site does not impose additional burden on the respondents.

All focus group will use the discussion guide (Attachment D) which will help FNS understand the perceptions of the SNAP E&T program, the perceived benefits to SNAP E&T participants, and the effectiveness of current communications efforts to enhance the perception of the program and value to potential participants.

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** (Check one)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form          | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Satisfaction Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software) | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Discussion Group       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus Group                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quick census or surveys                       |   |

**CERTIFICATION:**

I certify the following to be true:

1. The collection is voluntary.
2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
3. The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other federal agencies.
4. The results are not intended to be disseminated to the public.
5. Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions.
6. The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the future.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Marcie Foster \_\_\_\_\_

To assist review, please provide answers to the following question:

**Personally Identifiable Information:**

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected?  Yes  No

USDA will be collecting the following information from participants to schedule them for the sessions:

First and Last Name

State

Phone

Email

This information will be collected and used to confirm and schedule the focus groups. Some participants prefer to communicate via phone, text or email and we will use their preferred communication. Any PII will be stored on a secure site and securely destroyed upon conclusion of the discussion groups.

2. If Yes, will any information that is collected be included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974?  Yes  No All PII is securely destroyed after the research is completed.
3. If Yes, has an up-to-date System of Records Notice (SORN) been published?  Yes  No

**Sensitive Information:**

1. Will sensitive information, such as demographic characteristics, be collected from respondents?  
 Yes  No

2. If yes, explain the necessity of such information to the programmatic objective(s)?

Individuals will be identified for potential participation utilizing a screener document (Attachment B). To ensure we have an inclusive and diverse sample of individuals to participate in the discussions, we plan to collect demographic information such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, income, etc. We ensure that people representing underserved/underrepresented communities are included in the discussions. The demographic information is not calculated nor held as a quota for participation.

In addition, PII (respondents' contact information) will only be obtained by the recruiters in order to schedule the focus group discussions. This information will not be shared with the government nor the research team conducting the data collection and analysis. Finally, all respondent information will be anonymous and confidential, and no PII will be recorded or included in reporting.

**Gifts or Payments:**

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants?  Yes  No

FNS will provide an incentive of a \$75 electronic gift card incentive if they qualify and successfully complete the discussions. We have utilized this incentive level in previously OMB-approved qualitative research for consumer studies of other Federal Agencies. After the successful participation in the discussions, participants will receive the electronic gift cards via email using a digital incentive platform called Rybbon/BHN Rewards. The platform has data protection and security systems in place to protect PII.

Incentives have been considered a standard practice in conducting qualitative research, helping to maximize participation, manage recruitment hours, and reduce no-show rates. For 60 minute focus groups, the incentive can be used to offset any child-care cost for harder-to-reach groups, even for groups that are conducted virtually.

## BURDEN HOURS

Category of Respondent	Activity	No. of Respondents	Participation Time (in hours)	Burden Hours
<b>Recruiting Email/ Text Message (Attachment A)</b>				
Individuals (Respondents)	Reading/Responding to E-mail/Text Message	100	.083 hrs	8.3 hrs
Individuals (Non-Respondents)	Reading E-mail/Text Message	4,900	.083 hrs	406.7 hrs
<b>Screening Questions (Attachment B)</b>				
Individuals (Respondents)	Completing screener questions	50	.083 hrs	4.15 hrs
Individuals (Non-Respondents)	Completing screener questions	50	.083 hrs	4.15 hrs
Individuals	Confirmations	50	.05 hrs	2.5 hrs
<b>Individuals Consent Forms (Attachment C)</b>				
Individuals	Reading/signing Consent Form	24	.083 hrs	1.99 hrs
<b>Focus Group Participation Discussion Guide (Attachment D)</b>				
Individuals	Participation in focus group	24	1.3 hrs*	31.2 hrs
<b>Totals</b>		<b>5,000</b>		<b>458.99 hrs</b>

\*NOTE: the data collection will take 60 minutes, but respondents will need an additional 20 minutes for the technology check and to ensure they can log into the online interface.

A total of 5,000 individuals will be contacted in order to conduct research among 24 individuals. The 4,900 non-respondents are participants who will read the recruitment message but choose not to respond. The remaining 100 individuals will respond to the screener questions. Fifty (50) of those individuals will not fully complete the screener questions or will not qualify. The remaining 50 will be confirmed for the focus groups (i.e., meet recruitment criteria). Of the 50 individuals confirmed for the focus groups, we will conduct 4 focus groups and seat 6 per group, for a total of 24 focus group respondents. The focus group will use the designed discussion guide to lead the conversation, for a total of 60 minutes. An additional 20 minutes was added to account for logging in to the virtual meeting.

The estimate of respondent cost is based on the burden estimates and utilizes the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2022 National Occupational and Wage Statistics, All Occupations (00-0000) ([http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm)). The hourly mean wage for functions performed by respondents is estimated at \$29.76 per hour. With a burden of 458.99 hours at \$29.76 per hour, the base annual respondent cost is estimated at \$13,659.54. An additional 33% of the estimated base annual respondent cost must be added to represent fully loaded wages, equaling \$4,507.65. Thus, the total annual respondent cost is \$18,167.19.

## **FEDERAL COST:**

It is estimated that Federal employees will spend approximately 18 hours overseeing this collection. Using the hourly wage rate of \$53.67 for a GS-13 step 1 Federal employee from the 2023 Washington, DC locality pay table, 12 of those hours will be spent managing the contractor's operation of the focus groups and reviewing the findings. Using the hourly wage rate of \$74.60 for a GS-15 step 1 Federal employee from the 2023 Washington, DC locality pay table, the remaining 5 hours will be spent providing management support to this effort.

These two staff costs total (12 hours x \$53.67/hour) + (5 hours x \$74.60/hour) total \$1,017.04. Plus \$335.62 in fringe benefits, the total cost of Federal employees is \$1,352.66.

Contractor costs to the Federal Government will total \$36,000 over the course of this collection based on fully loaded rates. This is a one-time cost.

When combining the Federal employee and contractor costs, the total annual cost to the Federal Government for this information collection is estimated at \$37,352.66.

### **If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:**

#### **The selection of your targeted respondents**

1. Do you have a customer list or something similar that defines the universe of potential respondents and do you have a sampling plan for selecting from this universe?  
 Yes     No
2. If the answer is yes, please provide a description of both below (or attach the sampling plan)?  
If the answer is no, please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them?

A list of contacts who are likely eligible for benefits for SNAP will be sourced by a sample provider, Marketing Systems Group. A sample of the contacts will receive invitations to participate in the discussions through emails/text messages/calls (Attachment A). Those who are interested will complete a digital survey with screening questions (Attachment B) to ensure they meet the criteria for inclusion in the discussion and to register for a designated date/time.

After individuals are confirmed through the invitation/screening process mentioned above, they will receive information about connecting to the focus group platform and will ask to complete a consent form (Attachment C). The invitation/screening process and discussions will be conducted in February-March 2023.

#### **Administration of the Instrument**

1. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)  
 Web-based or other forms of Social Media  
 Telephone  
 In-person

- Mail
- Other, Explain

2. Will interviewers or facilitators be used?  Yes  No

**See Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Recruiting Email and Text Message
- Attachment B: Screening Questions
- Attachment C: Consent Form
- Attachment D: Discussion Guide
- IRB Memo

**Instructions for completing Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback”**

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**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:** Provide the name of the collection that is the subject of the request. (e.g. Comment card for soliciting feedback on xxxx)

**PURPOSE:** Provide a brief description of the purpose of this collection and how it will be used. If this is part of a larger study or effort, please include this in your explanation.

**DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:** Provide a brief description of the targeted group or groups for this collection of information. These groups must have experience with the program.

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** Check one box. If you are requesting approval of other instruments under the generic, you must complete a form for each instrument.

**CERTIFICATION:** Please read the certification carefully. If you incorrectly certify, the collection will be returned as improperly submitted or it will be disapproved.

**PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION:** Provide answers to the questions. Note: Agencies should only collect PII to the extent necessary, and they should only retain PII for the period of time that is necessary to achieve a specific objective.

**GIFTS OR PAYMENTS:** If you answer yes to the question, please describe the incentive and provide a justification for the amount.

**SENSITIVE INFORMATION:** If you answer yes to the question, please describe the nature of the sensitive information being collected (e.g., race, sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private) and provide a justification for its use.

**BURDEN HOURS:**

**Category of Respondents:** Identify who you expect the respondents to be in terms of the following categories: (1) Individuals or Households; (2) Businesses (i.e., Profit, Not for Profit, and/or Farms); (3) State, local, or tribal governments; or (4) Federal Government. Only one type of respondent can be selected per row.

**No. of Respondents:** Provide an estimate of the Number of respondents.

**Participation Time:** Provide an estimate of the amount of time required for a respondent to participate (e.g. fill out a survey or participate in a focus group)

**Burden:** Provide the Annual burden hours: Multiply the Number of responses and the participation time and divide by 60.

**FEDERAL COST:** Provide an estimate of the annual cost to the Federal government.

**If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:**

**The selection of your targeted respondents.** Please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them. If the answer is yes, to the first question, you may provide the sampling plan in an attachment.

**Administration of the Instrument:** Identify how the information will be collected. More than one box may be checked. Indicate whether there will be interviewers (e.g. for surveys) or facilitators (e.g., for focus groups) used.

**Submit all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.**

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