

Feedback After the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's 2024 Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency (RECS)

Formative Data Collections for Program Support

0970 – 0531

Supporting Statement

Part A

June 2024

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

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 Program Support (0970-0531).
- **Description of Request:** The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) plans to conduct a survey and convene focus group sessions to assess the use of conference content following the Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency (RECS) 2024, an ACF-funded meeting open to the public. OPRE will use the information gathered from the survey and focus groups to inform the planning of future conferences. We do not intend for this information to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions.
- **Time Sensitivity:** RECS 2024 was held May 29-31, 2024. To ensure that the data collection provides valid and reliable feedback on attendees' use of conference information after the event, the survey will be distributed, and the focus groups will be convened, within 6 - 10 weeks of the conclusion of RECS on May 31, 2024.

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A1. Necessity for Collection

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) hosts the Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency (RECS) every two years. RECS is a forum for researchers, state and local administrators, practitioners, and federal officials and policymakers to discuss cutting-edge research on programs, policies, and services that support families on the path to economic self-sufficiency and well-being. RECS 2024 provided an opportunity to hear the latest research findings, discuss ways to incorporate findings into the design and implementation of programs, and identify future research needs. The conference is an in-person event with select sessions shared virtually.

One of the primary goals of RECS is to disseminate and facilitate the use of the latest research in the field of family economic self-sufficiency. In order to support OPRE's interest in assessing whether the conference meets this goal, OPRE needs input from conference attendees. Through this data collection, ACF will be better positioned to plan future conferences.

There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate this collection. ACF is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency. ACF has contracted with AIR to complete this work.

A2. Purpose

Purpose and Use

The purpose of this information collection is to understand attendee experiences at RECS and their use of conference content. This includes input on how RECS attendees within specific attendee segments (i.e., groups of attendees with shared characteristics, such as their professional affiliation, mode of RECS attendance, and/or their years of work experience) retain and use knowledge gained during the conference in their daily work following the conference.

ACF will use the information for internal planning purposes to inform future conference planning and dissemination efforts.

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

- Obtain feedback about processes and/or practices to inform ACF program development or support.
- Inform learning agendas and research priorities.

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.

Research Questions

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The research domains for this study are: (a) attendee goals and needs related to attending RECS, (b) attendee learning experiences at the conference, and (c) use of conference research and information. The table below lists detailed research questions for each of these domains.

Domains	High-Level Questions	Survey	Focus Group
A. Goals & Needs	1. What were the attendee's goals related to attending RECS 2024?	Item 5	Item 3
	2. What were the attendees' topics of interest?	Item 6	Item 2
	3. Did the attendees need specific information that they were hoping to learn at RECS 2024? If so, what were these informational needs?	--	Item 4
B. Learning Experiences at The Conference	1. Was RECS 2024 the first time the attendee attended RECS?	Item 2	Participant Info Survey
	2. Did the attendee attend the conference virtually, in-person, or both?	Item 3	Participant Info Survey
	3. Approximately how many sessions did the attendee attend at RECS 2024?	Item 4	Participant Info Survey
	4. What processes and tools did attendees use to capture information shared at RECS 2024?	Item 7	Item 5
C. Use of Conference Research and Information	1. How did attendees access the information learned at RECS after the conference?	Item 8	Item 6
	2. Has the information participants learned at the conference changed how they understand an issue? (conceptual research use)	Item 9, Item 13	Item 8 (<i>Item 7 provides scaffolding</i>)
	3. Has the information participants learned at the conference been directly used in decision-making? (instrumental research use)	Item 10 - Item 13	Item 9
	4. What changes do attendees suggest so it is easier to retain and use information provided at RECS?	Item 14	Item 11
	5. Aside from RECS, what are trusted sources	--	Item 10

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Domains	High-Level Questions	Survey	Focus Group
	of information on research on human services programs and policies?		
D. Background Information	6. Professional background and select demographics (work experience and level of education)	Items 16 - 17	Item 1

Study Design/Information Collection Procedures and Processes

Data Collection Activity	Instruments	Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection	Mode and Duration
Survey	Instrument 1 – OPRE Post-RECS Data Collection Survey Questions	<p>Respondents: RECS attendees.</p> <p>Content: Multiple-choice and open-ended questions in a short survey.</p> <p>Purpose: Gain a high-level understanding of attendee experiences at RECS and their use of conference content.</p>	<p>Mode: Virtual (Vovici)</p> <p>Duration: 10 minutes</p>
Focus Groups (4 sessions)	Instrument 2 – OPRE Post-RECS Focus Group Facilitation Guide	<p>Respondents: RECS attendees who indicate willingness to participate in the focus group during registration, at the conference, and/or via a post-conference email invitation. Each focus group will represent one of OPRE’s prioritized attendee segments.</p> <p>Content: Facilitated discussion based on guiding questions targeted to the various attendee segments</p> <p>Purpose: Gather input on how RECS attendees within specific segments retain and use knowledge gained during the conference in their daily work.</p>	<p>Mode: Virtual group discussions</p> <p>Duration: 90 minutes each</p>

Other Data Sources and Uses of Information

The contracted study team will leverage registrant information from this year’s conference to identify different groups/segments of conference attendees and prioritize which groups to invite to participate in focus groups.

A3. Use of Information Technology to Reduce Burden

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The survey will be disseminated via an online form to all RECS attendees via email. The focus groups will be held virtually via Zoom, which reduces burden on participants to travel. In addition to taking notes during the focus groups, these sessions will be recorded, with participants' consent, to ensure that information is accurately captured. The recordings will only be used for the purposes of this project and accessed by the immediate study team at AIR.

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

The discussion questions are based on OPRE's understanding of the ways that attendees might revisit and use knowledge obtained during RECS. However, there is no existing information available on how attendees are actually utilizing RECS content after attending the conference. The survey and focus groups will provide critical perspectives to inform the relevance and usability of conference content and will support OPRE's planning for future conferences.

A5. Impact on Small Businesses

No small businesses will be involved with this information collection, with the exception that some conference attendees, and therefore respondents to the data collection, may be employed by a small business. The voluntary survey will be conducted online and voluntary focus group discussions will be held virtually, allowing more flexibility for those who choose to participate.

A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

This is a one-time data collection.

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 this information collection request to extend approval of the umbrella generic with minor changes. The notice was published on January 28, 2022, (87 FR 4603), and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. ACF did not receive any comments on the first notice. A second notice was published, allowing a thirty-day period for public comment, in conjunction with submission of the request to OMB. ACF did not receive any comments on the second notice.

Consultation with Experts

No external experts were consulted in preparation for this data collection activity.

A9. Tokens of Appreciation

It is extremely important to provide experts, staff, and others providing their feedback for these efforts with equitable compensation or tokens of appreciation for participation. As noted in a 2022 report by

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the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation¹ this “helps ensure a diverse population with varied views can participate.” We plan to provide Honoraria to focus group participants, as described in section A13.

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

Personally Identifiable Information

We request professional affiliation on the survey instrument and the focus group protocol includes a request for attendee names, their employer, and job role. We will also use the names and email addresses provided when indicating interest in the proposed information collection to match the interested individuals to RECS registration information in order to identify potential focus group participants from a variety of career backgrounds. The attendee names and email addresses will also be used to reach out to attendees who express interest in participating and invite them to participate in the focus groups. Participants were notified of these planned uses for the PII prior to completing the interest indication. The professional affiliation information will be used to determine if survey respondents include people from a range of career backgrounds. The employer and job role information will be used to confirm that the formed focus groups represent attendees with a range of career backgrounds.

Information will not be maintained in a paper or electronic system from which data are actually or directly retrieved by an individuals' personal identifier.

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, and that their participation is voluntary. As specified in the contract, the Contractor will comply with all Federal and Departmental regulations to keep information private.

Data Security and Monitoring

Survey results and focus group session recordings will be password-protected and housed on a secure MS Teams space by the Contractor. The recordings will be used to generate final reporting on findings and able to be accessed only by the very limited group of staff whose access is required. All recordings will be destroyed once the summary reports are submitted and approved by ACF.

A11. Sensitive Information²

¹ <chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/230a8fe8986f162910b9f29f6d050f35/Recruiting-Lived-Experience.pdf>

² 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.

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No sensitive information will be collected as part of this data collection activity.

A12. Burden

Explanation of Burden Estimates

The survey will be structured so that it can be completed in 10 minutes. Based on response rates to previous RECS surveys, we anticipate receiving responses from a maximum of 150 attendees.

Each focus group session will be 90 minutes in length to allow sufficient time for discussion with participants. This estimate is based on prior experience with using virtual meetings to gather information from participants. Each focus group will be attended by 4 – 6 attendees and we expect a total of 24 participants across the focus groups.

There may be an overlap in the focus group participants and survey respondents.

Estimated Annualized Cost to Respondents

Respondents will include TA providers, researchers, program providers, and practitioners. We have used the following wage data for each respondent type to calculate estimated costs to respondents. All data is from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2023 (https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm)

- **TA Providers:** Social Scientists and related workers: [May 2023 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates \(bls.gov\)](#); BLS Job Code 19-3000; May 2023: \$47.72/hr.
- **Researchers:** Economists: [Economists \(bls.gov\)](#); BLS Job Code: 19-3011 May 2023: \$63.78/hr.
- **Program Providers:** Social and community service managers: [Social and Community Service Managers \(bls.gov\)](#); BLS Job Code 11-9151; May 2023: \$40.10/hr.
- **Practitioners:** Social Workers, All Other: [Social Workers, All Other \(bls.gov\)](#); BLS Job Code 21 – 1029; May 2023: \$33.08/hr.

Based on this information, the average hourly wage is estimated to be \$46.17/hr.

Instrument	No. of Respondents (total over request period)	No. of Responses per Respondent (total over request period)	Avg. Burden per Response (in hours)	Total/ Annual Burden (in hours)	Average Hourly Wage Rate	Total Annual Respondent Cost
Instrument 1 – OPRE Post-RECS Data Collection	150	1	0.16	24	\$46.17	\$1,108.08

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Survey Questions						
Instrument 2 - OPRE Post-RECS Focus Group Facilitation Guide	24	1	1.5	36	\$46.17	\$1,662.12
Totals				60		\$ 2,770.2

Note: There may be an overlap in the focus group participants and survey respondents.

A13. Costs

Directly engaging individual with experience and expertise with government services is in line with the following priorities of the current Administration and HHS:

- [Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust In Government.](#)
- ACF's [Evaluation Policy](#)
- [Strategic Plan FY 2022 – 2026 | HHS.gov](#)

Honoraria in the amount of \$100 per individual will be provided to focus group participants to compensate them as experts for sharing their conference experiences and their use of conference content disseminated at RECS 2024. The purpose of the honoraria is to acknowledge and compensate individuals for both their time and contribution of their expertise in their respective professional roles following RECS 2024.

A14. Estimated Annualized Costs to the Federal Government

Cost Category	Estimated Costs
Data Collection: Survey, and Focus Groups	\$9,389.58
Data Analysis	\$7,574.41
Reporting	\$15,345.72
Total/Annual costs over the request period	\$ 32,309.71

A15. Reasons for changes in burden

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

A16. Timeline

Date(s)	Activity
April 2024	Develop and prioritize attendee segments
May 29 – 31, 2024	RECS Conference
June – July 2024	Prepare for data collection
July – August 2024	<i>Pending OMB approval</i> - Data Collection: administer survey and

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	conduct focus groups
August – September 2024	Data Analysis
October – November 2024	Reporting

A17. Exceptions

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

Attachments

- Appendix A: OPRE Post-RECS Study Recruitment & Data Collection Communication Materials
- Appendix B: Data Sources for Instrument 1
- Appendix C: Informed Consent Form Virtual Focus Groups
- Instrument 1 – OPRE Post-RECS Data Collection Survey Questions
- Instrument 2 – OPRE Post-RECS Focus Group Facilitation Guide