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

Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project

OMB Information Collection Request
0970 - 0545

Supporting Statement
Part B

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Part B

B1. Objectives

Study Objectives

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks approval to extend a data collection conducted for the Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project (NextGen Project). The objectives of this project are:

1. To identify and study innovative employment programs for people facing complex challenges to employment
2. To describe the operations, implementation successes and challenges, and lessons learned for each program
3. To estimate the costs of each studied program

This revision request is to update this information collection to reflect completed data collection activities and for a one-year extension without change to continue the second follow-up survey. The one-year extension will allow the project to complete the second follow-up survey data collection for all NextGen Project study participants.

Generalizability of Results

The impact studies, which are randomized controlled trials (RCTs), are intended to produce internally-valid estimates of the programs' causal impacts, not to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations. The descriptive and cost studies are intended to present internally-valid descriptions of the service population, implementation, and cost of the chosen programs, not to promote statistical generalization to other sites or service populations.

Appropriateness of Study Design and Methods for Planned Uses

As noted in Supporting Statement A, this information is not intended to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions and is not expected to meet the threshold of influential or highly influential scientific information.

The study's purposive selection of programs to evaluate and its impact, descriptive, and cost studies are appropriate for the government's goal of identifying and studying programs designed to promote employment and economic security among low-income people with complex challenges to employment.

- **Impact studies.** The results of the impact studies could be used to inform federal, state, and local policymakers about future funding of the tested programs; by program administrators and directors who might consider implementing the tested programs, or something like them, for their own programs; and program developers and technical assistance providers facilitating implementation of evidence-based practices. It is important that rigorous, internally valid methods are used to assess effectiveness. Therefore, as described further under the Study Design heading in Part A2, the project team is conducting a separate impact study for each program. Each impact study uses an RCT design.
- **Descriptive studies.** Findings from descriptive studies will support interpretation of the impact findings, describe the programs, and could help other programs replicate or refine the program for their own contexts.

- **Cost studies.** Results of the cost study are important for program funders and for practitioners considering implementing the programs.

One of the limitations of the study for its intended use (informing the design and adoption of future employment programs) is that the impact studies will produce an internally valid estimation of the impact of the program model and its implementation at the time of the study. Impacts are a function of the program model, its implementation, characteristics of the service population, and also of other similar services that are available in the studied community (sufficient treatment/control contrast). This context should be considered when interpreting whether and how findings will apply to program expansion. For this reason, the study also includes descriptive and cost studies of employment programs, which the study team will use to interpret the impact estimates. This information will also help other program funders or operators considering implementing the programs.

B2. Methods and Design

Target Population

The target population for the NextGen Project is low-income individuals with complex challenges to employment, including physical and mental health conditions, a criminal history, or limited formal work skills and experience. The project worked closely with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to identify employment-related interventions for individuals with current or foreseeable disabilities who have limited work history and are potential applicants for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to evaluate. SSA is providing financial and technical support for the evaluation of these interventions.

The project is conducting impact evaluations of four programs. Each focuses on participants with one or more employment challenges, with a total sample size of 3,542 participants equally split into treatment and control groups. The study team has completed descriptive and cost studies of these four programs.

Sampling and Site Selection

The site identification approach was described in detail in two previous Generic ICR submissions, one for stakeholder engagement and one for site assessment, both of which received approval under the generic clearance for Formative Data Collections for ACF Research (OMB #0970-0356). In summary, the programs for the project were selected to meet three general criteria:

1. The program addresses the research priorities of this project.
2. The program is well implemented, or could be after some technical assistance.
3. It is feasible to rigorously evaluate the program using an experimental design, or could be after the program received evaluation technical assistance.

Sampling for impact studies. The sample frame for the impact study is all people who are eligible for and interested in the program and consent to participate in the evaluation during the enrollment period. The project team collects survey information from all study participants at three points: (1) at baseline, before random assignment occurs; (2) at about 6 to 9 months after random assignment via the first follow-up survey; and (3) at about 18 to 21 months after random assignment via a second follow-up survey. Only the second follow-up survey is ongoing at this time; all other data collection activities are complete. The project team attempts to survey the universe of study participants and will also examine administrative data on earnings, benefit receipt, and potentially other outcomes on all study participants. The team anticipates obtaining information from administrative sources for all sample members.

Table B.1 reports program-level minimum detectable differences on earnings outcomes for survey and administrative data for the sample by each program. For the calculation, we used the response rates to the first follow-up survey, and match rates to the NDNH data as of the current stage, assuming similar response rates for the second follow-up survey. For example, in IPS-AJI, with 779 participants, a 65 percent response rate, and a 95 percent NDNH match rate, the minimum detectable impacts on earnings are approximately $230 for average monthly earnings (from survey data) and $571 for quarterly earnings (from administrative data). These correspond to minimum detectable effect sizes of 0.22 for the survey sample and 0.18 for the administrative data sample.

We also include power calculations for a sample size of 300—the minimum sample size for subgroup analysis. Using IPS-AJI again as an example, a sample of 300 study participants yields minimum detectable effect sizes of 0.30 for outcomes based on administrative records and 0.36 for those based on survey reports.

Table B.1. Minimum detectable difference (MDD) per program by sample size on key outcomes for an RCT

Study sample (program and comparison)	Monthly earnings measured with survey data		Quarterly earnings measured with administrative data	
	Minimum detectable impacts in dollars	Minimum detectable impacts in effect sizes	Minimum detectable impacts in dollars	Minimum detectable impacts in effect sizes
Final sample sizes and current response rates				
Bridges (73% for survey data; 85% for administrative data)				
933	$200	0.19	$553	0.18
300 (subgroup)	$350	0.34	$973	0.31
IPS-AJI (65% for survey data; 95% for administrative data)				
779	$230	0.22	$571	0.18
300 (subgroup)	$371	0.36	$920	0.30
Western Mass MOMS (85% for survey data; 88% for administrative data)				
880	$189	0.18	$558	0.18
300 (subgroup)	$324	0.31	$956	0.31
Philly WINs (69% for survey data; 91% for administrative data)				
950	$203	0.20	$530	0.17
300 (subgroup)	$360	0.35	$940	0.30

Assumptions: individuals are randomly assigned; equal random assignment probabilities for program and comparison groups; $1,034 standard deviation of monthly earnings and $3,102 standard deviation of quarterly earnings; covariates explain 20 percent of the variation in the outcomes. The power calculation uses the final enrolled sample size, response rates to the first follow-up survey, and match rates to the NDNH data at the current state..

Respondent recruitment for descriptive studies. The descriptive data collection is complete. We are keeping the following text here for context. The descriptive studies were based on three types of data collection, some of which involved purposeful respondent recruitment:

1. Semi-structured discussions with program staff, leaders, and, if applicable, partners and employers. Program staff and leaders were recruited purposively for discussions using organizational charts and information on each employee's role at the organization. Staff from partner organizations and employers, if applicable, were recruited based on their involvement with the program and its participants. Purposeful respondent recruitment was appropriate because particular insights and information available from individuals depended on their perspectives based on their role at the organization. The results of the descriptive study were not intended to generalize beyond the program being studied.
2. Surveys of program staff and leaders. The universe of all frontline staff and leaders at the selected programs were asked to complete a web-based staff or leadership survey collecting information on their professional backgrounds, skills, experience, and perceptions of the program. This provided a broader perspective on these topics than could be elicited through the interviews, and thus targeting the universe of staff and leaders was appropriate.
3. In-depth interviews of program participants. The project team recruited approximately 20 treatment group members from each program to complete the interviews among treatment group members who participated in the program. The team selected treatment group members who were randomly assigned at least six months before the interviews so that they included study participants who had potentially participated in the program for six months. These interviews provided narrative, in-depth context and experiences of program participants.

Sampling for cost studies. The cost study data collection is complete. We are keeping the following text here for context. Leaders from each participating program (or their designees) submitted their accounting records to the project team, who used them to complete a standardized Excel-based workbook. Or program staff who were familiar with the program's expenditure and accounting records directly completed the workbook.

B3. Design of Data Collection Instruments

Development of Data Collection Instruments

The second follow-up survey is the only data collection instrument relevant to this extension request. It was developed to capture essential data for the study's main research questions that are not readily available from administrative sources.

A description of how each question in the follow-up survey will be used in the analysis is provided in Appendix B. The appendix also includes references for items that were used in previous studies.

Data for impact studies. The baseline and two follow-up survey instruments for the NextGen Project were developed by content experts at Mathematica and ACF and informed by reviewing instruments used in similar data collection efforts. Many questions are sourced from prior studies, such as the Parents and Children Together study (OMB #0970-0403), the Evaluation of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Pilots (OMB #0584-0604), Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations (OMB #0970-0506), and the National Beneficiary Survey (OMB #0960-0800). Other items come from scales that have been frequently used in large-scale national surveys, such as the SF-12® Health Questionnaire to assess health status.

The project team used industry best practices to reduce potential sources of measurement error. These practices include:

- Using validated items from previous surveys administered to similar populations to the extent possible.
- Including in the instruments automatically enforced skip patterns, built-in range checks, internal item consistency checks, and required answer fields.
- Pretesting the baseline and follow-up surveys with individuals similar to the populations served by the type of programs being assessed for inclusion in the NextGen Project. The project team timed the interviews and used cognitive interviewing and respondent and interviewer debriefings to assess respondents' understanding of the survey questions, identify improvements to the flow and structure of the instruments, and to ensure burden was low. The same question was not asked of more than 9 people. The surveys were updated based on the findings.

Data for descriptive studies. The descriptive data collection is complete. We are keeping the following text here for context. The discussion guides for program staff, employers, and partners, the surveys of program staff and leaders, and the in-depth participant interview guide were developed by content experts at Mathematica and ACF. They were informed by reviewing instruments used in similar data collection efforts. These efforts included the Evaluation of SNAP Employment and Training Pilots (OMB #0584-0604) and the Evaluation of Employment Coaching for TANF and Related Populations (OMB #0970-0506).

The project team pretested the staff and leadership surveys with staff and leaders, with similar background and work experience to those implementing programs being considered for inclusion in the NextGen Project. The same question was not asked of more than 9 people. As a result of the pretests, the surveys were updated for clarity, flow, and to reduce burden. Used to record service receipt in some programs, RAPTER® is a secure, web-based system that program staff use to administer consent to participants, collect their identifying and contact information, conduct random assignment, and enter information on the services received or activities participated in by study participants. RAPTER was developed by content experts at Mathematica and are tailored to the NextGen programs and the services they provide.

Data for cost studies. The cost study data collection is complete. We are keeping the following text here for context. The Excel-based cost workbook was developed by Mathematica staff, who selected the cost elements based on cost-collection tools developed for the Evaluation of SNAP Employment and Training Pilots (OMB #0584-0604) and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation (OMB #1205-0504). The project team did not pretest the cost workbook but instead provides training to program leaders (or their designees) on the cost study and how to complete the workbook, and a designated site liaison works with programs to help them understand the request and complete the workbook accurately.

B4. Collection of Data and Quality Control

The second follow-up survey (Instrument 4) is available to all study participants to either self-administer via the web or complete using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI).

The project team has and will ensure quality and consistency in the data collected by the surveys by using tactics such as:

- For self-administered web surveys: use clear and straightforward language; include predominantly closed-ended questions; include check boxes, drop-down menus, and response categories; include soft checks to prevent outlier entries; and ensure the layout is compatible with multiple browsers, tablets, and smartphones.
- Recruit qualified interviewers to administer the survey by CATI.
- Train the interviewers in interviewing techniques as well as the intent of each question in the survey.
- Listen to about 10 percent of all CATI interviews to detect inaccurate presentation of information on the study; errors in reading questions; biased probes; inappropriate use of feedback in responding to questions; and any other unacceptable interviewer behavior.
- Examine data on the number of completed interviews, calls made, refusals, refusal conversions as well as time per call, and time per interview by interviewer. Supervisors will provide feedback to interviewers based on these data.
- Debrief with groups of interviewers shortly after the start of a data collection to discuss the respondents' level of cooperation and ability to understand and answer the survey questions.
- Examine frequencies and cross-tabulations of data collected on a regular basis to pinpoint any unexpected aspects of instrumentation, particularly in skip logic, valid value ranges, the operation of edits and consistency checks, and the recording of data for legitimately skipped items and "don't know" and refusal responses.
- Examine frequencies and cross-tabulations on data collected, by mode of collection, to look for evidence of mode bias or large differences in responses between self-administered web surveys and interviewer-administered telephone interviews.

B5. Response Rates and Potential Nonresponse Bias

Response Rates

The project team calculates conditional response rates as the number of completed surveys as a percentage of the number of people asked to complete the survey. If any study enrollees become ineligible for the study after they have been randomly assigned, the project team removes them from the denominator of the response rate calculation. This could happen if, for example, someone died during the course of the study.

Item response rates will be calculated as the number of people who complete an item as a percentage of the number of people who respond to any questions on the survey or other data collection instrument. The project team will exclude from the item response calculation any people who were not offered the question due to a survey skip pattern.

- **Second follow-up survey.** The project team anticipates a 73 percent response rate on the second follow-up survey based on their experience conducting the first follow-up survey with this population. The team will attempt to complete the second follow-up survey with the entire sample. The project team achieved an overall response rate of 73 percent on the first follow-up survey with this hard-to-engage population and does not expect to exceed this response rate on the second follow-up survey. On the first follow-up survey, response rates for each site ranged from 65 percent to 85 percent. The project team does not anticipate significant item nonresponse on the follow-up survey based on data collected so far and prior experience on the first follow-up survey.

To maximize response rates on the survey, the following techniques are being used, which were also employed in the aforementioned efforts:

- **Allow respondents to complete the survey in different ways**. Respondents can complete the survey either online (using a computer, tablet, or smartphone) or by telephone.
- **Send reminder notifications.** In addition to notifying the study participant about the follow-up surveys during study intake, the project team uses a combination of letters, emails, texts, and telephone calls to encourage people to participate (Appendix C) throughout data collection efforts.
- **Obtain accurate, up-to-date contact information.** The project team collects detailed contact information during study intake and the follow-up surveys to aid in locating participants to complete the follow-up survey. Before the start of the follow-up survey, the project team also updates participant contact information through online database searches and may request updates from participants via text message or email.
- **Use intensive locating methods, as needed.** The project team initially notifies participants about the survey by mail and email and asks them to complete it via the web, though they will also be able to complete it via telephone. After four weeks, the project team attempts to contact the participants via telephone, so they can complete the survey via telephone. If the participants cannot be reached by telephone, the project team uses the contacts identified by the participant during the baseline data collection, for help locating them. If the participants still cannot be located, the project team conducts customized, individual searches for contact information using specialized databases. Finally, if study participants still cannot be located, trained field locators go in person to the study participant's home and neighborhood. If they locate the study participant, the field locators lend him or her a smartphone to complete the survey.
- **Offer tokens of appreciation.** As discussed in greater detail in Part A, Section A9, the study's strategy for tokens of appreciation is designed to retain respondents in the longitudinal data collection and decrease the differential response rate between the treatment and control groups, and therefore reduce nonresponse bias on impact estimates.
- **Continuous quality improvement.** The study collects data on each attempt to contact a respondent, including the mode, time, date, interviewer, and contact results. Examining these paradata helps identify the most effective calling times and interviewers. The project team also uses paradata to determine which methods of contact (letters, emails, texts, or telephone calls) prove the most successful in this study, so that they can adjust the frequency and type of contacts to achieve high response rates.

NonResponse

During survey fielding for the second follow-up survey, the team actively monitors response rates, with an eye to any treatment–control differences. If such differences are observed, the project team intensifies the locating efforts for the group with the lower response rate to minimize differential nonresponse during active data collection.

Following the close of data collection, the project team will analyze nonresponse on the follow-up survey to assess whether the survey respondents are representative of the full study sample. Using the data on participants' characteristics collected at baseline, the project team will conduct statistical tests (chi-square and t-tests) to gauge whether the treatment group members who participated in data collection are representative of all the treatment group members, whether the control group members who participated in data collection are representative of all the control group members, and whether

there are systematic differences in the treatment and control group members who responded to the survey.

The project team will use two approaches to correct for potential nonresponse bias in the estimation of program impacts. First, the regression models described in Section B7 will adjust for observed differences between the characteristics of treatment and control group respondents. Second, because this regression procedure will not correct for differences between respondents and nonrespondents in each research group, the project team will construct sample weights so that the weighted baseline characteristics of respondents in the treatment and control group in each program are similar to those of the full sample (respondents and nonrespondents). These weights will be constructed using data from the baseline surveys.

To reduce any bias resulting from item nonresponse, the project team will impute values for missing data. Imputation is particularly useful in cases in which data might be systematically missing related to an observable characteristic. For example, if a study participant was not employed, the team knows that his or her wage and salary earnings will be zero. However, many more data items are required to construct a measure of earnings for employed individuals and, thus, it is more likely that employed individuals will have missing earnings. This suggests that, without imputation, estimates of earnings might be biased downward. The imputation approaches used will include logical imputation, predictive mean matching, and hot-deck imputation. The approach used will be determined by the type of data that are missing.

B6. Production of Estimates and Projections

The estimates from this project will be released publicly following ACF review.

Impact studies. The impact studies will estimate the effectiveness of each program in the study in improving outcomes of study participants. Any observed differences in outcomes between the treatment and control group members can be attributed to the effectiveness of the program; in statistical terms, the differences are internally valid estimates of the mean impacts of the program, as delivered, on the corresponding outcomes for similar populations in the same environment.

The project team will use the constructed sample weights described in Section B5 in the impact analysis so that the weighted baseline characteristics of respondents in the treatment and control group in each program are similar to those of the full sample (respondents and nonrespondents). The project team will also address missing responses as described in Section B5.

The baseline data will be used to describe the study participants in each program. The project team will use chi-squared tests of differences in means over all characteristics to assess whether random assignment successfully generated treatment and control groups with similar baseline characteristics, and that the treatment and control group respondents to the follow-up surveys are similar. The project team will also report t-tests of differences for individual characteristics.

Impacts will be estimated for each program. The project team will use regression estimators to control for residual differences between the treatment and control groups and to construct more efficient estimators than the simple difference-in-means estimators (as described in B7).

Descriptive studies. The data will not be used to generate population estimates, either for internal use or dissemination.

Cost studies. The data will not be used to generate population estimates, either for internal use or dissemination.

B7. Data Handling and Analysis

Data Handling

The web survey and the telephone interview software use real-time logic rules, enforce skip patterns, and provide soft and hard checks. Soft and hard checks are displayed for interviewers or respondents if the provided information conflicts with earlier responses or is out of range for expected values. Hard checks require resolution before continuing; soft checks can be suppressed. All CATI interviewers are subject to real-time or recorded monitoring to ensure they are correctly interpreting and entering respondent responses. Following data collection, the project team will conduct comprehensive data reviews and quality assurance reviews to ensure skip patterns are enforced and data are complete and within expected ranges.

During data processing and coding, the project team will conduct quality assurance reviews to ensure consistency and minimize any data processing errors. Specifically, coders will participate in a comprehensive training session, and the project team will monitor their work, perform quality control checks, and conduct quality assurance reviews of all weighting and imputation procedures. Any outliers, skip logic errors, or other recodes of survey data will be recorded in both internal programs and data editing spreadsheets.

Data Analysis

The impact analysis will consist of comparisons of means and distributions using the randomly assigned treatment and comparison group. This will include unadjusted and regression-adjusted means for outcomes including employment, earnings, and benefit receipt. Differences in means or proportions of follow-up outcomes between the treatment and control group will provide unbiased estimates of the impacts of the program. Estimates that are more precise will be obtained using regression models to control for random differences in the baseline characteristics of treatment and control group members. In their simplest forms, these models can be expressed by the following equation: $Y_i = \alpha + \beta X_i + \delta T_i + \varepsilon_i$, where Y_i is an outcome (such as earnings) for person i; α is a constant; X_i is a (column) vector of baseline characteristics (such as gender, age, race/ethnicity); β is a vector of coefficient parameters for the extent to which baseline characteristics are predictive of the outcome; T_i is an indicator for whether person i received treatment; δ represents the impact of the program; and ε_i is an error term. These models will be estimated separately for each program.

If the sample is large enough, the project team will conduct a subgroup analysis to examine who benefits most from the program. Subgroup effects will be estimated using the following equation: $Y_i = \alpha + \beta X_i + \delta_1 T_i + \delta_2 G_i + \delta_3 T_i G_i + \varepsilon_i$, where G_i is an indicator for whether person i is part of a subgroup; δ_2 represents the relationship between subgroup status and the outcome; and δ_3 represents the additional effect of treatment for those in the subgroup. The project team will consider subgroups that are appropriate for the program's target population, such as those defined by disability status, work readiness, employment challenges, or history of TANF receipt. The impact study will be pre-registered on Open Science Framework.

Data Use

The project team will publish findings from the project throughout the study in technical reports and briefs. The project team reported on the descriptive and cost studies in 2025. Reporting on the intermediate impact findings is anticipated to begin in 2026 and continue through 2027; and reporting on the final impact findings will begin in 2027 and continue through 2028. In addition to presenting findings, reports and briefs will document the methodologies used to collect, process, and analyze the project's data across the impact, descriptive, and cost studies; this will assist readers in assessing study quality and interpreting the findings. Study limitations and information about the generalizability of the results will be included when presenting findings.

The project team has completed reports for the descriptive studies of each site. These reports are available on the ACF website for Bridges (Supporting Young Adults in Special Education as They Enter the Labor Market: Experiences from the Implementation of Bridges from School to Work), IPS-AJI (Integrating Employment and Mental Health Services: Implementation of the Individual Placement and Support Model for Adults with Justice Involvement), Philly WINS (A Dual Focus on Adult Job Seekers and Employers: Implementation of Philly WINs), and Western Mass MOMS (Program Snapshot: Western Mass MOMS Partnership).

In addition, the project will prepare final data files and documentation to be available publicly. The provided documentation will improve the understanding of how to properly interpret, analyze, and evaluate the information resulting from the data collection. The project team anticipates that data archives (restricted or public use) would become available starting in 2029 and hosted on a data archive platform such as the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

B8. Contact Persons

Contact information for people who can answer questions about the statistical aspects of the survey:

- Marie Lawrence: Catherinemarie.Lawrence@acf.hhs.gov
- Diana McCallum: DMcCallum@mathematica-mpr.com

Mathematica developed the plans for this data collection. Leaders of the project team from ACF, Mathematica, and Tree House Economics who designed and/or will collect and analyze the data are as follows:

- Sarita Barton, social science research analyst, ACF
- Marie Lawrence, senior social science research analyst, ACF
- Michelle Derr, Founder and CEO, The Adjacent Possible
- David Stapleton, partner, Tree House Economics
- Diana McCallum, Vice President, HHS - Human Services, Mathematica
- Tim Kautz, senior researcher, Mathematica
- April Wu, senior researcher, Mathematica
- Jody Schimmel-Hyde, senior fellow, Mathematica
- Kristen Joyce, former senior researcher, Mathematica
- Ryan Callahan, former survey researcher, Mathematica
- Jessica De Santis, survey researcher, Mathematica

Attachments

Previously approved materials that are no longer in use can be found with the prior approvals on RegInfo.gov: https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAOMBHistory?ombControlNumber=0970-0545.

Instruments

Instrument 4. Second follow-up survey – revised August 2024

Appendices

Appendix A. Informed consent form – revised

Appendix A.1. Bridges consent forms

Appendix B. Question-by-question justification for follow-up surveys – revised August 2024

Appendix C. Follow-up survey reminders and notifications – revised

Supporting Statement B References

U.S. Department of Education. What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook, Version 5.0. Washington, DC: Institute for Education Sciences, 2022. Available at https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/referenceresources/Final_WWC-HandbookVer5_0-0-508.pdf. Accessed October 22, 2025.