

**Needs and Opportunities Assessment for Children's Interagency Coordinating Council:
Stakeholder Perspectives on Child Poverty and Well-Being**

Qualitative Data Collection

ASPE Generic Information Collection Request
OMB Control Number 0990-0421, Expires 2/28/2027

Supporting Statement – Section A

Submitted: December 12, 2024

Program Official/Project Officer

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Section A – Justification

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

A family's ability to meet their children's basic needs is critical to the health and well-being of children. Unfortunately, child poverty is a persistent problem that undermines the well-being of children, their families, and our nation. Child poverty is associated with a host of negative outcomes across the lifespan that can reverberate for generations. The consequences of poverty are profound, including increased risk of developing physical and mental health problems, a greater likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors (e.g., smoking, substance use), and premature death. Further, child poverty is strongly associated with lower educational attainment, fewer employment prospects, and a greater likelihood of criminal behavior. Child poverty bears significant costs to broader society, with estimates ranging from \$800 billion to over \$1 trillion per year due to lost productivity, increased health care and criminal justice costs, and increased costs related to homelessness and child abuse and neglect.¹

There are a host of federal programs designed to prevent or lift children out of poverty. While these programs can reduce the number of families in poverty, they are often less effective at supporting economic security. This is in part because programs overseen by different agencies are often not coordinated and increases in household income can result in loss of other needed benefits when earnings reach a threshold at which families become ineligible, also known as benefits cliffs. Further, the burden on families to access benefits can be significant and discourage them from applying despite need, and the stigma associated with accessing benefits may further deter families from enrolling. Multiple federal agencies have responsibility for the implementation of policies and programs aimed at reducing child and family poverty, which have been shown to promote child well-being.¹ Accordingly, coordination among federal agencies that oversee the implementation of these policies and programs is needed to most effectively meet the needs of children and their families.

Congress established the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CICC) as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, with the aim of fostering greater coordination and transparency on child policy across federal agencies. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through its Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), has been coordinating the efforts of the CICC on behalf of its 10 member departments and agencies. Congress charged the CICC to examine and periodically report on a broad array of cross-cutting issues affecting child well-being, particularly child poverty. Qualitative data collection from multiple groups of stakeholders can obtain diverse experiences and perspectives on needs and opportunities related to poverty and well-being among children ages 0-17. This project seeks to engage various stakeholders to identify important issues related to child poverty and well-being to help inform the CICC as it considers priorities for future efforts.

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2019. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25246/a-roadmap-to-reducing-child-poverty>.

To better understand the needs and opportunities related to child poverty and well-being, this project will employ a series of focus groups, carefully assembling diverse groups of stakeholders to foster rich, meaningful dialogues and generate actionable insights for the CICC. Protocols were designed to encourage open, honest discussions, enabling participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and suggestions freely. Protocol questions were tailored to each group of stakeholders, with questions broadly encompassing issues that affect children under age 18, particularly children living in poverty. Key informant interviews or small group interviews may be considered in lieu of focus groups for territories and/or Tribes where scheduling may be challenging. The protocols and questions would remain unchanged.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

This is an exploratory project that utilizes qualitative methods to gather diverse perspectives from various groups of stakeholders with experience addressing child poverty and well-being issues or parents and young people who have experienced poverty. This work is exploratory in nature. The key limitation of this project is that the findings from qualitative data collection may not be representative of the experiences of the entire population who oversee programs for children and families or those who have experienced poverty and who have either accessed or been unable to access social safety net programs. Information gathered via focus groups will inform our understanding of the needs and opportunities identified by those who serve children and families experiencing poverty as well as the children and families served.

The goal of this project is to identify themes around important issues affecting child poverty and well-being and federal opportunities to address them. The aims of the qualitative data collection are to explore and translate the needs, gaps, barriers, and opportunities into federal actions for the CICC across up to 30 focus groups (up to 240 participants).

Findings will be summarized in internal reports and memos summarizing emerging themes. A public-facing, high-level summary of the findings is also planned. Results of this work are intended to help inform the 5-year strategic priorities (2026-2030) for the CICC.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

Focus groups will be conducted virtually using the Zoom platform and recorded to allow for transcription via Rev Transcription.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

The team is not aware of any similar effort to collect qualitative information about important issues affecting child poverty and well-being and federal opportunities to address them from a diverse group of stakeholders, including state/local/territory/Tribal departments and practitioners/service providers as well as parents and youth (18 to 24 years old) with current or recent experiences of poverty.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

No small businesses will be involved in this study.

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

This request is for a one-time data collection and the data have not previously been collected elsewhere.

7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5

There are no special circumstances with this information collection package. This request fully complies with regulation 5 CFR 1320.5 and will be voluntary.

8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency

This data collection is being conducted using the Generic Information Collection mechanism through ASPE – OMB No. 0990-0421, therefore no Federal Register notice is required.

9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

Fairly compensating people with lived experience, in this case, parents, caregivers, and youth experiencing poverty and well-being issues, for the value of their time and their insights is a critical component of research that relies on their perspectives.² It is also essential for facilitating their participation in a study with limited time for recruitment. These two factors motivate our decision to provide an incentive of \$50.00 for their participation in the 90-minute focus group. Further, we recognize that there may be costs (need for child care, lost wages) associated with participation and therefore we intend to provide an additional \$25 to compensate them for the costs of child care or other care responsibilities and/or lost wages during their participation, for a total payment of \$75 for the referenced study participants. We are specifically looking to engage people who self-identify as having current or recent experiences of poverty (within the last 3 years), many of whom have hourly jobs and/or may face additional barriers to participation.

Evidence shows that monetary remuneration bolsters recruitment and small group interview attendance. According to Krueger and Casey (2014), it is “more efficient to pay more for incentives.... [to] increase the likelihood that people will show up,” concluding that “...amounts of \$50 to \$75 usually work for public and nonprofit studies” (p. 78). In addition to increasing attendance, Krueger, and Casey (2014) also note that “...as the incentive goes up, recruiting time goes down,” (p. 78). This is especially important for the current study because of the tight timeline for recruiting and the challenges in recruiting participants that are currently (or recently) experiencing poverty.

² See Mel Langness, Justin Winston Morgan, Saidy Cedano, and Elsa Falkenburger. 2023. “Equitable Compensation for Community Engagement Guidebook.” The Urban Institute.
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/equitable-compensation-community-engagement-guidebook>.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

Data collected in this needs assessment will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. The Privacy Act does not apply to this data collection. The contractor will collect only identifying information that is needed to schedule participation in the focus groups and will be erased following the conclusion of the participation. The data will be stored in a cloud storage system that is password protected and approved for protected data storage and only able to be accessed by the project team. Participants' names will be tracked for incentive redemption in the Tango portal that will only be accessible by the contractor staff managing distribution of incentives. The Tango is a platform used to manage the distribution of incentives to study participants. Participants redeem their incentive using a link provided by the contractor and participant names are tracked for incentive redemption purposes only. Accessible only by the contractor staff responsible for managing the incentives, the Tango portal facilitates an organized and secure method of compensation.

The names of study participants will not be used in the analysis or writing of the findings; the contractor will not use any real names when documenting the interview notes for analysis. Transcriptions will be deidentified for sharing with HHS/ASPE. When reporting findings, the contractor will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant.

For Zoom recordings, we will make sure participants understand that their faces will be recorded, or they can choose to turn their camera off. Either way, only the project team will have access to these recordings as they will be stored the same way as audio recordings.

Participants will be asked to sign a consent form prior to data collection that reiterates the voluntary nature of participation in qualitative data collection and their right to decline to respond to any discussion questions. This data collection is in the process of obtaining IRB approval through the American Institutes for Research IRB.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

Consistent with the exploratory design, focus group discussions will follow a semi-structured format, with several core questions per stakeholder group. These are broad questions and are not intended to elicit sensitive information, although due to the goals of data collection and the inclusion of lived experts, their responses may include sensitive information based on their personal experiences. This project is in the process of obtaining IRB approval for its protocols to address a participant who may become distressed through participation in qualitative data collection. The participants will be reassured that they can stop at any time or choose not to answer a discussion question if they do not feel comfortable.

12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

This study requires one engagement with each participant. Data will be collected through focus groups, with each participant engaging in a maximum of one focus group. Each focus group will last 90 minutes.

The estimate for burden hours is based on 30 90-minute focus group discussions with up to 240 participants (6-8 participants in each group). See protocol in Attachment B.

Focus group participants will be recruited through three key recruitment strategies: 1) leveraging contractor, federal agency, and other CICC networks to identify representatives for states, localities, territories, and Tribes, 2) leveraging ASPE's and the contractor's network of lived experts, and 3) reaching out to community organizations serving youth who have experienced poverty.

For parent/caregiver and youth participants, estimates for hourly burden are calculated using the minimum wage for workers, or \$7.25. Estimates do not adjust for the fact that some participants will not be employed, assuming that their time is of comparable value. Table A-12 shows estimated burden and cost information.

Table A-12: Estimated Annualized Burden Hours and Costs to Respondents

Type of Respondent	No. of Respondents	No. of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden per Response (in hours)	Total Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate	Total Respondent Costs
State/local/territory/Tribal department and agency representatives	Up to 80	1	1.5	120	\$23.28	\$2,793.60
Practitioners/service providers	Up to 80	1	1.5	120	\$23.28	\$2,793.60
Parents/caregivers	Up to 40	1	1.5	60	\$7.25	\$435.00
Youth (ages 18-24)	Up to 40	1	1.5	60	\$7.25	\$435.00
Total	Up to 240	-	-	360	-	\$6,457.20

13. Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers

There will be no direct costs to the respondents other than their time to participate in the data collection.

14. Annualized Cost to the Government

The cost of the government task order attributable to the work is \$198,308.34.

Table A-2: Estimated Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

Staff (FTE)	Average Hours per Collection	Average Hourly Rate	Average Cost
Federal Contract Officer's Representative (COR) – contract management	10	\$51.34	\$ 510.34
Manager (Contractor)	70	\$72.71	\$ 5,090.00
Project Manager (Contractor)	75	\$70.12	\$ 5,259.00
Researcher (Contractor)	900	\$51.30	\$ 46,175.00
Researcher (Contractor)	900	\$51.30	\$ 46,175.00
Researcher (Contractor)	900	\$51.30	\$ 46,175.00
Research Associate (Contractor)	600	\$27.18	\$ 16,308.00
Research Associate (Contractor)	600	\$27.18	\$ 16,308.00
Research Associate (Contractor)	600	\$27.18	\$ 16,308.00
Estimated Total Cost of Information Collection			\$198,308.34

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

This is a new, one-time data collection.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

The research team will participate in a session on coding and extracting meaning from transcripts. Then the research team will conduct coding. To facilitate the systematic identification of patterns, themes, and connections, the team will use the qualitative software NVivo, or similar analysis software. We will use an inductive approach throughout several rounds of descriptive coding that centers the knowledge and language of the participants as opposed to the perceptions of researchers. The contractor will summarize emerging themes in two internal memos on a rolling basis. After qualitative coding and the final analysis is complete, results will be summarized in an internal report and public-facing summary of findings.

Timeline:

Completion Date	Major Tasks/Milestones
December 2024	Submit request for OMB approval Plan for outreach and recruitment
January 2025	Receive OMB approval
January 2025 – May 2025	Data Collection
April 2025	Submit first internal memo
May 2025 – June 2025	Analyze Data
June 2025	Submit second internal memo
July 2025	Submit internal report
September 2025	Submit public-facing high-level summary of findings

17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate

We are requesting no exemption.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification. These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Note: Attachments are included as separate files as instructed.

- Attachment A: Focus Group Semi-Structured Discussion Guide Protocol
- Attachment B: Recruitment Emails
- Attachment C: Recruitment Flyers
- Attachment D: Participant Consent Forms
- Attachment E: Background Resource: Identifying Federal CICC Levers