DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY U.S. Army Public Health Center 8968 Depot Road Aberdeen Proving Ground Maryland 21010-5403

MCHB-PH-OOD 17 July 2021
MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION
SUBJECT: Scientific Review of Project 21- 931, *COVID-19 Vaccination Perceptions & Messaging Formative Evaluation* (Addendum)

1. General. The Scientific Review Committee completed its evaluation of Project 21-931. The proposal was endorsed with substantive and/or administrative comments and forwarded to the Public Health Review Board for consideration. The review has identified a number of issues considered to be either "substantive" or "administrative" in nature. While the issues are not critical, the project plan addendum would be improved if they were taken into consider. Those substantive and administrative issues are enumerated in section 2 below.

2. Questions and suggestions for improvement of substantive and administrative issues.
a. Page 1, Title: Add Addendum to project title – Added

b. Page 1, item 1: The modified objectives could be described as new or added objectives and simply stated as such. – Reworded to align with this guidance

c. Page 2, item 6: It is stated that "audio recordings will not be transcribed," but the Interviewer Guide on page 6 states that "recordings may be transcribed by a professional contract team." This inconsistency should be resolved. – Removed inaccurate language from the Focus Group/Interview Guide on page 6.

d. Page 2: Although background for the project plan is provided in the parent plan #21-931 it would help to have a little more information on why the issue of mandated COVID-19 vaccination is a problem for the Army. For instance, because Soldiers must work in close proximity to each other it is critical that they have optimal protection against COVID-19 infection which includes vaccination. Recent news reports indicate that only around 70% of active duty Soldiers and other active duty military services members are vaccinated and that as many as 30% of military service members have declined to take the vaccine voluntarily."
The team understands why this recommendation was made. However, we are opting to not add this information to the modification due to our timeline for this effort. Since modifications are archived, we would want to ensure that the additional background information aligned with how all entities with equity in this effort would want this framed and written. Due to the quick timeline of the project we wouldn't want to hold up submission to the board for approval to coordinate this additional language.

As appropriate we will include this information in the deliverables.

MCHB-PH-OOD SUBJECT: Scientific Review of Project 21-931

e. Page 3, Data Collection: It is stated the focus groups will "last 60-90 minute," and in the same line it is stated the sessions will last "45-60 minutes." This discrepancy should be resolved. – Revised language in data collection to clarify that FG are expected to be 60-90 minutes while interviews only 45-60.

f. Page 3, Data Analysis: It would be helpful if the author described in general what kinds observations would be coded and how themes would be developed from the coded observations. – Revised language to clarify that a codebook will be developed based upon the FG/Interview guide questions, coded, and then themed by emergent patterns in the data.

g. Page 6, Focus Group Interview Guide: Would it help to provide some added description/terminology of what is meant by a vaccine "mandate", e.g. vaccine requirement? Command Surgeons and PHEOs are already tracking on the pending mandate and will understand the language used in the guide. No revision will be made regarding this recommendation.

h. Page 6, Focus Group Interview Guide: The third paragraph states "discussion will likely last 60-90 minutes." This is not consistent with the "45-60 minutes" stated on page 3 in the Data Collection section. This should be reconciled. Revised language to indicate that FGs are expected to be 60-90 minutes and Interviews 45-60. The facilitator will use the appropriate language based upon if they are leading a FG or interview.

i. Pages 7-8: Would it help somewhere among the probes to ask more explicitly what kinds of information do you think would help vaccine hesitant Soldiers to feel more comfortable getting the COVID vaccine? – Added in this language as a probe.

3. Path Forward. No further interactions with the Scientific Review Committee are necessary before submission to the Public Health Review Board, however, If you have questions the Chair of the Scientific Review Committee is available to address them.
4. Point of Contact is the undersigned at 410-436-1008 or bruce.h.jones.civ@mail.mil.