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ABOUT US

Acumen, LLC was established by scholars from Stanford University in 1996 to improve the information provided to policymakers who design and revise welfare, health, education, labor, and business programs at the national, state, and local levels. In conjunction with its affiliated nonprofit firm, The SPHERE Institute, Acumen offers practitioners a powerful policy analysis capability, providing specific, impartial advice and context for policy debates.

We are committed to the improvement of public policy through information management, and we have worked with several agencies to develop resources to build their internal databases and self-evaluation capacity. To supplement internal sources of information, our team has created and utilized all forms of administrative and survey data to produce outcomes relevant for both service providers and funding organizations.

Acumen members have experience conveying information and research findings to broad audiences of policymakers, program operators, and other stakeholders. With these interrelated goals and expertise, Acumen, LLC serves the interests of the public, government, business and the research community.

GSA PRICE LIST

Labor Category Name SIN Number: 874-1, 874-3	<i>Year 1 Base</i> 2/1/06- 1/31/07	<i>Year 2</i> 2/1/07- 1/31/08	<i>Year 3</i> 2/1/08- 1/31/09	<i>Year 4</i> 2/1/09- 1/31/10	<i>Year 5</i> 2/1/10- 1/31/11
Partner Sr. Research Associate	\$185	\$191	\$198	\$205	\$212
Senior Research Associate	\$120	\$124	\$129	\$133	\$138
Research Associate	\$85	\$88	\$91	\$94	\$98
Senior Research Analyst	\$80	\$83	\$86	\$89	\$92
Research Analyst	\$51	\$53	\$55	\$57	\$59

LABOR CATEGORIES

Acumen uses five categories of labor. For each labor category presented below, we describe the qualifications and experience requirements.

Partner Senior Research Associate/Non-Partner Senior Research Associate. Individuals assigned under this category will be responsible for performing work of a technically complex nature, in addition to directing and reviewing the work of junior staff. These individuals will lead work groups in the development and execution of a theoretically sound and practical approach to achieve the objectives of any Task Order. Depending on the nature of the Task Orders, these objectives are likely to include advanced work in statistical methods, such as estimation and analysis, implementing both qualitative and quantitative data.

Senior Research Associates will be senior professionals with training in social science research methodology and experience in conducting program evaluations. These individuals will also have experience with data collection and processing methodology, especially as they pertain to quality control and process. Each individual in this category will have a Ph.D. or equivalent experience in one of the following disciplines: statistics, economics, public policy, or other social science. Further, each Senior Research Associate will have at least 7 years of experience working on and leading projects similar to those envisioned under a resultant MOBIS contract.

Research Associate. Individuals assigned under this category will be responsible for performing work of a technically complex nature, in addition to directing and reviewing the work of junior staff. These individuals will lead work groups in the development and execution of a theoretically sound and practical approach to achieve the objectives of any Task Order. Research Associates will typically work with other Research Associates or Senior Research Associates on projects.

Research Associates will have training in social science research methodology and experience in conducting program evaluations. These individuals will also have experience with data collection and processing methodology, especially as they pertain to quality control and process. Each individual in this category will have a Ph.D. or equivalent experience in one of the following disciplines: statistics, economics, public policy, or other social science. Further, each Research Associate will have at least 2 years of experience working on projects similar to those envisioned under a resultant MOBIS contract.

Senior Research Analyst. Individuals assigned under this category will assist and work under the supervision of the Research Associates. These individuals will perform technical work of a moderately complex nature under the direction of a senior staff. Such a person may direct the performance of one or more elements of a study that are related to his or her education or experience. Examples include: implementing survey methods, conducting interviews, developing data collection or data analytic procedures, performing basic statistical analyses, and conducting literature reviews.

Senior Research Analysts will have at least three years of experience in program evaluation design, data collection, and analysis procedures. Further, they will have at

least a M.A. or equivalent experience in one of the following disciplines: statistics, economics, public policy, or other social science.

Research Analyst. Individuals in this category will be capable of performing work requiring familiarity with program evaluation methodological or social scientific technical skills, but not in-depth experience in their application. A Research Analyst will work under the direction of a Senior Research Analyst or Research Associate, reviewing published program evaluation design or methods research, implementing data collection and analysis procedures, and assisting in report writing activities.

Research Analysts will have at least a B.A. or B.S., a minimum of one year experience, and will have demonstrated capabilities in qualitative and quantitative research and communication skills.

CLIENTS AND AFFILIATES

Federal

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Social Security Administration
National Institutes of Health
Food and Drug Administration
Health Resources and Services Administration

Congressional Budget Office

U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

U.S. Small Business Administration

State of California

Department of Health Services

Department of Developmental Services

SERVICES BY SIN NUMBERS

Acumen's extensive experience providing consulting and surveying services to federal and state government agencies includes an array of related services and activities. These services include performing policy analysis and supporting planning efforts of federal and state agencies, performing human service program evaluations, carrying out process improvement, and developing outcomes measures and quality indicators; and many of these consulting projects have involved a surveying component. A central element of Acumen's work is the development and utilization of reliable databases involving administrative data and often linking it to other datasets. This approach provides for comprehensive understanding of programs, policies and processes and the construction of tools that will improve the use of program data by program administrators. As a result, Acumen's team possesses in-depth knowledge of all enrollment and claims files from the Medicare system and California's Medicaid program as well as of data from virtually every category of income-support program for poor families in the U.S. Acumen LLC shares staff and facilities with its non-profit affiliate, the SPHERE Institute, and the projects introduced in this section have been undertaken by the same group of qualified staff, under both organization names. The projects described below reflect recent and on-going work for federal, state and county agencies that is similar in scope and complexity to **MOBIS SIN 874-1 Consulting Services** and **SIN 874-3 Surveying Services**.

Although some projects could be placed in both SIN service categories, three unique projects are presented for each, Consulting Services and Surveying Services.

SIN 874-1 CONSULTING SERVICES

Acumen has made valuable contributions to advancing the efforts of many government agencies and improving the processes and outcomes of their programs. Acumen's continued relationships with government bodies include the Congressional Budget Office, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and Department of Agriculture. All three projects presented in this section represent current contracts from a series of contracts with each of the three federal agencies.

Research File Development for CBO Policy Analyses of Medicare Spending, Congressional Budget Office

For the past several years Acumen has had a continuing contract with the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to produce a set of research files for CBO enabling it to forecast policy impacts and future Medicare budget outlays. CBO is the principal agency of the U.S. Congress that evaluates policy proposals being contemplated as legislation. Through this contract, our group supplies detailed longitudinal-linked files to CBO created directly from raw enrollment and claims data from the Medicare program on a large sample of participants. The availability of such a patient-level longitudinal data base is useful in a variety of analyses that help CBO gain insight into the process by which Medicare spending is generated, how it is used, and how it might be affected by potential changes in the Medicare program.

The files Acumen has created have already produced a series of analyses useful for CBO policymakers, and the files are in the process of being updated for current years through 2005.

Our group produced a series of cleaned, summarized research files for a 5% random sample of all Medicare beneficiaries enrolled from 1989-2002 including annual Medicare, third-party and beneficiary spending for inpatient, outpatient hospital, home health agency, hospice, and physician services. In addition, we produced a master monthly enrollment file including indicators of inpatient and outpatient care by year and month based on begin and end dates from Medicare enrollment records. Finally, our team produced annual summary files of diagnoses (primary and secondary) and procedures and service counts by individual ICD-9-CM, CPT-4 and HCPCS codes for studies of expenditures and utilization for major conditions and treatments.

Imputation of Prescription Drug Utilization for 5% Medicare Sample, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

In addition to serving as the CMS Research Data Distribution Center, members of Acumen's team have provided CMS with quality policy and program analysis services over a number of years. Recently, Acumen has worked directly with CMS in the implementation of Part D by developing sophisticated research extracts based on the 5% Medicare SAF enrollment and claims data. In a project conducted last summer, Acumen created a micro-level data set for the Care Management for High-Cost Beneficiaries Demonstration Project (CMHCBDEMO) to serve as an informational resource for health organizations entertaining submission of bids to participate in this demonstration; and, in a project initiated last fall, Acumen has produced the PDP Bidders Data Set to assist drug plans in preparing their bids for the 2006 implementation of the Medicare Prescription Drug Program (PDP).

Both data sets summarize claims and diagnosis information from individual claims from the Standard Analytical Files into a single observation per beneficiary, with each record including variables describing annual enrollment status, annual Medicare Part A and Part B reimbursements, 70 HCC categories, HCC risk scores and inpatient DRGs for the first 10 stays during the year. The CMHCBDEMO consists of a representative 5% sample of Medicare beneficiaries who were continuously enrolled in the traditional Fee for Service (FFS) program throughout 1999, 2000 and 2001, and who met the selection criteria. The PDP Bidders Data Set keeps the FFS, managed care, and facilities parts of the 5% sample for 2001 and adds imputed measures of pharmaceutical expenditures and health insurance status as well as measures of hospital and doctor visits. The imputations of pharmaceutical utilization and health insurance status was done using data from the 2001 MCBS. As part of our PDP contract with CMS, we are providing customer support for use of these data resources until the submission of PDP plan bids as well as a Data Description document and a Data Dictionary, which are available at: <http://www.acumenllc.com/PartD-Support/resources.html>.

The imputations of pharmaceutical utilization and health insurance status were done using data from the 2001 MCBS and involved sophisticated analysis. Simulation

methods such as those implemented in bootstrap applications and Monte Carlo estimation were applied to impute values for Rx expenditures on the 5% Medicare sample relying only on the summarized health and enrollment information and the estimates of the estimation. The 2001 MCBS was used to predict compensation for various beneficiary groups as implied by the CMS risk adjustment model to provide insights into the validity of risk multipliers. Acumen then compared predicted compensation with actual expenditures and calculated the difference between these two. The discussion focuses on validating the LIS (low income subsidy) and the LTC (long term care) components of the risk adjustments. We provided these analyses to CMS personnel, and provided our newly imputed Rx data and Risk Scores to OAct.

Integrating Food Stamp Program Rules and Processes with Other Public Assistance Programs, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

In examination of new opportunities for streamlining Food Stamp Program (FSP) eligibility rules provided by the 2002 Farm Bill, Acumen's team has set out to strengthen economic incentives in food assistance programs through a comprehensive appraisal of promising policy options for aligning state FSP qualification criteria with those of other public assistance programs. In previous projects for the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the USDA, the SPHERE/Acumen group developed a micro-simulation model based on Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) that projected the impacts on participation and benefits levels for those Farm Bill provisions allowing for simplified reporting, transitional food stamps for families leaving cash welfare, and partial restoration of benefits to legal immigrants. Building upon this existing simulation capacity, this current project will provide a powerful evaluation tool for federal and state practitioners to evaluate the tradeoffs faced by states when considering the use of qualification information gathered from Medicaid, SCHIP, TANF, EITC, and childcare programs to simplify their FSP eligibility and recertification rules.

In addition to providing an overview of options for integrating FSP qualification rules with those of other public assistance programs, our researchers are in the process of characterizing interactions among participation in FSP and other forms of public assistance, emphasizing complementarities and substitution in participation and stressing differences across demographic groups. We have developed the algorithms to define nationally-representative research samples of all family units formed over varying periods, including one month, one and two years, in addition to any other time period identified by the SIPP. The population in our simulations includes all individuals observed in the last month of the period of analysis and all FSUs formed by these individuals during the desired period. In this way, we can compute annual figures that account for families who participated in FSP for short intervals during the period of analysis. Furthermore, the SIPP contains detailed information on participation in the other income support programs on which we will focus. Finally, work is underway to identify who would be made eligible (and ineligible) for the FSP if the rules of other income support programs were applied.

SIN 874-3 SURVEY SERVICES

As explained above, Acumen's survey work is frequently a component of our policy analysis and program evaluation work. Acumen's team has designed and carried out surveys for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of services for a number of public assistance programs. For example, in a study spanning seven California counties, our team conducted a multiple wave, longitudinal household sample survey of 1400 families who had previously received TANF assistance (TANF-leavers). More recently, Acumen researchers carried out a survey of California employers and linked the survey results to employment data in an effort to assist California Employment Development Department (EDD) in setting eligibility limits for Unemployment Insurance benefits. As part of a larger project to assess the effects of alternative reporting regimes for the federal Food Stamp Program, our group designed a survey instrument to obtain time-use estimates for case types and activity categories performed by social service caseworkers across California. As part of California's Child Welfare Services Redesign, the Acumen team is currently carrying out all phases of a survey of community-based organizations in San Mateo County, in order to assess the capacity of these groups in providing services to the county's vulnerable families. These three recent and current projects are described in greater detail below.

Program Integrity and Improved Service to the Working Poor under Alternative Reporting Plans, Economic Research Services (USDA)

Examining key provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill for food assistance programs for the Economic Research Services (USDA), Acumen's nonprofit affiliate, the SPHERE Institute, projected the impacts of adjusting reporting plans on eligibility, benefit levels, and administrative activities in the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This two-part project involved (1) a micro-simulation model for the evaluation of a wide range of policy options for specifying the reporting plans required by the two programs, and (2) a time-use survey to measure the human resource costs associated with the changes in the programs and administrative activities.

The simulation model used data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), in order to develop a picture of how eligibility and potential benefits vary across families for any candidate reporting plan (e.g. monthly, quarterly, semi-annual with additional reports when income changes). To understand the impact of changes in the programs on administrative activity—the human resource costs required to process applications and certifications—we designed a survey instrument to obtain time-use estimates for case types and activity categories performed by social service caseworkers across California. The design was pre-tested in one county before being rolled out to the larger sample. The survey was in the form of a spreadsheet on which workers checked off the case type and activity in which they were engaged when a beeper emitted a random signal. On average, observations were recorded an approximately two times per hour for a full workweek. This random-moment design elicits more accurate responses with much less effort on the part of respondents than the traditional time-use diary.

The actual implementation of the survey involved both the active recruiting of counties to participate and the training of county social service personnel by SPHERE staff. At the time of the study, county officials and managers were concerned about the fiscal implications of California's budget crisis, and caseworkers were suspicious of what they worried would be an individual productivity analysis. In some counties, union opposition prevented the time-use study. In the counties that were included, SPHERE staff spent considerable effort emphasizing both the importance of the survey to DSS as well as the anonymity of the survey responses. Before the survey forms and pagers were distributed, training sessions were performed by SPHERE staff in each county to all personnel who were randomly selected for the survey.

Effects of an Alternative Base Period on Unemployment Benefits in California, California Employment Development Department

Through its nonprofit affiliate, the SPHERE Institute, Acumen carried out a survey of employers concerning the state's unemployment insurance (UI) program in an assessment of potential policy changes contemplated by California Employment Development Department (EDD). In particular, this project analyzed the impact of implementing several alternative base periods for determining monetary eligibility for unemployment benefits. The analysis entailed examining quarterly wage and unemployment insurance claim records for a 20% sample of California UI applicants from 1995-2000, as well as performing a mail survey of firms in order to determine their compliance costs. The survey consisted of stratified random samples of firms in four employment-size strata from the entire universe of firms covered by unemployment insurance. Simple random samples of the member firms from two major trade associations were also surveyed to determine if there were likely to be industry-specific effects.

In conjunction with the EDD's Small Business Advisory Group, SPHERE designed the survey instrument. In doing so, we convened a focus group to discuss the survey and tested the initial design on a small group of firms. The survey consisted of stratified random samples of firms in four employment-size strata from the entire universe of firms covered by unemployment insurance. Simple random samples of the member firms from two major trade associations were also surveyed to determine if there were likely to be industry-specific effects. The stratified sample covered 3,200 firms in four strata, and the trade association samples covered another 1,000 firms. The first mailing included a cover letter explaining the survey, and follow-up surveys were mailed out to firms that did not respond to the original mailing.

Exploiting the combination of administrative and survey data, the study calculated the costs and benefits of each policy option to workers, employers, and to the EDD. Further analyses were performed on firm tax records to assess the impact of eligibility changes on UI trust fund balances.

Child Welfare Services System Improvement Plan, San Mateo County Human Services Agency

Part of California's state-wide Child Welfare Services System Improvement effort involves the design and implementation of a community service network to provide a differential level of service response to families at risk of entering the child welfare system. In support of San Mateo County's implementation efforts, Acumen's team is currently conducting a capacity and needs assessment of the County's existing and potential private non-profit service partners. A core component of this project is a county-wide survey of 200 community-based organizations (CBO) that provide services to high risk families in the County. The project will assess the capacity of CBOs and non-traditional community associations and groups to provide differential response and family support services to children and families at risk of entering, currently served by, or exiting the child welfare system; identify gaps in services; and identify resources needed to expand capacity.

Acumen's team developed, pretested and disseminated the survey instrument, conducted follow-up calls and provided technical assistance to assure a high return rate, developed and administers the survey database, and will carry out the analysis and prepare a report presenting the findings. The survey instrument collects information on the organization's structure and staffing, client population, and on detailed facets of their programs and services. In addition to detailing service types and case management capabilities of the County's CBOs, the assessment will document the factors affecting participation in services and effective/efficient service delivery, funding and other resources, as well as an organization's expansion capacity to accommodate additional services. As part of the assessment, the project will identify the specific training needs of these CBOs and then develop the necessary curricula and training materials.