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THE HUMAN ECOLOGY LEARNING & PROBLEM SOLVING (HELPS) LAB
Montana State University

CONTACT US FOR A CONSULTATION

Please contact us at helpslab@montana.edu for a free consultation. Your message should include basic information about your project, as well as the date by which any cost estimate would be needed.

Preparing for Your Consultation

The HELPS lab provides one free hour of consultation to researchers at the start of a project to help determine the specific needs of the project and to set up a project time line and budget. To the extent possible, the researcher should be prepared to provide the following information either before or during this consultation session to ensure the best quality service. A researcher unable to provide the following information may need to work further on the research design or may need to pay for further consultation services in order to obtain the estimate. The requested information includes:

- The date by which the estimate is needed
- A short description of the research project, including the research question and purpose
- The anticipated methods of data collection (i.e., computer-based experiment; interview; focus group; web, mail, personal, or phone survey; mixed-mode or mixed-methods)
- A description of the population and any requests related to specific sampling procedures or sample characteristics
- Information about who will provide the sampling frame (e.g., the researcher or the HELPS Lab) and any other information about the recruitment of research participants
- The desired final sample size
- The funding source or planned funding source (including grant applications)
- The anticipated dates of data collection
- Data security and confidentiality requirements
- The desired end product(s) (e.g., raw or cleaned data, basic data summary, codebook, etc.)
The Human Ecology Learning and Problem Solving (HELPS) Lab is a fee-for-service facility at Montana State University-Bozeman that enables the collection of high-quality data for researchers using a variety of social and behavioral methods. The HELPS Lab is open to the broader community of researchers, with an emphasis on providing tools for studying interactions between human systems and other complex phenomena like ecosystems and public health. In addition to enabling data collection, the HELPS Lab consults with researchers to provide information and cost estimates for use in funding applications. The HELPS Lab also supports opportunities for researchers to increase their research design knowledge and their research methods skills.

DATA COLLECTION TYPES AND SERVICES

**Computer-based Experiments:** The HELPS Lab features eight computer stations that researchers can access for use in conducting message-based and other computer-based experiments.

**Interviews:** The HELPS Lab includes equipment for conducting interviews at a distance and for recording and transcribing interviews.

**Focus Groups:** The HELPS Lab provides access to focus group facilities with equipment for showing content to participants and for recording audio and video. The HELPS Lab is also proud to offer start-of-the-art dial response technology that allows a researcher to gather real-time data as focus group participants react to stimuli.

**Mail Surveys:** The HELPS Lab can coordinate the printing, mailing, collection, and processing of mail-based surveys. Such services can include secure, high-quality data entry into a variety of software programs.

**Web Surveys:** The HELPS Lab can assist with formatting and programming a researcher’s survey in advanced web-based software in a way that fits the researcher’s precise needs. The HELPS Lab can also assist with sampling and distribution strategies, as well as cleaning of the resulting data.

**Personal Surveys:** At full capacity, the HELPS lab will offer computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) technologies that allow researchers to upload the digital results of in-person surveys quickly and accurately into a secure database.

**Phone Surveys:** At full capacity, the HELPS Lab will offer computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology via eight calling stations. Interviewers will undergo general and project-specific training to ensure proficiency, accuracy, and ethical behavior. Supervisors will monitor calls and data entry to ensure quality.

**Mixed-mode and Mixed-methods Research:** The HELPS Lab can facilitate data collection for research that involves mixed modes (e.g., a combined web and mail survey) and mixed methods (e.g., a study with both focus group and survey methods).