

**Corporation for National and Community Service  
Department of Research and Policy Development**

# Accomplishment Surveys for Senior Corps Programs

*Office of Management and Budget  
Clearance Package Supporting Statement and  
Data Collection Instruments*

March 5, 2007

## **B COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS**

### **B.1. Potential Respondent Universe**

The respondent universe for the Senior Corps Accomplishment Surveys is all volunteer stations, which are local community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, or agencies, listed by Senior Corps projects.

### **B.2. Description of Sampling and Information Collection Procedures**

#### **B.2.1. Overview of Survey**

The approach to this survey is to obtain information from volunteer supervisors or managers of the organizations through which Senior Corps volunteers provide services to their communities. The Senior Corps programs provide support by awarding grants to sponsoring organizations (“grantees”) that, in turn, work with volunteer stations to recruit, place and oversee Senior Corps volunteers assigned there. The formal agreement between a Senior Corps project and a volunteer station is a Memorandum of Agreement that specifies the roles and responsibilities of each organization. Because the volunteer stations are the organizational level most closely associated with delivery of services, they are the organizations that are most likely to be able to collect and report on accomplishments of Senior Corps volunteers.

Because each of the three Senior Corps programs has its unique characteristics, we will draw separate samples of volunteer stations RSVP, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program.

For each program, the basic strategy is to sample with probability proportional to size to ensure that very small stations in terms of the number of volunteers are represented but do not overwhelm the smaller number of stations with larger numbers of volunteers. In addition, for each program, the selection will involve stratification by relevant variables. Sample sizes for the two smaller programs – FGP and SCP – in terms of the numbers of volunteers and stations will be set at 500; for the much larger RSVP, sample size is set at 1,500.

#### **B.2.2. Sampling Procedures**

Considering the fact that each of the three Senior Corps programs has its unique characteristics, we propose to draw separate samples of stations for each program.

The basic strategy is to select a stratified sample of stations for each program. Among the variables relevant for stratification, we believe the size of the stations (in terms of the numbers of volunteers) is particularly important to the effectiveness of the sample. Our plan is to use differential sampling rates within different strata to ensure that very small stations in terms of the number of volunteers are represented but do not overwhelm the smaller number of stations with larger numbers of volunteers. The number of strata by size will be determined based on an analysis of the stations’ size distribution by using each program’s frame dataset. When we plan the stratification by size, it is also important to limit the differences in sampling rates so as to avoid large variations in sample weights. Note that we will include those stations with zero volunteers, because the actual size of such stations may be non-zero at the time of the survey. In

addition, for each program, the selection may involve stratification by other relevant variables, such as region.

### **B.2.3. Approach to Data Collection**

The data collection approach is designed to reflect the goals of the project in gathering data about volunteer activities overall and by service categories, and information on processes and procedures related to volunteer management. The data will be collected in manner that is efficient and cost-effective for CNCS and for the respondents, minimizes burden on the respondents, and encourages a high response rate.

Primary data collection will use a survey instrument formatted in a style that will be easy to read and complete. The majority of the survey questions will be close-ended with check boxes or areas to insert specific numbers in response to questions regarding volunteer services and beneficiaries. These responses are to be based on records kept by the volunteer station, although some verification and coordination with the Senior Corps project director may be necessary. Respondents will receive only those survey sections related to service categories in which the Senior Corps volunteers assigned to them serve. The set of volunteer management questions is close-ended.

In addition to the accomplishments survey, a pre-survey letter will verify contact and service category information. It will also ask if the station supervisors prefer to receive the printed survey in English or Spanish. The letter will also provide an opportunity to inform project directors of the timeline for receiving the survey and encourage their stations to respond promptly.

### **B.2.4. Data Collection Procedures**

The first step in data collection will be to contact Senior Corps projects with sampled stations and administer the questionnaire. A primary focus of this stage of the data collection process will be identifying the most appropriate individual to receive the mailed paper survey. In addition, project directors will be informed about which of their stations are being sampled, and the project directors may be asked to follow up on these surveys if the stations are not immediately responsive.

Once contact information has been verified, the printed survey package will be sent by mail to the project directors for distribution to stations sampled within their projects. A letter with instructions and encouraging prompt return of the survey will be sent with the survey. Stations will be asked to return the completed survey to the contractor within two-weeks of receipt of the survey from the project director in a pre-paid envelope. A graduated series of steps will be undertaken to prompt responses, including follow-up emails and telephone calls directly to the volunteer station and emails and telephone calls to the project directors.

A system will be in place to notify project directors when all of volunteer stations associated with their project have submitted completed surveys to the contractor.

### **B.3. Methods to Maximize Response**

The Corporation has determined that it will put its resources into obtaining high response rates rather than greatly oversampling and will work closely with its contractor to maximize response. To obtain a high response rate on mailed surveys requires preparing the field for the surveys, packaging the survey for ease-of-response, and following up vigorously.

After announcing this survey in the Senior Corps' monthly newsletter, a letter or email will be sent to all Corporation state office staff as well as to Senior Corps project directors informing them of this upcoming activity and specifically asking the project directors to inform their station supervisors. In addition, the Senior Corps' listserv will begin carrying announcements to inform the project directors of the survey's launch and progress. The contractor will then begin contacting project directors to verify station contact information, determine which service category modules should be sent, and to ask project directors to urge the volunteer supervisors to respond.

Once contact information has been verified through the telephone survey, the printed survey package will be sent to the project directors for distribution to the stations. On average, each project director would have two stations selected as survey respondents. The survey packet will contain a cover letter signed by the Director of Senior Corps, forms clearance and confidentiality information, the appropriate survey modules, and a prepaid return envelope.

The contractor will give the stations two weeks to submit their response before initiating an escalating series of prompts. The first step will be an email to the station, followed by a call to the station a week later if necessary. If the form is not returned at that point, a letter will be sent to the station with a copy to the project director. If the station has still not responded, the email will be repeated with a copy to the project director followed by another phone call by the project director. At this point, approximately 7 weeks after the survey was distributed, the station will be turned over to Senior Corps by the contractor, and the Corporation State Office and the project director will contact the station together.

### **B.4. Tests of Procedures to Minimize Burden**

The surveys and procedures were pretested with three volunteer supervisors for each program who are located in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

### **B.5. Identity of Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects of Design and Identity of Contractors**

In 2003-2004, the Corporation for National and Community Service contracted with Westat of Rockville, MD and its subcontractor EnCompass<sup>LLC</sup> of Bethesda, MD to design these surveys. A competition to select a contractor to administer the next wave of these surveys will be conducted.