

**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:**

**Follow-Up Federal Student Aid Awareness Survey**

SURVEY    FOCUS GROUP    SOFTWARE USABILITY TESTING

**DESCRIPTION OF THIS SPECIFIC COLLECTION**

**1. Intended Purpose**

In July and August 2005, the U.S. Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) conducted a baseline study among high school students and parents to determine public awareness of FSA's role in helping individuals and their families meet the rising costs of postsecondary education. This was undertaken prior to a planned outreach campaign using public service announcements (PSAs) and other media materials designed to increase such awareness. Baseline awareness was assessed through a national telephone survey of a random sample of high school students and their parents, using a questionnaire that took an average of 8 minutes to complete.

The program factors assessed in this baseline focused on:

- Awareness of the resources that the Department of Education and FSA provide to help individuals pay for education beyond high school
- Knowledge about the process of applying for aid, including awareness of the FAFSA as the starting point
- Prevailing attitudes about borrowing money for school and the perceived personal and social value represented by the government's involvement in the loan process

The outreach campaign began in 2007 with the airing of PSAs that built on a new visual design and accompanying tagline/materials that were first used on a redesigned web site and accompanying printed materials. The tagline is "Start here. Go further."

The purpose of the proposed 2008 survey is to assess changes in awareness and accompanying attitudes and to determine whether those surveyed recalled the theme of the public outreach efforts.

**2. Need for the Collection**

This collection of information is necessary for FSA to obtain program performance measures as required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. GPRA was enacted to improve confidence in government by holding Federal agencies accountable for program results; to measure program performance against goals and report on progress; to improve program effectiveness by focusing on results; to provide managers with information about program results as part of efforts to meet program objectives; to provide Congress with objective information on the effectiveness and

efficiency of Federal programs and spending; and to improve internal management of the Federal Government.

The President's Management Agenda (2002), which calls for government to become citizen-centered, results-oriented and market-based, further focused efforts on improving government performance. As such, programs must "focus on results" and provide evidence of success in order to obtain continued funding. The Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) sets out a process for agencies to conduct assessments of key programs. A PART review identifies program strengths and weaknesses that impact its effectiveness and informs budget recommendations.

To meet these performance measurement requirements for program improvement, the office of Federal Student Aid proposes to compare baseline measures/benchmarks with those obtained after conducting outreach efforts intended to increase public awareness. The specific program goals, contained within the Department of Education's Performance Plan, include helping ensure access to high-quality postsecondary education by providing financial aid in the form of grants, loans, and work-study in an efficient, financially sound and customer-responsive manner.

### **3. Planned Use of the Data**

The proposed data collection will be used as a follow-up performance measure for FSA program activities implemented since the baseline survey. The survey results will provide the office of Federal Student Aid with measures of change in program outcomes over time as well as the ability to assess its current methods and procedures for communicating with constituents and users. Specifically, the data will permit assessment of changes that are due, in part, to the outreach campaign begun in 2007 in terms of 1) awareness of Federal resources to help pay for postsecondary education; 2) knowledge about how to apply for Federal aid; and 3) attitudes toward student loans and the Federal role in the loan process.

### **4. Dates and Location**

The survey will be conducted by telephone beginning July 7, 2008 and ending approximately August 15, 2008. Telephone calls will be made by Macro International, a survey research firm with call centers in New York, Vermont, and Nebraska. Telephone calls will be made nationally to households with teenagers using list-assisted random digit dialing.

### **5. Collection Procedures**

The contractor will conduct a telephone survey using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) among high school students and their parents, regardless of the student's intent to attend college. The contractor will use a list-assisted, stratified RDD sampling design to reach respondents aged 13-18 and their parents. To support analysis of the desired subgroups, the RDD sample will be geographically stratified based on the

density of the desired populations, including low-income households, African-Americans, and Hispanics. In addition, external consumer database information will be used to identify telephone numbers that are likely to lead to a household with a teen.

Sufficient calls will be completed to be able to assess awareness among the previously identified three underserved groups (as self-defined by respondents):

- Low-income Americans (annual income of \$35,000 or less)
- African-Americans
- Hispanic Americans

These sampling procedures will increase the likelihood of reaching households with the required respondents, thus maximizing the efficiency of the sample and yielding reliable results that can be generalized to the populations of interest.

Additional discussion of the stratification and sampling is included below under **Statistical Information.**

**Procedures:** Households will be sampled randomly from the list. Surveys will be conducted using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system, which will record respondents' answers in an electronic database. Calls will be made with parents (or legal guardians) and students in households with a student who was in high school during the previous school year as the survey will be conducted in the summer, when school is not as session. Interviewers will request parental permission to survey the high school student if under age 18. If the parent and student are available, both will be conducted during the same call. If the student is not available (or the parent cannot complete the interview at that time) a call back will be scheduled for another time. If an interview with either the parent or student cannot be completed after the maximum number of callback attempts, a replacement from another household will be used. We estimate that two-thirds of the parents and students reached will be paired in the same household. The remaining cases will not be paired.

The survey will be translated into Spanish and administered in Spanish as required.

## **6. Number of Surveys**

There will be 3,000 surveys from 1,500 students and 1,500 parents. Students and parents from the same household will be interviewed where possible, but this is not required for the methodology. Based on past experience, we estimate that these completed interviews will come from approximately 2,300 households. This will meet the required goal of a 2.5percent error margin for a 90percent confidence interval for an estimate of a population.

From the 1,500 surveys each with students and parents, the anticipated yield will be about 160 each African-American and Hispanic respondents and about 500 respondents from households with combined income of \$35,000 or less. The use of consumer market segment lists will increase the ability of the survey to reach the target groups.

## 7. Description of Respondents

The contractor will make calls from the obtained list of telephone households with a high likelihood of 13-18 year olds and further screen the households to make sure there is a high school student in each. If there is more than one high school student in a household, the respondent will be the oldest. Parents or guardians will be asked permission to conduct the survey with minors.

One parent in a household will be the respondent. For purposes of efficiency, parents and students in the same household will be included to the extent possible. However, the sampling procedures do not require that students and parents be paired.

All respondents will be advised of the nature of the activity, the length of time it will require, that participation is purely voluntary, and that responses will be confidential. The contractor, Macro International, complies with Department and Health and Human Services regulations for the protection of human subjects (45 CFR 46). Thus, an Institutional Review Board will review this research for compliance, as required.

### AMOUNT OF ANY PROPOSED STIPEND OR INCENTIVE

No stipend or incentive is proposed.

**BURDEN HOUR COMPUTATION** (*Number of responses (X) estimated response or participation time in minutes (/60) = annual burden hours*):

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Students	1500	9 minutes	225 hours
Parents	1500	9 minutes	225 hours
<b>Totals</b>			

### BURDEN COST COMPUTATION

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Hourly Rate	Response Time	Total
Students	1500	\$6.20*	225 hours	\$1395
Parents	1500	\$19.29**	225 hours	\$4340
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3000</b>	\$12.745 (mean)	<b>450 hours</b>	<b>\$5735</b>

\* The minimum wage hourly rate changes from \$5.85 to \$6.55 per hour on July 24, 2008, midway through the proposed data collection period; thus we use the mean of the two rates.

\*\* Average hourly wage for civilian workers, Bureau of Labor Statistics' National Compensation Survey, June 2006. (<http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ocs/sp/nchl0910.pdf>).

### STATISTICAL INFORMATION

This section includes a discussion of the random digit dialing (RDD) sampling frame, stratification of the RDD sample to reach subgroups of particular interest.

To build a list-assisted RDD sampling frame, the listed telephone numbers for the United States are mapped and assigned to a specific geographic location (such as a census block group, a census tract, or a zip code). Telephone lines are not restricted by geographic borders, but are generally associated with finite geographic areas. The mapping results in a many-to-many association between telephone exchanges and geographic boundaries (i.e. many exchanges associated with many geographic areas). The association between geographic area and telephone exchanges is quantified by tallying the number of directory-listed households in each geographic area by exchange combination. The geographic area is assigned to the telephone exchange with the most number of listed telephones (the rule of plurality). After each geographic area has been assigned to an exchange, the exchanges inherit the characteristics of the geographic areas. These exchange characteristics can be used for targeting certain populations, such as African-Americans and Hispanics, to increase sample sizes for certain subgroups, or for targeting specific geographic boundaries, such as counties or groups of zip codes.

After mapping the telephone exchanges, all possible telephone numbers are then divided into blocks (or banks) of 100 of numbers. A 100-block is the series of 100 phone numbers defined by the last two digits of a 10-digit phone number. For phone numbers with the first eight digits in common, there are 100 possible combinations of the last two digits (ranging from 00-99)—this is one 100-block. To greatly enhance efficiency (and reduce costs) zero-blocks, or 100 blocks with zero listed phone numbers, are excluded (or truncated) from the sampling frame. The exclusion of zero-blocks reduces the frame coverage, but considerably increases productivity. Nationally, only about 3.5 percent of residential numbers are in zero-blocks and coverage bias is negligible. The remaining 100-blocks, those with at least one listed residential number (or 1+ blocks), comprise the sampling frame—referred to as a *truncated, list-assisted* frame since listed telephone numbers help in improving sampling efficiency. All possible telephone numbers, both listed and unlisted, in 1+ blocks are eligible for selection through RDD with equal probability.

Macro International conducts frame research and selects samples using an in-house RDD sampling system, Genesys, licensed from MSG, Inc. The Genesys system provides Macro with the ability to design and implement complex sample surveys in-house. It also provides the telephone exchange-geographic location mapping necessary for identifying a complete and efficient sampling frame.

Although all high school students and their parents are eligible for the survey, population subgroups of particular interest are low-income households, African-Americans, and Hispanics. All three of these groups tend to be unrepresented in RDD telephone samples. To increase the analytic capabilities for these three population groups, Macro will stratify and oversample areas with high concentrations of at least one of these three groups. As described above, the Genesys system provides a geographic area to telephone exchange mapping from which we can identify telephone exchanges associated with geographic areas concentrated with respondents in one or more of the target groups. Macro will stratify telephone exchanges into four mutually exclusive strata as shown:

Stratum	Definition	Sampling Frame		Sample Allocation
		Total	Percent	
High-High	Telephone exchanges with at least 45% of households earning \$35,000 or less and at least 40% of the population is African-American or Hispanic	34,283,700	12%	23%
High-Low	Telephone exchanges with at least 45% of households earning \$35,000 or less	45,324,000	16%	22%
Low-High	Telephone exchanges with at least 40% of the population is African-American or Hispanic	29,973,400	11%	14%
Low-Low	Remaining telephone exchanges (low percentage of low-income households and low percentage of African-American and Hispanic populations)	172,599,300	61%	41%

This stratification is designed to balance the goals of the survey (overall estimation and subgroup estimation). The oversampling telephone numbers in exchanges associated with geographic areas with high concentrations of low-income households and/or African-American and Hispanic populations will increase the yield of interviews for these groups than would normally be obtained through RDD. It is expected that oversampling will increase the percentage of African-Americans and Hispanics by about 25-35 percent and the percentage of lower income households by about 12 percent. However, oversampling typically has a negative impact on the variability (error margins) for survey estimates. Therefore it is critical to evaluate the impact on variability of various designs—especially since oversampling can actually lead to larger error margins, despite a larger sample size. In the instance, the oversampling design will increase error margins modestly by about 8 percent (i.e. a design effect of 1.08).

Within each exchange stratum, telephone numbers will be further stratified into the *high-density* substratum or the *low-density* substratum based on whether the number is linked to a household that is likely to contain a teen. Macro will work with *infoUSA*, which maintains a database with 210 million consumer records built from publicly available data sources. Telephone numbers that *infoUSA* identifies as belonging to a household that contains a teen will be stratified into the high-density substratum, whereas those that don't match (including nonworking telephone numbers) will be stratified into the low-density substratum. To increase the incidence of households with teens, Macro will oversample telephone numbers in the high-density substratum (where a high percentage of phone numbers will lead to a teen household) relative to the low-density substratum (where a low percentage of phone numbers will lead to a teen household). Macro will use a *double sampling approach* to the density stratification, where a large RDD sample is drawn, matched to the *infoUSA* database, assigned to the appropriate stratum, and finally subsampled at appropriate rates. Assuming that 30 percent of teen households are identified from the *infoUSA* database and classified into the high-density stratum, Macro will oversample telephone numbers in the high-density at a ratio of 2.5:1 relative to the low-density stratum, such that an anticipated 50 percent of the interviews come from the high-density and 50 percent from the low-density. This oversampling is expected to increase the incidence of teen households in sample from around 15 percent to 20

percent, reducing the amount of screening for households by about 40 percent. However, the oversampling will increase the error margin by about 5-10 percent.

**Sample Sizes.** To meet the required goal of a 2.5 percent error margin for a 90 percent confidence interval for an estimate of a population percentage of 50 percent (conservative estimate) with a simple random sample the final sample would need about 1,080 interviews with teen households, requiring about 7,250 household interviews (most non-teen households). Macro would expect about 85-90 interviews with Hispanic and African-Americans (about +/-9 percent) and about 325 with households earning \$35,000 or less. Our proposed design calls for 1500 interviews with teens (or parents) to meet the goal of a 2.5 percent error margin. This allows for a design effect yielding an increase of 17.7 percent of the confidence interval, more than what we anticipate. But, Macro expects the increased incidence of teen households to maintain the household screening at about 7,000 households. Further, Macro anticipates about 160 African-American and Hispanic respondents, and about 500 respondents from households with combined income of \$35,000 or less.

From experience, Macro expects about 37 percent of the household interviews will result in a teen and parent interview. The remaining interviews will come from households where we interview only one household member. Thus, interviews will take place in approximately 2,300 households to reach 1,500 teen interviews and 1,500 parent interviews.

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