

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 20, 2009

To: Shellie Wilkie Martinez, Desk Officer
Office of Management and Budget

From: Lynda T. Carlson, Director
Science Resources Statistics Division

Via: Suzanne Plimpton, Clearance Officer
National Science Foundation (NSF)

Subject: Notification of data collection under generic clearance

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of NSF's plan to conduct web usability testing under the generic clearance for survey improvement projects (OMB #3145-0174). This activity is associated with the redesign of the NSF Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges.

Background

The Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges has been conducted annually since 1973. The survey collects information on the amount of research and development (R&D) expenditures at colleges and universities in the United States. Since 2007 NSF has been working on a full-scale redesign of the survey. The goal of the redesign is to update the survey instrument to ensure we are obtaining the most valid and reliable measurements of the amount of academic research activity in the U.S. To date NSF has hosted a data user workshop, two expert panel meetings, and 32 institution visits in order to receive input on changes to the survey. NSF has now developed a revised questionnaire and plans to conduct web usability testing on the revised web survey in advance of a 40 institution pilot test planned for the FY 2009 survey cycle (beginning in fall 2009).

The web usability tests will be in the form of 12 site visits and 8 remote tests using Cisco WebEx software. We will use the remote testing capability to reach institutions in geographic areas that were not included in our site visits.

Data Collection Instrument

The draft redesigned questionnaire and sample web screen shots are attached. The web survey is being designed to closely resemble the PDF version of the questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedures

We plan to conduct 12 site visits in three different U.S. metropolitan areas, including Washington, DC. We will schedule a half-day visit with each institution. We also plan to conduct usability tests remotely using Cisco WebEx software with 8 additional institutions. The software will allow us to observe the respondent's keystrokes as they navigate through the web survey. The procedure for all testing will be to provide the respondent with dummy data, observe them as they enter data into the web survey, and conduct a usability debriefing upon completion. The debriefing will be conducted by phone for the remote tests.

Burden Information

Site Visits: We expect to conduct 20 web usability tests with the academic survey respondents. An average of 2 people from each institution will be invited to participate, and we expect each usability test to require 3 hours. Therefore, we estimate a total of 120 hours of respondent burden:

- $(2 \text{ people} * 3 \text{ hours}) * 20 \text{ tests} = 120 \text{ hours}$.

Incentive Payments

There are no incentive payments.

Contact Information

The contact person for questions regarding this data collection is:

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Attachments

cc: Fran Featherston