Data Collection/Needs Assessment OMB Responses from the IES-funded Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast (REL-SE) -- October 22, 2007

1. Please describe specifically how these results will inform the work of the REL-SE.

Purposes stated in original OMB package	How results will inform the work of the REL-SE
The purpose of the needs assessment is to ascertain from our regional clients their attitudes toward evidence-based education (EBE), any challenges they face in identifying and utilizing high quality information in their decision making, and the issues or topics for which they need high quality information.	The results will inform the work of the REL-SE in several ways. 1) The results will help us in identifying and understanding high priority informational needs in individual states and across the region. They will also help us in understanding how needs vary across different levels of the educational system within states. The results will help us in our planning processes relative to needed products and services such as: • Fast Response Projects. Fast Response Projects, as outlined in the RFP from IES, should tap into real questions, problems, and issues as they emerge over time. Thus, our needs sensing needs to be ongoing so that we are regularly updated about client needs beyond the SEAs. • Training and Technical Assistance: Results will be reviewed by training and technical assistance staff in order to determine how they can best share or discuss evidence-based decision-making (EBDM) processes with clients in the region. The needs assessment results will provide training and technical assistance staff an in depth look at specific topic areas/needs that will then be incorporated into or provide context for presentations, workshops, and or one-on-one meetings with clients. 2) The results will help us in understanding how various groups use information. For example, there may be some areas, e.g., textbook selection processes, where we can probe and develop a better understanding across states of how systematic decision making is carried out in this area. Based on this knowledge, we can suggest improvements to decision making processes. 3) As suggested in Question 3 below, the results can also be used to provide us feedback on the utility of existing informational resources and how they could be improved to make them more valuable to our clients.

2. Please describe how it will affect the studies that the REL-SE decides to perform under its contract with IES over the next four years.

The results from the proposed data collection will not affect the Task 2 research studies in terms of planning future studies. The three Task 2 studies that are currently underway have already been approved by IES. We are not projecting adding any more Task 2 studies during this contract period.

3. Have you considered asking specifically how useful current REL and/or IES products (e.g., What Works Clearinghouse) are for these individuals rather than assuming future needs?

At the time this OMB package was submitted, REL-SE did not have any products for dissemination; thus, that was not a consideration at the time. However, the suggestion is a good one and we will consider asking some questions about the quality and utility of REL-SE or IES products.

4. Please cite the Education Sciences Reform Act in the confidentiality section, ie, the standard IES pledge for REL studies.

In Supporting Statement A, Question 10. Confidentiality Assurances, we add the citation for the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA Act of 2002) as follows. Specifically, under ESRA 2002, the REL-SE pledges that all individually identifiable information about students, their families, and their schools shall remain confidential. To this end ESRA 2002 requires and REL-SE pledges that no person may:

- Use any individually identifiable information furnished under the provisions of this section for any purpose other than statistical purposes for which it is supplied;
- Make any publication whereby the data furnished by any particular person under this section can be identified; or
- Permit anyone other than the individuals authorized by the Commissioner to examine the individual reports.

The source of this language is the Restricted Use Data Procedures Manual, Chapter 1.4, Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Confidentiality Standards, pg. 10.

5. Why does REL-SE need to do 20 sessions of 20-25 people annually? This is approaching the size of a quantitative study, rather than a qualitative one. And why does the assessment need to be annual rather than one time (as other RELs have done)?

The REL-SE plans to collect needs assessment data from various educational role groups in each of the six states for the purpose of tailoring our products/services to best meet the needs of the region. REL-SE believes smaller but more frequent and varied needs assessment data collection sessions will provide us more timely and relevant feedback from our constituents that can then be translated into more targeted, timely, and relevant products/services.

However, we recognize that the 20 sessions per year can perhaps best be considered as the maximum that we would attempt to conduct in a year. Most likely the number of sessions would be less than 20. For example, we proposed as a maximum that we would consider collecting data from each of our six CEEBE meetings of district teams (one meeting per state). This is a service we are providing to the region and so the meetings with these district teams are part of our scope of work. The data collection aspect is just intended as a small part of the two-day agenda we develop for these meetings. However, our 2008 plans for this group of district teams is that the state groups will meet at least once as regional group and thus, the data would more efficiently be collected from the one regional meeting rather than the 6 individual CEEBE meetings. For 2009, we will also likely have a regional CEEBE meeting which could be used for data collection rather than the individual state meetings.

Similarly, although we proposed collecting data from a small group of attendees at 12 state sponsored meetings each year, it is unlikely given the early submittal dates for proposed sessions at these summer conferences that we will be able to participate in two per state for the spring and summer of 2008. So the idea of scaling back on the number of data collection sessions we try to arrange for 2008 is a good suggestion. The number of sessions for 2008 will be less than the 12 proposed.

In sum, for the two years remaining of proposed data collection-2008 through 2009, the number of sessions per year may be 10 or less, rather than the maximum possible outlined of 20 each year.

6. What is the estimated session length? Part A indicates a burden of 1.5 hours per respondent but the Protocol refers to a 2-hour session.

Part A states, "*The focus group burden for participants is approximately 1.5 hours with an additional professional development component of 30 minutes*."

The Protocol states, "*The format of the two hour facilitated market research session consists of an introduction to the mission of the REL-SE and to the idea of evidence-based education, followed by the needs assessment protocol*."

To clarify, “the professional development component” mentioned in Part A involves an introduction to the mission of the REL-SE and an overview of the components of evidence-based educational decision-making. The professional development component (also known as the Introduction in the Protocol) takes 30 minutes. Thus, in addition to the 1.5 hours of proposed data collection, the 30 minutes of professional development/Introduction brings the length of the entire session to two hours (but data collection will only be 1.5 hours of the session).