

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

NOAA AWARENESS STUDY

OMB CONTROL NO.: 0648-xxxx

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

On August 9, 2007, President Bush signed legislation into law the America COMPETES (*America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act, Public Law 110-69*), which seeks to strengthen education and research related to science and technology (“America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act”). This legislation is significant for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), granting the agency a mandate to engage in agency-wide education and outreach efforts to all stakeholders. NOAA is charged with developing and promoting education and outreach activities at all levels for the purpose of heightening the public’s current understanding of issues related to atmospheric science, the earth’s environment, and protecting life and property.

In addition NOAA currently disseminates a significant amount of communications in the form of public affairs, education materials, scientific and operational data, regulations, and life saving weather related advisories and warnings. These communications are dispersed by many different parts of NOAA’s business units across several target audiences and until recently had little coordination. There is a significant knowledge gap as to the effectiveness of the communications. The leadership of NOAA has created a central communications office whose task it is to coordinate and maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of agency communications to reduce redundancy and eliminate waste. In order to ensure the strongest most cost effective communications and communications which integrate into the new agency-wide education and outreach efforts NOAA believes that metrics must be established and the value of the communications consistently measured.

NOAA programs around the country have been experimenting with more extensive and effective mechanisms for cross-office communication and coordination. NOAA employees are finding innovative ways to be resourceful, reach out to the community, and truly demonstrate the benefits of “One NOAA” to the nation – these efforts need to be assessed and aligned to be truly effective. The information derived from the proposed collection will be used in this alignment.

The information collection requested will allow NOAA to assess the understanding and awareness of NOAA, its programs and communications among its target audiences including the general public, science attentive public, the data users or scientific community and NOAA’s stakeholders as it relates to the collection and dissemination of scientific, operational, and life-saving data, consistent with NOAA’s mission which includes: 1) understanding and predicting changes in the Earth’s environment; 2) maintaining international leadership in changing the way integrated environmental observations and information are captured, managed, stored, shared, and used to benefit the world; and 3) protecting life and property. NOAA will utilize the findings in: 1) the formulation of cost efficient, efficacious and integrated communications and 2) beginning to provide the basis from which to design metrics for measuring the value and utilization by various audiences of tax-funded information and data products.

2. Indicate how, by whom and for what purpose the information is to be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

This information is for internal uses only. It will not be published, made available to the public, or used in testimony. It will be used by the leadership, the communications office and the communicators at NOAA to develop a successful communication strategy for NOAA that will resonate with NOAA's target audiences consistent with the Agency's objectives and mission. The contracted research firm, Harmonic International and its subcontractor, Kelton Research, will conduct one study in three steps as outlined below:

STEP ONE: Explorative Qualitative Phase

In this first step, exploratory focus groups will be conducted among the general population and science attentive public (defined as those tuned into the issues and news concerning science and the environment on a regular basis) having access to the internet, as a majority of NOAA information is made available over the internet. These groups will provide the essential understanding needed to ensure that issues relevant and important to people are identified and pursued in subsequent phases of the study. Specifically, the important beliefs elicited in the groups will inform the question items used in the Step Two questionnaire. Additionally, these groups will ensure that subsequent research steps as well as the final communication concepts are framed in their language. The moderator guide for the discussion is provided as part of this submission.

Methodology: Using two convenience samples, the research firm will conduct six to eight two hour sessions with 10-12 participants in each session, held in traditional focus group facilities across two-three geographic areas among the general population - three to four groups, and the science attentive public - three to four groups. In selecting participants for the focus groups, we start with a brief random digit dialed (RDD) telephone survey so that as many residents in the area where the research is being conducted have as good a chance of being contacted and selected to participate as possible, to avoid people that continually participate in focus groups and to broaden the sample. Please not, however, that despite these measures the sample will not be representative of the general population.

The single word answers from the benefits question in the Explorative Qualitative Phase will be inserted into a model in Step Two.

STEP TWO: Quantitative Awareness and Positioning Development Phase

This phase refines and furthers the understanding needed for the development of the communication strategy. We will be identifying those issues most salient to NOAA's publics in order to provide the building blocks for the communication concepts that will be evaluated in Step Three, and which will guide communication strategy.

Using four separate convenience samples, the research firm will conduct 1,500 online surveys in Step Two among the following target audiences: two segments of the American public (general population and science attentive), NOAA stake-holders, and peers (which includes the science community and data users).

General Population 2 segments

Targets: a convenience sample reflecting the general population: 500 surveys
Science Attentive Public: 500 surveys

NOAA Stakeholders

Decision Makers and Policy Leaders: 250 surveys

Peers

Members of Scientific Community, Data Users: 250 surveys

With this data, NOAA will have the necessary understanding of current awareness, perceptions, emotions and attitudes among its various publics. This will inform the communication concepts to be evaluated in Step Three.

STEP THREE: Umbrella Communication Concept Evaluation

Based upon the learning from Steps One and Two, three communication concepts will be directly inserted that reflect the positioning for NOAA communication that is most likely to positively resonate with the various publics, as well as be consistent with NOAA's objectives and mission. Such communication concepts provide an 'umbrella' under which all of NOAA's primary communication will fall. It will provide strategic direction for individual communication executions and provide a consistent overall communication program.

In Step Three, the research will replicate the quantitative methodology of Step Two. The concepts developed will be tested to ensure that they do resonate with the various publics. This completes the study. Step One uncovers the appropriate language and issues important to the publics; Step Two refines that understanding, identifying the most salient issues for consideration in the development of the communication strategy; Step Three checks to sure the concept is understandable and does indeed reflect what is important to the various publics.

General Population 2 segments

Targets: a convenience sample reflecting the general population: 500 surveys
Science Attentive Public: 500 surveys

NOAA Stakeholders

Decision Makers and Policy Leaders: 250 surveys

Peers

Members of Scientific Community, Data Users: 250 surveys

When the three steps of the first study are completed, the research team will deliver a full **Analysis of Results** and **Strategic Recommendations** that synthesizes and culminates the findings in Steps One, Two, and Three in a communications roadmap and message architecture. This phase will postulate a set of standard metrics that can be used in any future tracking or communications assessment. All other analyses and reports completed for Steps One and Two will also be completed for Step Three.

At the conclusion of this phase, NOAA will have a strategic roadmap to guide the agency through all of its communications with the general public, and with specific stake-holders and peers. Additionally, NOAA will have a framework for ongoing measurement to ensure future communications continue to effectively and efficiently continually improve. The exact metrics for the measurement of effective communications will be established in the next study, once the key objectives and messages have been aligned in a baseline study that will require separate approval from OMB, as the objectives and messages are not predictable at this point in time.

As explained in the preceding paragraphs, the information gathered has utility. NOAA will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response #10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Internet survey responses, which reflect 99% of all surveys conducted for this research engagement (Total Number of Online Surveys/ Total Number of Interviews conducted qualitatively and quantitatively), will be collected through a secure internet server, and all these will be tabulated electronically.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

After an overview of current and recent NOAA outreach and education surveys, we know of no other collections of information for the express purpose of determining public understanding and awareness of NOAA and its programs, especially the collection and dissemination of scientific, operational data.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item five of form OMB-83-I, the Paperwork Reduction Act Submission form), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

Not applicable.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or conducted less frequently.

The consequences are: 1) the considerable amount of taxpayer dollars NOAA uses to collect and disseminates a significant amount of communications in the form of public affairs, education materials, scientific and operational data, regulations, and life saving weather related advisories and warnings will not be spent as cost effectively and efficiently as possible, and the communication will not be as effective, requiring greater volumes to penetrate the target audiences; 2) there will be no strategy under which to unify and integrate NOAA's communications, to measure and continually improve efficiencies or to reduce redundancy and eliminate waste.

NOAA recognizes communications and outreach as a priority area to unify collaborative efforts across regions and is expanding the “One NOAA” outreach component of existing outreach programs into a more systematic approach within a defined framework. The collection of this data is important to effectively and efficiently build awareness of NOAA’s capabilities and products, strengthen our planning and execution with strong user and partner interactions, and increase environmental literacy with a focus on the programmatic priorities.

Without the collection of such data, a tailored implementation of NOAA’s programmatic priorities and a more systematic approach to outreach and communications will not be as effective at improving service for NOAA’s customers, increasing the value and productivity of our partnerships, improving stake-holder relations, improving internal communications and efficiency across line offices and programs, and creating a more visible and valued NOAA. By collecting this information, NOAA has a very exciting opportunity to build upon our past successes in a way that improves the services NOAA provides to the nation.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

NOAA is relying on internet interviews for the quantitative aspects of this survey, primarily because NOAA uses the internet as its main form of communications to the various segments of the public which this survey targets – including the general public.

This is the preferred approach in this situation, because it is less invasive and allows respondents to complete the survey at their own pace and at a time that is most convenient for them. Additionally, with the decreasing response rate to telephone surveys and increased rates of people with no land line and no publicly available cell phone listings (5%+), telephone surveys are becoming increasingly less reflective of the population, while increasing dramatically in cost and time. Consequently, NOAA feels that on a cost/benefit basis, the best use of the agency’s funds would be an internet based study for Steps 2 and 3 and will not generalize beyond the sample.

8. Provide a copy of the PRA Federal Register notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

A Federal Register Notice was published on August 8, 2007. No comments on the collection were received.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

Participants in the focus groups will be paid \$50, a rate which is in the lower end of the standard rates for focus groups. No other payments or gifts will be provided to respondents for the research.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No personally identifiable information about respondents, other than age range and gender, will be collected. That information will be presented in aggregate form only.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

Not applicable.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection information.

The current research plan for *all three steps*: 96 surveys for the exploratory focus Groups and a total of 3000 surveys for a total of 3,096 surveys. The focus groups require 8 groups of 12 people = 96 x 2 hours each = 192 hours and 3,000 surveys at 20 minutes each = 1000 hours, for a total of 1,192 hours.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information.

There is no cost to respondents resulting from this information collection.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses, and any other expense that would not have been incurred without collection of information.

The cost of questionnaire construction, conducting the surveys, plus analysis, is \$250,000, based on a negotiated contract.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-1.

This is a new program.

16. For collections of information intended for publication, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

This information is not intended for publication, it is intended for internal development only.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display may be inappropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in item 19, “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission” of OM 83-1.

NOAA believes that all requirements posed by the certification statement are met.