SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Commercial Service – Strategic User Satisfaction Survey
OMB Control No. 0625-XXXX

SECTION A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

Expanding U.S. exports is a national priority essential to improving U.S. trade performance. The Department of Commerce (DOC) International Trade Administration (ITA) U.S. Commercial Service (CS) is the key U.S. government agency responsible for assisting exporters. CS provides a multitude of export promotion programs to help to U.S. businesses, particularly small and medium-sized companies. These programs include information products, client counseling, and trade events.

To accomplish its mission effectively and efficiently, in accordance with Reinvention objectives, CS needs ongoing client feedback on its programs. For example:

- A top recommendation of the National Performance Review (NPR) is to make Government responsive to client needs (Cf. A Creating a Government that Works Better and Costs Less). The NPR recommends that agencies dealing with the public survey their customers on services and results desired, and on satisfaction with existing services (Cf. Chapter 2. Step 1, A Giving Customers a Voice).

- Executive Order 12862 of September 11, 1993, Setting Customer Standards, established a requirement that, where applicable, executive branch agencies use customer satisfaction surveys as a tool for a continual reform of the executive branches' management practices and operations.

- The Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee (TPCC) specifically recommends that export-oriented Government programs develop and implement performance measures to guide decisions and improve strategic focus.

ITA has taken major steps to implement NPR and comply with E.O. 12862. For example, a specialized unit was formed to collect and maintain customer feedback for Commercial Service (CS) trade promotion programs. The CS user satisfaction survey staff (known as the Customer Relationship Management Unit - CRMU) is responsible for ensuring the collection and reporting of customer feedback data for more then a dozen programs is done using a consistent methodology. In addition, the CRMU tests and implements techniques for improving survey response rates, streamlines collections where possible, and alerts management to program strengths and weaknesses as identified by clients in the U.S. business community.

As part of its mission, the CS uses OMB-approved (OMB Control No. 0625-0217) user satisfaction surveys on a transactional basis to collect feedback on the programs it provides to the U.S. business clients it serves. Survey responses acquaint CS domestic and international field staff with their clients' perceptions and assessments of export assistance products and services. These transactional user satisfaction survey responses are used to assess client satisfaction and identify areas where service levels and benefits differ from client expectations. Clients benefit from the collection of this information, because it is used to address their dissatisfaction and improve services provided to the public.

The CS recently streamlined most of its transactional user satisfaction surveys so that clients only have to spend 5 minutes, instead of 10 minutes, to complete a survey. These transactional user satisfaction surveys do not, however, provide the CS with in-depth client feedback needed to conduct sophisticated customer satisfaction data analysis.

As a result, the CS requests OMB approval to conduct a strategic user satisfaction survey on an annual basis using a stratified random sample to collect more in-depth user satisfaction feedback from our clients in order to assess the importance or relative impact of specific service delivery processes and attributes on overall customer satisfaction. The feedback from the strategic user satisfaction survey would enable the CS to prioritize the allocation of time, budget and resources using regression analysis and performance-importance diagrams. Without this information, the CS is unable to systematically determine the actual and relative levels of performance for attributes, processes and subprocesses, identify the drivers or determinants of overall satisfaction, and provide clear, actionable insights for managerial intervention.

The data collection method chosen for the strategic user satisfaction surveys is an e-mail message delivering a hotlink to a web enabled survey. This survey will ask the client to evaluate the CS on its customer service upon which results will be used to make business process improvements (changes to policies, programs, or procedures affecting the service) in order to provide better and more effective export assistance to U.S. companies.

The success rate of ITA programs depends on continued sensitivity to ITA's diverse clientele. ITA's goal is to reach a stratified random sample of CS's customer base for all programs. In general, user satisfaction surveys for the CS have elicited response rates between 25-60%. Introductory emails to clients will be carefully targeted and monitored to avoid duplication.

To promote optimal use and provide focused and effective improvements to CS services, we are requesting a three-year approval. This clearance would allow enough time to determine process and attribute prioritization associated with CS trade promotion service delivery as well as eliminate time, effort, and costs associated with preparation of annual packages and enable CS to continue to conduct its ongoing client-feedback activities. ITA has already been through test and redesign phases with this survey instrument and has revised this instrument based on actual experience and guidance from survey experts, client facing employees, and existing clients. If ITA determines that this survey instrument is not serving its purpose (i.e., respondents find questions confusing and do no answer them or response rates are unacceptable), ITA will revise this questionnaire and resubmit it to OMB prior to the three-year expiration.

Description of Forms

Customer satisfaction and loyalty questions, including assessments of the quality and benefits of Commercial Service trade promotion assistance.

This is a series of questions/measures to solicit clients' opinions about the Commercial Service as whole and not for individual trade promotion programs provided CS offices, as is the case for our transactional user satisfaction surveys.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will 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 used for program improvement, strategic planning, and allocation of resources. Survey responses are used to assess client satisfaction, assess priorities, and identify areas where service levels and benefits differ from client expectations. Clients benefit because the information is used to improve services provided to the public.

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

The information can only be supplied by previous clients and cannot be economically obtained through electronic or telephonic transmissions. Many of the surveys are sent via email and U.S. companies complete and submit the surveys online, which is quicker and easier than via mail or fax.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

Survey questions specifically relate to ITA export promotion assistance (i.e., no duplication of effort by other U.S. Government agencies is imposed on respondents). No similar information is available.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

Survey questions are opinion-oriented, and there is no need for clients to maintain additional records, or incur extra expense to develop data not readily available.

The simplicity of the surveys also minimizes the burden on small businesses. Some of the surveys include a contact telephone/fax number for individuals requesting personal assistance.

6. <u>Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently</u>.

Without this information, ITA is unable to systematically determine client perceptions about the quality and benefit of its export promotion assistance.

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

The information will be collected consistent with Paperwork Reduction Act guidelines.

8. <u>Provide a the information 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</u>. <u>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</u>.

A Federal Register Notice soliciting comments from the public was published on April 17, 2007 (Vol. 72, pg. 19171). No comments were received.

ITA's staff regularly consults with customers to determine areas where improvements to its export promotion products and services can be made. There are no unresolved or material issues stemming from the consultations. Reformatting has not substantially changed the revised information collections and only makes the forms easier for respondents to use.

9. <u>Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees</u>.

None. ITA makes no payments or gifts to U.S. companies who complete the survey.

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

U.S. companies are informed that the information is for internal U.S. Government use only and will be considered business confidential. Some of the information collected may be subject to data covered by Freedom of Information Act requests.

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.

No questions of a sensitive nature are requested.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

Estimated Number of Respondents = 1,500

[estimated stratified random sample) x (estimated survey response rate]

3,750 survey recipients x 40% = 1,500 respondents

Estimated Time Per Response = 30 minutes

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 750 hours

[estimated number of respondents] x [estimated time per response]

1,500 respondents x 30 minutes = 750 hours

Estimated Cost Burden for Respondents = $26,250

[hourly private sector salary] x [estimated total annual burden hours]

$35 x 750 hours = $26,250

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in #12 above).

Not Applicable.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

Not Applicable.

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

This is a new collection thus no program change or adjustment.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

Data will be used to conduct sophisticated customer satisfaction data analysis. The primary criterion guiding the analysis of data resulting from the survey is the development of policy-useful information – i.e. findings on export assistance service use and service quality that will enable the fine-tuning of the current mix of products/services/trade events to increase impact and usefulness to the exporter population. Data analysis will include basic tabulations of the responses (including: frequency analysis, cross-tabulations, and analysis of variance) as well regression analysis. Regression analysis will be used to devise a dependence model and importance-performance quadrant chart.

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

The OMB number and expiration date will be displayed on the form.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19 of the OMB 83-I.

Not Applicable.