

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:

Baseline Federal Student Aid Awareness Survey- Long Beach, California

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 national outreach campaign begun in 2007 using public service announcements (PSAs), other media materials designed to increase such awareness, and a redesigned web site. 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

While a national follow-up survey began in July 2008 to assess changes in awareness and accompanying attitudes the purpose of the proposed survey is to focus on one urban primarily Hispanic community (Long Beach, California) where FSA is working with community-based organizations and area schools to achieve similar goals. This survey (essentially the same as the national follow-up survey) will serve as a baseline among Long Beach high school students, prior to the start of the Long Beach community activities/efforts that will begin in October 2008.

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 collect baseline measures/benchmarks with this survey; subsequently, after conducting outreach efforts in Long Beach, the office of Federal Student Aid will conduct a follow-up survey. (The follow up survey is expected to be conducted in August 2009, but is not yet funded and is not included in this request for data collection.) 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.

Note that the national follow-up survey cannot provide sufficient reach to serve as a baseline measure in Long Beach. Even with augmentation, it could not reasonably provide the targeted reach needed in the Long Beach community.

3. Planned Use of the Data

The proposed data collection will be used as a baseline measure for FSA program activities implemented in Long Beach. The survey results will provide the office of Federal Student Aid with initial measures of knowledge and awareness with constituents in Long Beach. Specifically, the data will provide baseline measures 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 in person in public locations over the course of two weeks in September 2008. The survey will be conducted by Macro International, a survey research firm using local area interviewer(s). Interviewers will approach youth in public places in Long Beach (shopping malls, parks, recreation centers) randomly and conduct what are known as intercept interviews. Intercept interviews are a recognized approach in survey research ideally suited to localized efforts.

5. Collection Procedures

The contractor will conduct intercept surveys among high school students, regardless of the student's intent to attend college. The contractor will obtain locations in Long Beach where high school-age students gather (several shopping area, parks and other public areas have been suggested by those who work with youth in the area) and approach youths to reach respondents aged 13-18 who attended high school in the Long Beach Unified School District in the year ending in June 2008.

Intercept surveys offer methodological challenges in selecting the participants that have been taken into account. In advance of data collection, the interviewer will observe places where youth tend to congregate at various time of day/days of the week. The interviewer will develop a roster of locations and proceed from one to another in a logical order over time. In small parks or shopping areas one location might be selected; in larger parks and shopping malls, multiple locations in different areas will be selected.

For shopping malls, senior project staff will approach mall management to inform them of our plans and obtain their permission to proceed. We will discuss with them approaches to avoid disruption of their interests and possible locations. Given the goals of the survey and their Federal sponsorship, we do not anticipate any difficulties.

Sampling will be conducted on consecutive days throughout the period of the study. The sampling days will be spread out over the days of the week, with sampling occurring between approximately 4:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and 2:00 p.m. and 9:00 pm on weekends. Time adjustments will be made based on local observations and mall or park closing times. The interviewer will capture surrounding conditions that might affect the pre and post comparison (such as, rainy day, rock concert in park,)

During each sampling day, a trained interviewer will approach groups of one or more that appear to include high school students. The interviewer will approach the n^{th} group (with the interval adjusted for traffic levels and most likely ranging from every third to seventh) as they pass the location. Intervals will be decided in advance based on traffic levels at the location and time of day, and recorded. If members of the group are high school students and agree to participate, the person in the group whose birthday is closest to the sampling day will be asked to complete the survey. Only one person per group will be selected.

Efforts will be made to reach students by gender and major minority status in approximate proportion to their enrollment. Non-response will be assessed by comparing selected characteristics of the sample population obtained from the Long Beach Unified School District with characteristics observed and recorded in those interviewed. Since a focus of the study is on Hispanic youth, the interviewer(s) will be bi-lingual and able to conduct the survey in the respondent's preferred language. (As high school students, Hispanic youth are expected to be fluent in English; however, some youth are expected to

prefer a Spanish-language interview.) However, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth will be included in the survey, (In 2007-2008 46.4 percent of high school students in Long Beach were Hispanic.¹)

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

Interview Procedures: Surveys will be conducted using intercept interviews with students who are enrolled in high school at the time of the survey .at parks and malls as specified. The interviewer will begin by providing an overview of the sites and locations at which interviews will be conducted within each site. These will be specified in sufficient detail (e.g., northwest corner of intersection; approaching food court in upper level of mall from department store, standing near fountain display), to enable them to be replicated by another interviewer.

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

The interviewer will provide complete documentation of all sampling procedures followed using a log developed for that purpose. The log will be arranged in chronological order and specify location sampled, start and end times for location, group sampling interval maintained for that location, and if changed due to external circumstances, the times during which the changed group sampling interval applied and the reasons for the change.

The interviewer will also maintain a roster of observable characteristics of sampled groups. This roster will include size and observed race/ethnicity and gender of those in groups. This roster will assist in replicating sample approaches for the 2nd year of the survey.

6. Number of Surveys

There will be 160 completed surveys from students. This will provide estimates of change in the population at or exceeding 85 percent power. (See Statistical Information below.)

7. Description of Respondents

The contractor will approach youth with a high likelihood of being 13-18 years old and further screen the individuals to make sure they were high school students in the Long Beach Unified School District in the year ending June 2008.

¹ Derived from data provided by California Department of Education (DataQuest), 2007-08, Long Beach Unified School District: (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DstEnrAll.asp?cYear=2007-08&cChoice=DstEnrAll&cSelect=1964725--LONGBEACHUNIFIED&Level=District&myTimeFrame=S&cTopic=Enrollment&cLevel=District&TheName=long^beach>)

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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 anonymous. The contractor, Macro International, complies with Department and Health and Human Services regulations for the protection of human subjects (45 CFR 46). Macro’s Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study and determined that it does not meet the definition of research; therefore it is exempt from IRB review.

AMOUNT OF ANY PROPOSED STIPEND OR INCENTIVE

No incentive will be offered.

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	160	9 minutes	24 hours

BURDEN COST COMPUTATION

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Hourly Rate	Response Time	Total
Students	160	\$8.00*	24 hours	\$192

* The minimum wage in California is \$8.00 per hour effective January 1, 2008. <http://www.dir.ca.gov/iwc/minwage2007.pdf>.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Sample Size.

It is expected that the intervention would yield an increase of at least 15 percentage points in awareness of the program. The anticipated 15 percentage point increase is based on initial low levels of awareness in a recent national sample, suggesting there is room for change. For example, only about one third of students have heard of the FAFSA and less than one tenth of students can identify the Department of Education as an agency providing student financial aid. While this is a substantial change in awareness it is one that seems reasonable given the promotional efforts —targeted directly to underserved students—that will be undertaken in Long Beach and their support by multiple community based organizations as well as the Long Beach Unified School District, California State University – Long Beach, and Long Beach City College.

In order to detect a change of this magnitude at the .05 level with 85 percent probability, 158 cases would be needed in each sample. It was decided that rounding this number up was reasonable. Hence, a sample of 160 high school students will provide sufficient power to assess changes from the pretest (to be conducted in September 2008) to the posttest (anticipated in September 2009) based on an assumed increase of 15 percentage points in basic awareness of the Department of Education’s role in student financial aid.

Given a conservative estimate of change in the mid range (from 42.5% awareness to 57.5% awareness) a sample of 160 each in the pretest and posttest will allow us to detect a difference of 15 percentage points with 85 percent power with a one-tailed test of significance at $p < .05$. (A one-tailed test is suitable given a projected increase in awareness, rather than a change in either direction.) Using a less conservative estimate (a change from 20 percent awareness to 35 percent awareness) the power increases to 91.5 percent with a one-tailed of significance at $p < .05$.

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