

Supporting Statement
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Institute of Standards and Technology
Generic Request for Customer Service-Related Data Collections
OMB CONTROL NO. 0693-0031

A. JUSTIFICATION

This is to request an extension of this information collection.

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

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR 1320 - implementing the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, Executive Order 12862 - Setting Customer Service Standards, the National Performance Review, good management practices, and its mission,

“To strengthen the U.S. economy and improve the quality of life by working with industry to develop and apply technology, measurements, and standards”

the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), a non-regulatory agency of the Department of Commerce, proposes to conduct a number of surveys and other customer data collections.

These surveys, both quantitative and qualitative, are designed to determine the kind and the quality of products, services, and information NIST's key customers want and expect; satisfaction with and awareness of existing products, services, and information; and, in limited cases, the economic impact of products, services, or assistance provided by NIST.

In addition, NIST proposes other customer service satisfaction data collection that includes, but may not be limited to focus groups, reply cards that accompany product distributions, and web-based surveys and dialogue boxes. NIST will seek to determine its customers' level of satisfaction with its products, services, and information, and provide an ongoing opportunity for dialogue with NIST. The data collections and opportunity for dialogue present a chance for customers to suggest how products, services, and information may be improved or made more useful. It also provides valuable and strategic input on possible new products, services, or fields of research. NIST also seeks to develop agency-wide customer satisfaction data and management of performance data for GPRA purposes.

NIST will limit its inquiries to data collections that solicit strictly voluntary opinions and information, and will not—under this PRA clearance request—collect information that is required or regulated.

For each proposed request using the generic clearance, NIST will submit the actual instrument to OMB along with responses to the following questions:

1. **Explain who will be surveyed and why the group is appropriate to survey.**
2. **Explain how the survey was developed including consultation with interested parties, pretesting, and responses to suggestions for improvement.**
3. **Explain how the survey will be conducted, how customers will be sampled if fewer than all customers will be surveyed, expected response rate, and actions your agency plans to take to improve the response rate.**
4. **Describe how the results of the survey will be analyzed and used to generalize the results to the entire customer population.**

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.

In general, the data collected will be used by NIST to determine where and to what extent products, services, and information are satisfactory and where and to what extent they can be improved or awareness of their availability can be improved. In addition, NIST will seek information on product, information, and service awareness, as well as limited information on the economic impact of selected programs.

Analysis of customer satisfaction data collections may be used as a catalyst for program planning, program changes or enhancements, as well as in identifying high priority items for improvement. The attached sample of the “National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) Assessor Questionnaire” resulted in new policies and is used to help monitor the performance of NVLAP assessors.

This information collection and dissemination will comply with the NIST CIO Information Quality Guidelines and Standards.

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.

Wherever possible, improved information technology will be used to reduce burden on NIST’s customers. In addition to traditional data collection methods, NIST will, whenever possible, offer electronic response via the NIST Internet web site and by fax. For some data collections,

especially those related to its products, services, and information offered via the Internet, NIST will focus on Internet-based responses.

The planned use of transactional and electronic web site surveys substantially contribute to the number of projected responses and associated burden hours.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

NIST has an internal review process that will examine each survey or data collection effort to be conducted under the generic clearance—to prevent internal duplication of effort and to ensure that appropriate data collection instruments are developed. By examining its three-year, NIST-wide requirements and combining those requirements into a generic clearance request, NIST is, to the greatest extent possible, centralizing the administration of its customer data collections. This will provide for a more consistent and comprehensive approach. While there may be other surveys or data collections that become the subject of separate clearance requests, NIST is confident that the procedures in place ensure that there will be no duplication. Due to the nature of NIST's unique mission and programs to further that mission, no similar data exists.

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

Some small businesses and other small entities are likely to be involved in these efforts, but NIST will keep the burden to them—as well as on any business, organization, or individual—at a minimum by asking for opinions on a strictly voluntary basis and by asking for only the minimum amount of information needed to evaluate NIST's customer opinions.

Also, as stated in Question 3, the use of transactional and electronic web site surveys reduce the average respondent burden.

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

These surveys and other data collections could/should not be collected less frequently. NIST will gauge customer satisfaction with the products, services, and information it now provides and also seek customer input on future products, services, and programs. Results from these data collections may lead to further investigations that could result in changes to, or enhancements of, the delivery of products, services, and information, as well as identifying high-priority items for improvement or inclusion in the suite of products, services and programs NIST provides. The collection of economic data will shed light on the productivity of NIST programs and the part they play in achieving NIST's mission. There is no technical or legal obstacle to reducing this burden.

In addition, the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, Executive Order 12862 - Setting Customer Service Standards, the National Performance Review, and good management practices set the policy and performance precedents that warrant and encourage such data collections.

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

The data collection conducted under this generic clearance will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

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 notice soliciting public comments was published in the Federal Register on November 3, 2008, (Vol. 73, Number 213, page 65293). No comments were received.

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

NIST will not provide any payment or gift to respondents to any written, telephone, comment card, or other such survey. For focus groups, professionally conducted by a contractor, where NIST has requested the voluntary participation of professional individuals who—in order to participate in the focus group. However, if respondents must leave their home or place of business to travel to a specific location, NIST will, on a case-by-case basis, consider modest remuneration for the participant's time and travel. In such case, the remuneration will range from \$50-\$100 per individual, dependent on the data collection and the level and length of participation required of the participants.

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

No assurances of confidentiality will be given. However, all surveys and, therefore, information provided by respondents will be completely voluntary.

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 sensitive data will be collected.

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

The estimated annual burden hours for the three-year period are 3,500 hours for 6,000 responses.

5,000 responses X 30 minutes per survey = 1,500 hours

1,000 responses X 2 hours (focus groups) = 2,000 hours

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).

The total annual cost to the public is zero.

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

It is difficult to estimate the costs in advance. The availability of funds and staff resources will impact NIST's ability to conduct all the proposed activities. Consequently, it is uncertain of the number of activities that will be undertaken. In addition, it is difficult to project the number of responses that will be received for surveys. Most of the surveys will be conducted and analyzed using in-house resources, though NIST has intent to contract several of the surveys.

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

Not Applicable.

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

The results from these data collection activities are not intended for general publication, but may be disseminated to NIST staff, key policy and management officials, and stakeholders.

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.

All written and electronic material will display the expiration date for the OMB approval of the information collection. All written and electronic surveys (with the exception of transactional surveys in the form of business reply cards where space will not permit) will also display the following notification:

This survey is authorized under Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards." Your response is voluntary and all data collected will be considered confidential. Public reporting for this collection of information is estimated to average _____ (insert time) minutes per response, including the time of reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this estimate or any other aspects of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the length of this questionnaire, to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Attn. Darla Yonder, 100 Bureau Drive, Stop 1710, Gaithersburg, MD, 20899-1710 and the Office of Management and Budget Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503.

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

NIST does not require any exceptions.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

Collections will not employ statistical methods.