B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g. establishments, State and local governmental units, households, or persons) in the universe and the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form. The tabulation must also include expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection has been conducted before, provide the actual response rate achieved.

The potential respondent universe consists of all clients that have completed an ITA service described in Question 2 of Supporting Statement A. We will therefore be conducting census surveys.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection, including: the statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection; the estimation procedure; the degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification; any unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures; and any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.

Census methodology will be used for the collections in this package, that is, each client completing a service described within question 2 of Supporting Statement A will have the opportunity to participate in the surveys. We will not be using sampling techniques.

3. Describe the methods used to maximize response rates and to deal with nonresponse. The accuracy and reliability of the information collected must be shown to be adequate for the intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided if they will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

The data collection method chosen for all surveys (except for the TIC Transactional Automated Telephone Survey) is an e-mail message delivering a hot link to a web enabled survey – in part, because this allows for minimum expense and should yield more considered answers. If the client does not respond to the survey within two weeks, another e-mail reminder is sent to the client. A number of efforts have already been undertaken to improve response rates. An Internet delivered survey reduces the burden on the respondents, surveys have been shortened, and open-ended questions requiring narrative responses have been reduced. As a way to increase response rates, many ITA staff inform their clients that once a service is completed, they will receive a user satisfaction survey via e-mail within two weeks. In addition, returned e-mails are addressed systematically in order to increase response rates. Ongoing review of the survey instruments and policies may result in further refinements and resubmission of instruments. If changes are deemed necessary to improve response rates or more accurately capture client perceptions, these changes may occur within the three-year approval.

To address non-response rate, when the response rate is lower than recommended, ITA will perform telephone interviews of non-respondents to inquire about their user satisfaction and complete the user satisfaction survey over the phone.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Tests are encouraged as effective means to refine collections, but if ten or more test respondents are involved OMB must give prior approval.

The majority of collections are revisions of currently approved surveys and the revisions in many cases are based upon client feedback. For many of the revised collections, the primary changes pertain to the removal of questions. New collections have been pilot-tested with ITA staff and between 3-4 clients.

Questionnaire construction is one of the most critical stages in the survey development process so a great deal of thought has gone into the design issues involved (e.g. development and pretesting) regarding the ITA user satisfaction surveys. In order to prevent the resulting data from being seriously misleading, ITA has worked with the appropriate program and field staff within the organization to make sure that the concepts are clearly defined and survey questions unambiguously phrased. Furthermore, designing a suitable questionnaire requires attention be given to its length and the order in which questions are asked – long questionnaires are apt to induce respondent fatigue and errors arising from inattention, incomplete answers, and refusals. In addition to making sure that the questionnaires are the suitable length, all questions in the surveys have been pretested to ensure that they are understood by the respondents and do not adversely affect survey cooperation. Many of the surveys are based on a modified version of a proven survey instrument. The core of the surveys will entail questions of customer satisfaction and perception of quality of export assistance programs provided by ITA. In most cases, surveys are tested on ITA staff who use or are familiar with the programs and reviewed in the context of training by survey-design experts. ITA also tests on fewer than 10 external clients whenever appropriate.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on the statistical aspects of the design, and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

Susan Crawford reviewed the research methodology based upon her graduate level academic training and her private sector quantitative research experience. She can be reached at the Commercial Service at 202-482-2050. The Commercial Service's Customer Relationship Management Unit will collect and analyze the data.