

OMB Control No. 0693-0033 – NIST Generic Clearance for Program Evaluation Data Collections

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Forensic Database Survey: Evaluation of NIST's Offering to the Forensic/Law Enforcement Community Through Standard Reference Materials (SRMs) and Standard Reference Databases (SRDs)

FOUR STANDARD SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Explain who will be surveyed and why the group is appropriate to survey.

NIST maintains a collection of over 1300 standard reference materials (SRMs) and 80 standard reference databases (SRDs). A mission of NIST Law Enforcement Standards Office (OLES) is to provide the law enforcement community with forensic reference materials and information of the highest quality and metrological value to conduct their investigations.

This survey will be sent to approximately 300 individuals involved in the forensics community at the state and local level. The individuals contacted will be those who conduct forensic investigations at a state or local law enforcement agency, or those who maintain a forensic database or reference collection outside of a law enforcement agency. The Subcommittee on Forensic Science (SOFS) contact list provides the initial survey participant list, additional survey participants may be referred by SOFS members or based on contact information listed on forensic laboratories websites.

The individuals targeted by this survey are most appropriate because they are the individuals who utilize NIST's forensic databases and reference materials in their daily work. These individuals will be able to provide an accurate assessment of NIST's offering to the forensic/law enforcement community, and contribute feedback for enhancing this offering. With this feedback, OLES will be able to determine the frequency of access for NIST SRMs and SRDs, and which areas the forensic community turns elsewhere for materials and information.

2. Explain how the survey was developed including consultation with interested parties, pre-testing, and responses to suggestions for improvement.

The survey was initially developed through collaboration with law enforcement and data collection experts. Both parties discussed strategies for conducting this survey, resulting in a survey instrument that:

- a) Captures the information that would benefit NIST's evaluation of its SRM and SRD programs.
- b) Minimizes the burden on the respondents.

The survey has already been conducted on federal employees. Experience and feedback from

this process has allowed for fine tuning and enhancement to the current survey, including improvement in questioning, focus, content, and delivery.

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.

The survey will be conducted by contacting an individual via email. The email will include:

- a) A standardized introduction that states who we are, what our purpose is, and how the respondent can respond to the survey should he/she wish to do so.
- b) The survey instrument.

If no email is available for an individual, a phone call will be made and an interview conducted from a script that contains the same information found in the standardized introduction and survey instruments.

Because contacting every single forensic investigator at a state or local law enforcement is too much of a burden, a random sample of this population will be surveyed. Forensic laboratory accreditation boards, scientific working groups (SWGs), and referrals from forensic experts will provide a diverse sample of contacts to survey.

Of the roughly 300 individuals contacted by this survey, the expected response rate is 85% based on the survey results from the federal survey. NIST OLES has developed a computerized tracking method that provides updates on the survey status of each individual to allow us to follow-up with non-respondents. OLES has also reached out to the forensic community encouraging participation in the survey.

(NOTE: The tracking system allows the recording of every instance of contact with a person (date/time, how contacted (email/phone), what was discussed, and any follow up actions). This informs who requires follow-up reminders.

4. Describe how the results of the survey will be analyzed and used to generalize the results to the entire customer population.

The sample population being surveyed will include multiple members of all disciplines (such as chemistry, toxicology, trace evidence, toolmarks/firearms, biology/DNA, questioned documents, latent prints, environmental, technology) in forensic science. Feedback from the sample population for each discipline will serve as the evaluation for NIST's offering to that discipline through its SRMs and SRDs. It is safe to make this generalization because information across forensic disciplines is standardized for the most part. If several respondents from a particular discipline provide similar feedback to NIST's programs, it can serve as feedback for all members of that particular discipline.