

INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

B.1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

The respondent universe includes approximately 1,850 active Neighborhood Networks centers as identified from the Neighborhood Networks database. All centers are required to submit a START business plan, with an estimated 11 percent expected to complete or update a START business plan annually. Further, all Neighborhood Networks centers are encouraged to complete the Classification and Center Profile Tools, as appropriate; and the postcard data collection will be attempted with all centers. Therefore, sampling stratification procedures are not applicable to this data collection.

B.2. Information Collection Procedures

START, Classification, and Center Profile Data Collections

Centers are asked to create a START business plan for three consecutive fiscal years. A fiscal year is defined as the period beginning October 1st of the calendar year and ending September 30th of the following calendar year. New centers are asked to provide a start-up budget and a projected operational budget for future years. Existing centers are asked to provide their current budget and projected future budgets. New centers are asked for all other information based on a projection of what they believe will happen during the start-up year. Existing centers are also asked to report information about the current year.

After a START business plan is approved, all centers are requested to update START annually. They are also asked to complete the annual assessment and evaluation, which compares projections with what actually occurred (see description of Section 8 below).

Key sections of START include:

Section 1: Starting the START Process. This section helps centers create a mission statement for the center, determine benefits for stakeholders, determine community assets and resources, determine staffing resources, identify center users, and identify the interests and needs of users.

Section 2: Program Planning. This section of START helps centers select programs to offer; develop targets for standard annual outcomes that can be measured and evaluated; develop customized goals, activities, and outcomes; and develop a program calendar.

Section 3: Marketing and Outreach. This section helps centers develop an internal marketing plan that targets potential users of the center, develop an external marketing plan that targets potential partners and the larger community, create a narrowed list of potential partners that can help meet programming needs, and implement an action plan to reach those partners that can best help the center meet its goals.

Section 4: Organization and Management. This section helps centers learn about management structure, including the roles of residents, advisory board/boards of directors and organizations designated as 501(c)(3); develop a timeframe for establishing an accounting infrastructure; develop a timeframe for creating personnel policies and procedures; and set goals, activities, and outcomes for the organization and management of the center.

Section 5: Planning for Center Operations. This section focuses on what is needed to open and run a center. The section answers questions about space requirements, equipment requirements, and security and accessibility issues, and provides sufficient information for the development of a center operations timeline.

Section 6: Budgeting and Fundraising. This section focuses on calculating the cost to start a center and developing operating budgets for the first three years. This section enables users to develop expense budgets for the center's start-up and operational budgets for years one, two, and three; review potential sources of funding and build a revenue budget for the center's startup and operational budgets for years one, two, and three; and develop goals, activities, and outcomes for a fundraising plan for the center.

Section 7: Business Plan Reports. This section allows users to generate a business plan report that will be saved in START and can be modified and updated at any time.

Section 8: Assessment and Evaluation. To encourage centers to update, modify, and assess their START business plans annually, START provides an online form for assessment and evaluation purposes. Each fiscal year, centers are encouraged to evaluate their actual programs, services, and expenses in relation to their projected programs, services, and expenses. START makes this easy by allowing users to view the center's START business plan while they record the center's actual yield.

START follows a logical format that allows users to build upon the information requested in previous sections.

The completed START business plan is submitted to the appropriate HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator using online methodology. The HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator may review the START business plan and make comments, recommendations, and suggestions to the center. The HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator may accept the START business plan, or based upon suggestions and recommendations, send the START business plan back to the center electronically and request that changes be made and the plan be re-submitted.

For the best quality START business plan, centers are asked to respond to each data request within START. However, in the case of new centers, it is recognized that it is difficult to project some items. Centers are encouraged to be realistic and make every effort to project. New centers base their responses entirely upon projection/speculation for the startup year, while existing centers can base their projections upon a previous year's outcomes.

In conjunction with updates to the START business plan, centers are requested to update their Center Profiles to ensure that data collection is current.

Centers are not required to directly input any information into the Classification tool for Designated and Certified status. However, they may submit requests for Model classification once they believe they have met the requirements. This process and data collection only occurs once per center.

Electronic Postcard Data Collection

The postcard data collection will capture contact information from Neighborhood Networks centers. The proposed methodology is an e-mail distribution with telephone follow up. Center directors identified from the Neighborhood Networks center database will be contacted by e-mail approximately one week after OMB approval. The postcard e-mails and telephone follow-up interviews will be conducted on a semi-annual basis.

B.3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates

START, Classification, and Center Profile Data Collections

Several procedures have been implemented to increase online completion of business plans and the associated tools. For example, the Neighborhood Networks Statement of Work emphasizes strategies to increase response, including marketing on the Neighborhood Networks Web site, dedicated conference workshops and general sessions, and mentioning the online tools during technical assistance visits and conference calls. In addition, dedicated technical assistance coordinators have been assigned to assist centers in using START and completing online Classification forms and Center Profiles.

It is also anticipated that the recent enhancements to START will result in an overall increase in response rate by providing automated email reminders to centers to complete their START business plans and automated reminders to HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinators to review submitted START business plans.

The Center Profile data collection response rate will be enhanced by providing a means for centers to easily access and update their center profiles while updating their START business plans and assessments.

Center classification response rates are enhanced by automatic designation of Designated and Certified classification, as well as e-mail reminders provided to HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinators to review and approve applications for Model classification.

Electronic Postcard Data Collection

A mixed mode data collection approach (e-mail with telephone follow up) is used to achieve the highest possible response rate for this component of the data collection. The e-mail and telephone follow-up script emphasize the importance and the benefits of completion. For instance, the data collection is used to update HUD's *Neighborhood Networks Center Directory*. Besides being a resource for center representatives to learn about other centers, the directory is a reference document for partners and others to use to locate recipients for their donations and contributions. In addition, the postcard data helps HUD maintain an up-to-date profile of Neighborhood Networks centers, enabling them to receive important resources and announcements that are disseminated periodically throughout the year.

B.4. Tests of Procedures

As indicated in Section A.8, the Neighborhood Networks team contacted six Neighborhood Networks centers by telephone to obtain an estimate of respondent burden in terms of the amount of time required to complete START, the Classification Tool, the Center Profile Tool, and the electronic postcard. Calls were conducted with centers that have already completed START business plans and/or updated contact information via electronic postcard.

B.5. Statistical Consultants

The following individuals were consulted regarding the current design of the START system and the associated data collections:

- Silvia Benavides, Neighborhood Networks Program Development Manager, 301-495-4361
- Mark Fiery, Neighborhood Networks Web/Database Specialist II, 301-589-4020, extension 364
- Sharon Glenn, Neighborhood Networks CLIN 2 Project Director, 301-589-4020, extension 333
- Veralee Liban, Neighborhood Networks Corporate Officer, 301-589-4020, extension 330
- Abhi Madhugiri, Neighborhood Networks CLIN 3 Project Director, 301-589-4020, extension 158
- Steve McLaine, Neighborhood Networks Project Manager, 301-495-4337

Supporting Documents

The following documents are included in support of this submission:

Collection Forms (forms associated with the data collection)

Laws and Regulations (legislation and regulations authorizing data collection)

Summary Memo (note to have the 60-Day Federal Register Notice signed by the commissioner)

60-Day Federal Register Notice