OMB Forms Justification Package

Learn and Serve America Program and Performance Reporting System (LASSIE)

PART B: COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

The Agency should be prepared to justify its decision not to use statistical methods in any case where such methods might reduce burden or improve accuracy of results. When Item 17 on OMB Form 83-1 is checked "Yes," the following should be included in the Supporting Statement to the extent that it applies to the methods proposed:

B1. 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 government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rate for the collection as a whole. If the collection has been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.

The LASSIE system is designed to collect information from all institutions that have received Learn and Serve America funding. This includes grantees receiving funding directly from the Corporation; subgrantees receiving funds through the grantee organizations; and sub-subgrantees receiving grants from subgrantee organizations. The total number of respondents is estimated at 1800 organizations.

Since initiating the system in 2003, the Corporation has achieved a steadily increasing response rate. Since 2005, we have achieved a response rate of 90 percent or higher. In the last full data collection period (March 2009-July 2009), over 98 percent of grantees, subgrantees, and sub-subgrantees completed their reporting requirements. We are currently in the midst of this year's data collection, which will be completed in July 2010.

B2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information including: (a) statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection, (b) estimation procedures, (c) degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification, (d) unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures, and (e) any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.

The data collection process is designed to identify and collect data from all Learn and Serve America grant recipients. There are no provisions for sampling.

B3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information must be shown to be adequate for intended use. For collections based on sampling, a special justification

must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

The data collection process has been designed to maximize response and the accuracy of the data submitted to the system. The two major elements in the data collection process are (1) the notification and registration of grant recipients into the system, and (2) completion and collection of the annual report.

Notification and Registration.

Because of the flow-down nature of the Learn and Serve America grants, the first task in the operation of the reporting system is the compilation of a listing of all Learn and Serve America grant recipients and their registration on the system. This process takes place in a series of steps as each level of Learn and Serve America recipients (grantees, subgrantees, sub-subgrantees) registers on the system and identifies any sub-recipients.

In the Fall, basic contact information on the Corporation's direct Learn and Serve America grantees (those receiving funds directly from the Corporation) are manually imported into the system from the Corporation's e-Grants system. Grantees are prompted by email (and follow-up emails or telephone calls as needed) to complete the Grant Profile form and enter contact information for all of their subgrantees for the current program year. The system keeps a record of all of the grantee's previous subgrants, allowing the grantee to reactivate previous subgrantees that receive funding in the current year; the system automatically fills in the subgrantees' contact information. Grantees are given until March to enter all of their subgrantees into the system and may use the system at any point during this time to send an email to their subgrantees to notify them of the reporting requirements and direct them to website's help page and pdf versions of the survey instruments. Grantees may also notify subgrantees of the system's eWorksheet function, which is activated in the Fall to allow subgrantees to record data prior to the reporting period between March and June. When subgrantees log into the system, they are directed to update their grant profile and report any sub-subgrantees, following the same steps as grantees.

At the conclusion of this process, the Corporation has a full listing of all grant recipients so that it can monitor compliance on a timely basis. Grantees and subgrantees are also able to access real-time status reports on their sub-recipients so that they can follow-up as needed to ensure that all of their subgrantees and sub-subgrantees are reporting as required.

Completion and Collection of the Annual Reports

The on-line data collection system is designed to provide an easy-to-use reporting interface and promote full and accurate reporting of program data. When the reporting system opens in March, all grantees, subgrantees, and sub-subgrantees are sent notification of their reporting requirements, including a username and password for accessing the system and instructions for navigating the system and completing the requirements. Several elements are built into the system to support those goals:

1. **The web-based interface is designed to promote ease of use**. Users are able to print a paper version of the survey and worksheets for use in collecting information

prior to completing the forms online. Users are able to save and return to a partially-completed report and to update reports prior to submission so that the reports can be completed as information is available. The web-based interface also includes links to definitions and instructions, so that users can make sure that they are providing appropriate information.

2. **Electronic versions of survey worksheets assist in reporting and improve data reliability.** Electronic versions of the worksheets (eWorksheets), which include a subset of questions on the survey form, are available to users to collect project-level data on Learn and Serve America-funded service-learning activities. Data collected through the eWorksheets can be automatically aggregated across projects and transferred to the appropriate subgrantee or grantee's survey.

3. **The data entry form includes built-in checks to promote accurate reporting.** In key places (for example, counts of participants), the system includes checks that will prompt users when data is out of range, when data is in the wrong format or when percentages or numbers do not add up to the appropriate totals.

4. **Grant management tools allow the Corporation and grantors to monitor survey response.** Through the management tools, users are able to review (but not alter) the survey status and responses of their sub-recipients. An email notification system provides an easy-to-use mechanism to notify subgrantees of deadlines and share information.

5. **Support for the system includes a variety of training and support activities aimed at responding to any data collection problems or concerns**. These support activities include training sessions for grantees and Corporation staff, as well as a help page on the website that includes a quick start guide and an on-line tutorial. The contractor provides email and telephone support on all technical questions, with a guaranteed response time of one working day for any question submitted. Learn and Serve America program officers provide support to grantees on content-related questions.

B4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions from 10 or more respondents. A proposed test or set of tests may be submitted for approval separately or in combination with the main collection of data.

The initial version of the survey instrument (OMB # 3045-0095) was reviewed by members of the Practitioner Working Group, and a small number of practitioners (fewer than 10) from Higher Education Institutions, Community-Based Organizations, and K-12 Schools and School Districts were asked to pilot test the survey form appropriate to their type of organization. Since its initiation in 2004, the system undergoes continuous review to ensure that the web-based technology functions as expected and to identify any instructions or procedures that are confusing or ambiguous. The collection form submitted for this review is largely identical to the initial version and the modifications, which are intended to improve clarity and reduce burden, are based on comments provided during previous years and comments provided during the federal notice period.

B5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

The data will be collected and initial analysis conducted by Abt Associates, 55 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, The Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University, 415 South Street, Waltham, MA 02453, and RelyOn Media LLC, 12 Main Street, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370. Project Director for Abt Associates is JoAnn Jastrzab, 617-349-2372. Project Director for Brandeis University is Alan Melchior, 781-736-3775. Project Director for RelyOn Media is Chris Macek, 413-625-6009.