

Supporting Statement - NASA Procurement Customer Survey

A. Justification

1. This survey is needed to determine whether NASA procurement offices are providing an acceptable level of service to the business/educational community, and if not, which areas need improvement. There are no specific legal or administrative requirements necessitating this collection.
2. The information will be used by the NASA Assistant Administrator for Procurement to assist in evaluating the degree to which the NASA field center procurement offices are providing high quality customer service outside the Agency. The information will also enable the offices to develop improvements in an efficient and effective manner, and may help combat waste and abuse in the NASA procurement process.
3. The proposed information collection will be completely automated. The invitation to potential respondents will be issued electronically via Fed Biz Ops. The invitation will include a "hotlink" to a NASA website with the survey instrument. Respondents will complete the survey on-line and submit it via the web. Results will be electronically compiled into a file that will be downloaded to a NASA analyst's computer. The analyst will execute a macro that converts the file to Microsoft Excel format, automatically runs calculations on the data, and produces printer-ready reports.
4. A prior survey of external NASA procurement vendors was conducted in 2002. That survey identified areas that could be improved. Sufficient time has elapsed since that survey that we believe another survey would be useful in assessing whether NASA's procurement operations have improved and, if so, the extent of the improvement, and identifying those areas still needing improvement. Anecdotal information could be obtained from reading court cases and protest files, but it would be suspect because it only comes from parties suing NASA and who would therefore be expected to be prejudiced against the Agency. In addition, the information from those sources cannot provide the broad level of information about the many aspects of NASA's procurement operations that can be derived from a survey.
5. There is no impact on small business because the survey is voluntary and anonymous.
6. The proposed survey does not support any specific Federal program or policy. If the survey is not conducted, NASA will have to guess whether its procurement vendors are satisfied. This in turn may lead to inappropriate changes in NASA procurement procedures, resulting in waste and possibly abuse. Further, lack of a survey may result in the continuation of unidentified waste and abuse. Because the collection will be done in an entirely automated fashion, and doesn't call for respondents to collect or store any information, we don't believe it is technically possible to further reduce the burden.
7. In order to elicit frank and forthright responses, we intend to include what might be

considered a pledge of confidentiality. By this we mean that respondents are not required to identify themselves, and we will make no attempt through electronic means or otherwise to learn who they are.

8. A Federal Register Notice (FRN) was published in the Federal Register for public comment to the Agency. No comments on the subject information collection were received from the public for a period of 60 days. The FRN was published on November 16, 2005, page 69603, Vol. 70, No. 220.

In addition, based on the results of the previous vendor survey and other internal surveys, we are led to believe that we have sufficient experience to provide clear survey instructions, relevant questions in number and content, with optimal format and frequency. Further, the information being collected is opinion, as opposed to hard data or fact, so there is no issue regarding availability of data.

9. No payment or gift will be provided to respondents.

10. Respondents are not required to identify themselves, and we will assure them that we will make no attempt through electronic means or otherwise to learn who they are.

11. There are no sensitive questions.

12. The number of respondents cannot be reliably estimated, since response is voluntary, and there is no reward or penalty to motivate participation. We hope to obtain 1,000 responses per survey. We believe it will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey. Therefore, the total burden is estimated to be 250 hours per survey. We expect to space out the surveys sufficiently to give us time to implement changes before the next survey. This means we plan to issue the survey no more frequently than once every two or three years. The average total annual burden would therefore be either 125 or 83 hours. The annualized cost to each respondent, assuming a salary equivalent to \$67 per hour (GS-15 step 10), would be \$8.38 or \$5.58, with a total annualized cost of \$8,375 or \$5,583. If there are fewer responses, the total annualized cost will be less.

13. Respondents will have no capital or start-up costs, and no maintenance costs.

14. The total estimated costs to the Federal Government are: \$2,400 per survey to modify existing survey software; \$1,600 (3 days for a GS-15) to analyze the data and prepare a report. This equates to a total annualized cost of either \$2,000 or \$1,333, depending on survey frequency (2 or 3 years).

15. The annual reporting and recordkeeping cost burden borne by the public was misunderstood. It was assumed to have been zero, since the previous two Information Collection Request (ICR) 83-I's had a value of zero for the cost burden on the public. However, the burden on the public is very real in this survey since vendors who have bid on NASA contracts, but have never received an award or do not currently have a contract, are being requested to participate in the survey as respondents and they are bearing the cost of filling out the survey. In addition, vendors that currently have NASA contracts are filling out the survey outside the scope of their contract. See the answer to Question 12 for cost

burden information.

16. We do not plan to publish the results; however, we do plan to post them to NASA's Procurement Library web site (<http://ec.msfc.nasa.gov/hq/library/surveys/vendsurv.html>) to which the public has access. Our plan to post the results and where they will be posted will be included in the Fed Biz Ops announcement with the link to the survey. The NASA Procurement Library web site contains the results from NASA's prior vendor survey. NASA plans to conduct the vendor survey, collect and review the responses, and post the results in the first quarter of FY 2007.

17. The expiration date will be displayed.

18. No certification exceptions are required.

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. The potential respondent universe is all businesses and educational institutions that NASA either does business with or those that have tried to do business with NASA. Based on the prior vendor survey conducted by NASA in which we received 388 responses, we estimate a response rate of approximately 400, although we would hope to attain one closer to 1,000. Since responding to the survey is voluntary, and there is no incentive for responding, other than allowing the respondents to vent any feelings they have about NASA Procurement and a hope that the survey will lead to improvements, we cannot provide a better estimate of the actual number of responses.

2. The collection procedure will be an electronic, web-based survey. We will post an invitation with a link to the survey web address in Fed Biz Ops. Our sample will consist of everyone who responds. Stratification will be made by type of business (large, small, educational institution), category of acquisition (R&D, services, etc.), and type of award instrument (contract, grant, etc.). Degree of accuracy or confidence level- NASA will not be projecting results based on the survey responses received. Therefore, no degree of accuracy or confidence level is needed. NASA will utilize the actual responses to determine how well it is doing and what areas need improvement. We do not plan to conduct the survey more often than once every two or three years, as it will probably take that long for meaningful changes to be implemented and have an impact on the NASA contract/grant community

3. With the large potential universe, we don't believe we need to take special steps to encourage responses. In addition, NASA has a vocal contractor community that welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback. However, to reduce the possibility of a low response, NASA intends to inform the contractor community before publishing the survey through an advance notice in Fed Biz Ops, by advertising the upcoming survey on the NASA Headquarters and Center Procurement web sites, and through the Assistant Administrator for Procurement's contractor forums held at NASA Centers.

4. The use of web-based surveys has been tested in-house over the past several years. We have conducted several internal surveys to determine how well our procurement offices

support our science and engineering offices, and how well headquarters supports the field centers. This has led to refinements in the type and number of questions. It has also shown that annual surveys are too frequent.

5. The contact point for the proposed data collection is Mr. Reginald Walker, NASA Headquarters Code, LH030, (202) 358-0443.