

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

The Peace Corps is committed to improving the recruitment and selection process to attract a diverse group of appropriately skilled Volunteers. While working to improve the recruitment, application, and selection process, Peace Corps also wants to attract the most qualified applicants while ensuring effective use of resources.

In order to help meet these goals, the Peace Corps' Office of Communications wishes to collect feedback from Peace Corps applicants and returned Volunteers to help understand factors that are driving recruitment attrition, as well as what information or education needs would increase the conversion ratio. Understanding the dynamics that influence the conversion loss of initial candidates along the recruitment path is critical to guiding and building effective recruitment efforts. Including returned Volunteers will help guide the strategies for correcting conversion loss.

Five thousand people are invited to serve by Peace Corps each year and about 4,000 new Volunteers (PCVs) go into the field and 3,500 close service, becoming returned Volunteers (RPCVs). The total number of Volunteers serving abroad is approximately 8,000 each year. The number of participants at each survey related stage:

- 1) 200,000 complete the inquiry to learn more about Peace Corps service*
- 2) 90,000 begin an application*
- 3) 15,000 submit a completed application*
- 4) 3,500 Volunteers close service and become returned volunteers*

The conversion loss study is looking at potential volunteers who drop out during the registration and review/vetting process. As such, the study does not include people who drop out during their assignment nor those who accept an invitation to serve and change their mind before departing for their assignment. These two segments are not in the scope of this study, hence is not covered within this survey. Peace Corps uses different, internal tools for evaluating early terminations and those that do not deploy.

Recruiting qualified candidates for Peace Corps service is critical to Peace Corps' mission outlined in the Peace Corps Act, Title 22 United States Code, and Section 2501.

2. Purpose and Use of Information Collection

The purpose of this survey is to collect feedback from Peace Corps applicants and returned Volunteers to help understand factors that are driving recruitment attrition, as well as what information or

education needs would increase the conversion ratio. At the close of the survey, key findings will be summarized, in addition to strategic implications and recommendations. This study is designed to deliver strategic and actionable guidance for refining the recruitment process in an effort to drive conversion of qualified candidates.

An online survey will be conducted among 1,200 Peace Corps applicants and returned Peace Corps Volunteers, including 300 from each of the following segments: Inquire – complete an initial inquiry but do not begin an application after 12 months; Begin application – but either do not submit it or move forward; Submit complete application – but then elect not to proceed by stopping communication or actively withdrawing during the review process; returned Peace Corps Volunteers – who completed Peace Corps service in the past two years. Including returned Peace Corps Volunteers in the study will provide information to understand what is working in the application process and will help guide the strategies for correcting the conversion loss.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

This study will use an online survey to ensure quality and accurate collection of data, while also providing the greatest privacy to respondents and the least burden of time on respondents. (See page 9 for example of online grid.) Since more than 95 percent of Peace Corps applications are completed online, this methodology will allow us to collect the most representative sample of Peace Corps inquirers.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

The Office of Communications has met with Peace Corps' headquarters offices, including the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection and the Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning to determine whether these offices have the type of information that the survey expects to collect. The Office of Communications found no evidence that the agency has collected this specific feedback.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

Not Applicable – The collection of this information will not impact small businesses or other small entities.

6. Consequences of Not Collecting the Information

There are multiple negative consequences to Peace Corps if this information from former applicants and returned Volunteers is not collected. Peace Corps needs to gain a better understanding of the factors that are driving recruitment attrition in order to attract and retain the most qualified applicants. In an effort to understand the challenges with the application and selection process from the applicants' perspective we need to be open to feedback. Therefore, Peace Corps needs to systematically collect a statistically significant number of responses from former applicants and returned Volunteers in order to determine how best to improve the current system. By collecting this information we hope to make it easier and more transparent for applicants to navigate through the application and selection process and ultimately increase the number of Volunteers. Understanding the reasons for recruitment attrition will help us responsibly apply our resources. If we do not conduct this survey, we will not understand

the factors that are driving recruitment attrition.

7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines

There are no special circumstances.

8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency

A. A 60-day notice to solicit public comments was published in the Federal Register (Volume 75, Number 215, Monday, November 8, 2010). See attachment.

B. Those outside of Peace Corps who have been consulted during 2010 for their views regarding this data collection include:

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide Staff:

- Heidi D'Agostino
(212) 880-5428; Heidi.D'Agostino@ogilvypr.com
- Vickie Jones
(202) 729-4179; Vickie.jones.@ogilvypr.com
- Nancy Accetta
(202) 729-4167; Nancy.Accetta@ogilvypr.com

9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

Not applicable – Respondents will not be compensated for sharing information during this study.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

Survey responses will be aggregated. Peace Corps' lists include names and email addresses and they are de-duped by comparing both name and email addresses, first at Peace Corps before we send the list to our survey vendor, and then again by the vendor. Once respondents start the survey a record number is automatically assigned as an ID. This is done electronically by machine. The survey is designed to be completed in a single session. This prevents multiple logins from one respondent.

11. Justification of Sensitive Questions

The survey contains limited reference to questions of a sensitive nature. The only questions that might be considered sensitive are in regard to income level and student loan debt. This information will not be shared with other offices or agencies. These questions are important to ask so we can understand how a person's financial situation might affect his or her decision to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Peace Corps will ensure respondent confidentiality, consistent with the Privacy Act.

12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

The voluntary online survey will be conducted one time (not annually) and will target roughly 1,200 Peace Corps applicants and returned Peace Corps Volunteers, including 300 from each of the following

segments: Inquire – complete an initial inquiry but do not begin an application after 12 months; Begin application – but either do not submit it or move forward; Submit complete application – but then elect not to proceed by stopping communication or actively withdrawing during the review process; returned Peace Corps Volunteers – who completed Peace Corps service in the past two years. The online survey is estimated to take 20 minutes to complete.

Table 1 Presents burden estimates for the collection of information from the four categories. It is estimated that the total burden will be 400 hours. There will be no cost burden and no annual cost burden on the respondents.

TABLE 1: ESTIMATES OF ANNUALIZED BURDEN HOUR

Type of Respondent	No. of respondents	No. of responses /respondent	Avg. burden/ response (in minutes)	Total burden (in hrs.)
Inquire	300	1	20	100
Begin Application	300	1	20	100
Submit Complete Application	300	1	20	100
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer	300	1	20	100
Total	1200			400

Regarding length of time to complete we will test this during the survey’s slow start, meaning a limited sample is sent out and data is collected. The data is then processed to ensure that respondents are accurately moving through the survey, as well as evaluating the time it takes the various segments to progress through the survey. If any issues arise, the survey’s operation will be revised and prepped for full field. Once these checks have occurred, the full field of the study will begin. If any changes are made to the survey during the slow start, the data collected is discarded. In addition, both the Peace Corps and Ogilvy will pre-test the survey programming with in-house staff prior to approving it for field. Further, our research partner has reviewed the survey for length and comprehension considerations.

While this quantitative research project is designed to be substantially beneficial for Peace Corps as a stand-alone, we will follow our evaluation of data with a consideration on possible follow-up qualitative research in future fiscal years. Based on findings from the survey for example, we may propose at a later date to use phone or focus group studies to expand our understanding and test new proposed recruitment processes. Any such additional research will of course be submitted through the OMB process.

13. Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers

Not Applicable – There are no capital or start-up costs associated with this project for respondents. There is no annual cost burden on the respondents.

14. Annual Cost to the Federal Government

This is a one-time information collection. Information will not be collected on an annual basis; therefore, there are no annual costs. However, there will be a one-time cost to the government. Peace Corps will pay Ogilvy Public Relations \$55,655 to develop and conduct the research study as well as summarize findings.

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

Not Applicable.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

As with all federal studies, general findings, excluding specific personal information, may be requested through the Freedom of Information Act. However, there will not be any effort to publish findings in academic journals or with media channels. Peace Corps will produce an internal report.

TABLE 5: PROJECT TIME SCHEDULE

ACTIVITY	TIME SCHEDULE (Post OMB Approval)
Programming of survey instrument	Week 1
Delivery of participant lists	
Fielding of quantitative survey	Week 2-5
Data Coding and analysis	Week 6
Development of final report	Week 7

Online surveys generally receive the majority of responses with a few days of the email invite going out. In addition, most online surveys require at least one-two reminder emails, which follow 4-5 days and 7-8 days after the initial invite. Standard guidelines on field periods recommend a week for general consumer populations and two weeks for specialized audiences. Based on the age and transitory nature of this population, we recommend the two week period. However, the field period will be driven by response rates to meet the 1,200 sample requirement. The first week of the field will inform whether the field will last two weeks or longer. The survey will not be closed until we meet the sample requirement threshold. As a safeguard, the table above shows 4 weeks for the data collection.

We anticipate sending at least one-two reminder emails, which follow 4-5 days and 7-8 days after the initial invite. Since more than 95% of the Peace Corps applications are completed online, and the applicant population tends to be younger and more transient, we do not believe letters via mail will be productive.

We believe the seven week period, which takes us from survey programming to final analysis, is sufficient. It accounts for a two- to four-week field period. We have allotted a full week for programming, although it will only take a few days.

17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate

Not Applicable

18. Exception to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission

Not Applicable