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To: Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Through: Seleda Perryman
DHHS Report Clearance Officer

From: Jill Mattia, PhD
Division of Loan Repayment (DLR)
Office of Extramural Programs (OEP)/Office of Extramural Research (OER)/
Office of the Director (OD)/National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Subject: **Generic Sub-Study, “Survey of Loan Repayment Program Participants”
(OMB No. 0925-0627)**

The DLR proposes to conduct a follow-up survey of Loan Repayment Program (LRP) participants under OMB Control Number 0925-0627, expiration date 2/28/2014. This survey will gather information regarding LRP participants’ characteristics and subjective experience of the LRP application and participation process.

Use of the Information Collected

Information from the survey will be used by DLR to identify strengths and areas for improvement in current policies, programs, operations, and services provided by the LRP that support and promote NIH’s mission. Depending on the results of the survey, information from the survey will be used to help us improve and refine our interactions with, and responsiveness to, the scientific community and the general public; refocus the strategies that are used to accomplish our objectives; and identify areas in need of improvement and enhancement. This survey will not be used to formulate or change policies. Rather, it will be used to enable DLR to be responsive to its constituents.

Background

The mission of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is to improve human health through biomedical and behavioral research. The NIH implements this mission by conducting intramural research in its own laboratories; supporting extramural research by scientists at universities, medical schools, hospitals, and research institutes; training basic and clinical research investigators; and fostering and supporting biomedical communication as well as public health information dissemination.

OER/OD/NIH exercises overall oversight for the policies and procedures governing the award of

extramural program financial support. This represents more than 80% of the total NIH budget (\$30.9 billion in FY 2012) to the extramural scientific community and academic research institutions through a variety of mechanisms including the LRP. The goal of the LRP is to encourage promising researchers and scientists to continue in their research careers by repaying up to \$35,000 of their qualified student loan debt each year. Frequently, beginning scientists leave their research careers in order to pursue jobs in other types of settings. By helping them pay off their student debt, the LRP can promote the retention of these individuals in research and scientific settings.

Executive Order 12862 directs agencies that “provide significant services directly to the public” to “survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services.” DLR’s proposed LRP survey project is consistent with these goals, and the project will garner important information regarding the experience and satisfaction of our customers.

Plan

We will recruit a sample of 3,000 LRP participants from FY 2004 to the present to take part in the survey, and potential survey responders will be chosen in order to represent the heterogeneity of demographic characteristics of our LRP participants. Potential survey responders will be invited to participate in the survey by an independent contractor, Abt Associates, on behalf of DLR. They will be sent an email (Attachment 1) with a unique link and password to the LRP Survey hosted on Abt secure servers. Individuals who do not complete the survey within two weeks of the invitation email will be sent a second invitation email (Attachment 2). Individuals will have four weeks total from the date of the first email invitation to complete the survey, and once individuals complete the survey and submit it, the link will expire. See Attachment 3 for screenshots of the survey. As requested, a burden statement is included at the beginning of Attachment 3.

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary, and Abt anticipates a 40% non-responder rate, for a final anticipated sample of 1,800. All participant-identifying information from the survey will be kept confidential, unless compelled by law; Abt will perform all analyses and provide DLR with aggregate summary information only. Any necessary identifying or potentially identifying information DLR provides to Abt (e.g., demographic characteristics and contact information of potential survey participants) will be secured and kept separate from data records. All electronic information will be kept on secure servers and hard copy information will be kept in locked cabinets in locked facilities. All information provided by respondents will be maintained in a confidential manner, unless compelled by law. Abt will destroy all project records within 1-year of project completion.

Analysis of data will include summary information on all variables and examination of suggestions for LRP-experience improvement. Comparisons of groups who were and were not

satisfied with their experiences will be conducted in order to guide modifications of relevant DLR operations, processes, services, and/or outreach efforts.

Estimates of Hour Burden and Cost					
Types of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Frequency of Response	Average Time Per Response (Hours)	Annual Hour Burden	Cost
LRP Participants	1,800	1	20/60	600	0

Thank you for your consideration of this study proposal.