

**Justification for Non-Substantive Changes to the  
Benefit Offset National Demonstration  
OMB Control No. 0960-0785**

**Background**

As part of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999, Congress mandated that the Social Security Administration (SSA) conduct a demonstration project testing a program under which title II disability benefits are offset \$1 for every \$2 above a specific amount of earnings. We moved forward with this Congressional mandate by implementing the Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND). OMB approved BOND information collections in February 2011.

BOND uses an experimental design, with random assignment that takes place in two stages. Stage 1 randomizes beneficiaries into three groups: treatment, control, and potential Stage 2 participants. Individuals in the Stage 1 treatment group receive a letter from the BOND project informing them of their selection for the BOND project and providing them with information about BOND. In accordance with our design, we will survey a Stage 1 sample after 36 months. During clearance of the BOND information collection, OMB expressed some concern that sending a letter to the Stage 1 with no follow-up for 36 months might be problematic. OMB suggested that an early survey of a small sample of the Stage 1 treatment group would be useful to determine the extent to which BOND Stage One treatment subjects received, read, and understood the initial contact letter.

**Description of Survey**

In response to OMB's suggestion, SSA has developed a short survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the initial contact letter. The purpose of the letter is to convince subjects to participate in BOND. The survey determines whether the subject (1) got the letter, (2) read the letter, (3) understood the letter, and (4) is interested in participating in BOND.

This survey is not part of the BOND implementation contract with Abt Associates. SSA developed this survey, and we will analyze the data, in-house. However, a contracted call center will administer the survey by telephone, since SSA does not have staff trained to conduct telephone surveys. The contracted call center will administer the survey to 500 Stage 1 treatment subjects randomly selected from those who were sent the letter in an August 26<sup>th</sup> mailing. Abt, the implementation, contractor for BOND, has been mailing initial contact letters approximately every two weeks since the beginning of May. Abt mailed the last of the letters on August 26<sup>th</sup>. We are targeting individuals from the final mailing because the best chance for the accurate responses will come from those who most recently received the letter.

SSA will use the results of this data collection to evaluate the effectiveness of the BOND initial contact letter and determine whether follow-up contact is necessary.

## **Burden Information**

Number of Responses: 500

Estimated Response Time: 3 Minutes

Annual Burden hours: 25 Hours

## **Statistical Methodology**

### **Sampling**

The beneficiaries assigned to the Stage 1 treatment group receive a letter from SSA explaining that they are subject to a new benefit schedule, and includes information about the \$1-for-\$2 benefit offset. SSA is sending these letters to approximately 1/6 of the 80,000 Stage 1 participants every two weeks over a three-month period, to prevent a possible overrun of calls to BOND call centers and site offices.

The final mailing, in late August 2011, will contain approximately 12,000 letters. We will select a random sample of 1000 Stage 1 treatment beneficiaries assigned to the final mailing for the initial letter survey.

Consistent with the SSDI population, which is by definition disabled, we will establish data collection procedures to accommodate various types of disabilities. If the respondent is cognitively unable to respond to the survey, the interviewer will identify a proxy respondent so as not to exclude these sample members from the data collection effort. If the respondent is hearing impaired, the interviewer will use text telephoning.

We have translated the survey instrument into Spanish. If the respondent speaks only Spanish, the interviewer will conduct the survey in Spanish.

### **Response Rates**

The target response rate for the survey is 80%. We will collect contact information from the SSA administrative database. We expect this information to be 95% accurate and if it is not, the call center will use other databases to update the information.

We are fielding the survey on a sample of the beneficiaries who received letters in the final mailing. Based on the results of other SSA surveys, this will maximize response rates and ensure the most accurate information.