

## MEMORANDUM

Date: June 15, 2010

To: Shellie Wilkie Martinez, Desk Officer  
Office of Management and Budget

From: Lynda T. Carlson, Director  
Science Resources Statistics Division

Via: Suzanne Plimpton, Clearance Officer  
National Science Foundation (NSF)

Subject: Notification of data collection under generic clearance

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of NSF's plan to conduct web usability testing under the generic clearance for survey improvement projects (OMB #3145-0174). This activity is associated with the redesign of the NSF Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges, now known as the Higher Education R&D Survey.

### **Background**

The survey has been conducted annually since 1973 and collects information on the amount of research and development (R&D) expenditures at colleges and universities in the United States. Since 2007 NSF has been working on a full-scale redesign of the survey. The goal of the redesign is to update the survey instrument to ensure we are obtaining the most valid and reliable measurements of the amount of academic research activity in the U.S. Last winter NSF conducted a pilot test of the redesigned survey with a subset of 40 institutions. Following debriefing interviews with all of the 40 institutions, NSF revised the questionnaire and web form and plans to conduct web usability testing on the revised web survey in advance of the full rollout of the survey for the FY 2010 survey cycle (beginning in fall 2010).

The web usability tests will be in the form of 15 remote tests using Cisco WebEx software. We will use the remote testing capability to reach a variety of institutions in a short period of time.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

Sample web screen shots are attached (Attachment 1). The web survey is being designed to closely resemble the PDF version of the questionnaire. A draft version of the questionnaire is also attached (Attachment 2). Clearance for the FY 2010 questionnaire and data collection is being requested under a separate OMB Information Collection clearance.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

We plan to conduct 15 web usability tests remotely using Cisco WebEx software and telephone conferencing. The software will allow us to observe the respondent's keystrokes as they navigate through the web survey. The procedure for all testing will be to provide the respondent with dummy data for a few questions in order to test new functionality, observe them as they enter data into the web survey, and conduct a usability debriefing upon completion.

## **Burden Information**

We expect to conduct 15 web usability tests with the academic survey respondents. An average of 2 people from each institution will be invited to participate, and we expect each usability test to require 2 hours. Therefore, we estimate a total of 60 hours of respondent burden:

- $(2 \text{ people} * 2 \text{ hours}) * 15 \text{ tests} = 60 \text{ hours}$ .

## **Incentive Payments**

There are no incentive payments.

## **Contact Information**

The contact person for questions regarding this data collection is:

Ronda Britt  
Survey Manager  
Higher Education R&D Survey  
Science Resources Statistics Division  
National Science Foundation  
703-292-7765  
[rbritt@nsf.gov](mailto:rbritt@nsf.gov)

Attachments

cc: Fran Featherston