MEMORANDUM

Date: August 25, 2011

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

From: Lynda T. Carlson, Director
               National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics

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 NSF's Higher Education Research and Development Survey.

Background

The Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD), formerly known as the Survey of R&D Expenditures at Universities and Colleges, has been conducted annually since 1972. The redesigned and expanded HERD survey also uses a new web interface which was rolled out to all institutions during the FY 2010 survey cycle. Based on feedback from institutions as well as data collection staff, several revisions were made to the website after the 2010 cycle to increase ease of use and data accuracy for future cycles. NSF would like to conduct usability tests on the revised web interface in advance of the FY 2011 survey.

The web usability tests will be in the form of 25 remote tests using Citrix Go To Meeting software. We will use the remote testing capability to reach a variety of institutions in a short period of time.

Data Collection Instrument

The following documents outlining the usability testing protocol are included as attachments:

1) test recruitment email
2) verbal consent form
3) facilitator's guide
4) sample web screen shots

Data Collection Procedures

We plan to conduct 25 web usability tests remotely using Cisco Go To Meeting software and telephone conferencing. The software will allow us to observe and record 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 ask followup questions for each of the new functionalities.

Burden Information

We expect to conduct 25 web usability tests with the HERD survey respondents. An average of 2 people from each institution will be invited to participate, and we expect each usability test to require 1 hour. Therefore, we estimate a total of 50 hours of respondent burden:
- (2 people * 1 hour) * 25 tests = 50 hours.

Incentive Payments

There are no incentive payments.

Contact Information

The contact person for questions regarding this data collection is:

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Attachments

cc: Fran Featherston