

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 28, 2011

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

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

Via: Suzanne Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer
National Science Foundation

Subject: Request for Incentives for Cognitive Research under Generic Clearance

The purpose of this memorandum is to request that NSF receive OMB approval to offer our cognitive interview respondents an incentive of \$40 in order to minimize recruiting costs and maximize the time that these busy respondents will meet with us.

In March of this year, NSF received permission from OMB to conduct up to 100 cognitive interviews under the generic clearance for survey improvement projects (OMB number 3145-0174 - ICR Reference Number: 201006-3145-002). This work is part of the anticipated Microbusiness Innovation Science and Technology Survey (MIST). MIST is expected to collect R&D and innovation related data from a nationally representative sample of U.S. based companies with fewer than five employees. This research will focus on the ability of microbusinesses (fewer than 5 employees) to answer selected research and development (R&D), innovation, and entrepreneurship related questions.

Background

Extensive research indicates that incentives do make a difference in increasing cooperation rates. In particular, incentives for cognitive interviews are helpful because of the extra demands they place on the participant: they often consume more time than completing the questionnaire itself, the time must be used as a block (rather than doing the questionnaire in pieces at the respondent's convenience), and the time must be scheduled, giving the participant less flexibility to meet any needs that arise. Given the special nature of the study and the respondent, we believe an incentive is justified. These are very small businesses, and in nearly all cases the respondent will be the owner of the business.

For these cognitive interviews, we need to speak to a variety of microbusinesses with and without R&D. These businesses, especially microbusinesses with fewer than five employees who conduct R&D, will be difficult to find. Therefore, it is important to use incentives to increase cooperation when we locate a microbusiness with the attributes we need. Thus, this incentive payment will be beneficial to minimizing recruiting costs. In addition, the busy nature of a microbusiness will work against us in gaining respondent cooperation. We feel that the incentive payment will increase respondent motivation in helping us evaluate the questionnaire.

The contact person for questions regarding this research is:

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