Supporting Statement
Information Collection Request for a
Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) Completion Report
for GRFP Institutions
Submitted by
The National Science Foundation

A.   JUSTIFICATION

1. CIRCUMSTANCES MAKING COLLECTION OF INFORMATION NECESSARY

GRFP collects several sources of information, including the Annual Activity Report submitted by GRFP Fellows to NSF. In addition, GRFP institutions are required to submit an Annual Report, which certifies the Program Expense Report for the previous fellowship year. Although Fellows indicate their proposed plans for graduation and completion of their fellowships in their Annual Activity Reports, the actual completion status of the graduate degree is currently not reported to the NSF. Information on degree completion and time to degree is important to help determine program impact and inform program management. Therefore, a new GRFP Completion Report is proposed, which will be part of the GRFP Annual Report submitted by GRFP institutions.

The new Completion Report will be added to the GRFP Annual Report, which currently contains the Program Expense Report. The Completion Report will allow GRFP institutions to certify the current status of all GRFP Fellows at the institution. The current status will identify a Fellow as: In Progress, Graduated, Transferred, or Withdrawn. For Graduate Fellows with Graduated status, the graduation date will be a required reporting element. The collection of this information will allow the program to obtain information on the current status of Fellows, the number and/or percentage of NSF Graduate Research Fellowship recipients who complete a graduate degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field, and an estimate of time to degree completion.

2. HOW, BY WHOM, AND PURPOSE FOR WHICH INFORMATION IS TO BE USED

The National Science Foundation (NSF) will serve as sponsor of this new report. The information will be gathered electronically from the Annual

Report, which will be certified and submitted by the institution's designated Financial Official (FO).

The purpose of the information request is to provide NSF information on the current status of Fellows, the number and/or percentage of Graduate Fellowship recipients who complete a STEM degree, and an estimate of time to degree completion. The information will be used by the NSF to assess the impact of its investments in the GRFP, as well as inform its program management.

3. **USE OF AUTOMATION**

Research.gov is an initiative that provides a menu of services tailored to the needs of the research community. Research.gov provides next generation capabilities by enabling organizations and grantees access to a menu of NSF services such as FastLane.

FastLane is the mechanism used by institutions to submit requests and reports to the NSF. As noted above, and reiterated here, the Completion Report, which is part of the Annual Report, will be submitted through FastLane.

4. **EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY DUPLICATION**

Information regarding when Fellows graduate is not currently available to the NSF. The information currently available in NSF records includes only a Fellow's Tenure, Reserve, Deferral or Termination status. These different statuses are confirmed by the institutions when they certify the previous fellowship year Program Expense Report. Upon implementation, the Completion Report will be used by the NSF to determine degree completion and time to degree of Fellows. It will not duplicate any reporting system, and will improve the current required reporting system by providing Fellow degree status and completion date.

5. **SMALL BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

6. **CONSEQUENCES OF LESS FREQUENT COLLECTION**

Not applicable.

7. **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR COLLECTION**

There are no special circumstances for this collection.

8. FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE/OUTSIDE CONSULTATION

The National Science Foundation (NSF) proposed the draft Completion Report for comment in the **Federal Register** [Volume 77, pages 30330-30331, May 22, 2012]. All GRFP institutional representatives were also contacted by email and provided a link to the Federal Register notice. Public comments were received from GRFP institutional representatives, including Coordinating and Financial Officials, from three institutions of higher education. A description of these roles and responsibilities is provided below, as they relate to the comments received in response to the Federal Register notice.

The primary GRFP Institution representatives are the Principal Investigator (PI), Coordinating Official (CO), and Financial Official (FO). The CO is designated by the GRFP Institution to serve as the primary and day-to-day point of contact for Fellows and the Program Office. The CO is paired with a representative from the sponsored research/projects office and/or grants accounting office, the Financial Official (FO), who is responsible for the financial reporting requirements.

COs perform the following duties:
1.   advise Fellows on GRFP Policies, Procedures, Terms and Conditions, etc.;
2.   interpret GRFP Policies in the context of their institutional procedures (e.g., Stipend Payment Schedules, enrollment requirements, etc.);
3.   review Fellow requests in the GRFP FastLane Module and provide GRFP Institution Approval/Disapproval of such requests, as appropriate;
4.   review information on New and Continuing Fellows for the GRFP Institution during the New Fellowship Announcement and Tenure Declaration Periods each spring;
5.   confirm the accuracy of the Fellows listed and their statuses for the upcoming Fellowship Year;
6.   certify satisfactory progress of continuing Fellows; and
7.   participate in the preparation and submission of the GRFP Annual Report (due October 1) in coordination with the PI and FO.

The FO is the GRFP Institutional representative from the Office of Sponsored Projects (or equivalent organization) and is responsible for financial oversight of NSF awards. In coordination with the PI and CO, the FO is responsible for ensuring that the quarterly Federal Financial Reports (FFR) and the GRFP Annual Report (due October 1 in the NSF GRFP FastLane Module) are accurate and submitted by the established deadlines.

All comments were carefully considered in developing a final version of the Completion Report. A number of specific issues were raised, and those comments and responses are summarized below:

Comment: One institutional Financial Official (FO) questioned why it was the responsibility of the FO to submit the Completion Report and not the responsibility of the Coordinating Official (CO). The FO was concerned that the information gathered by them may not be accurate.

Response: The CO and FO will have access to the same Completion Report module. The CO and FO can add information to the Completion Report, but only the FO can submit the Completion Report which is tied to the Annual Report. The CO can assist the FO in obtaining accurate information regarding the entries to the Completion Report. The module has a General Comments section in which the CO can communicate with the FO regarding the Completion Report update, as well as alerting the FO of when the report is ready for their submission. The FO will certify the information, electronically sign and date the report, and submit the report.

Comment: One institutional CO requested clarification of the "current degree status". Did it mean type of degree (i.e. MS or Ph.D.), or years remaining until conferral of degree, or something else. The CO stated that knowledge of the specific information requested by NSF is necessary in order for them to obtain the needed personnel to perform the work, as that institution has a significant number of Fellows.

Response: The Completion Report menu will have four columns to populate, 1.) Degree Status, 2.) Graduate Program Start Date, 3.) Degree Sought, and 4.) Graduation Date. The Degree Status will have four pull-down choices- In Progress, Graduated, Transferred, or Withdrawn. The Graduate Program Start Date will require a month and a year. The Degree Sought will be pre-populated from the Degree Sought field of the Fellow's Annual Activity Report. The Graduation Date is required only if the Fellow's degree status is marked as "Graduated".

Comment: One institutional CO asked how to report Fellows who are on an approved leave (medical or military deferral), as "In Progress" does not fit their situation.

Response: All Fellows within the Fellowship Period will be defined as In Progress in the Completion Report. The Fellowship Period is a five-year Fellowship Period which includes three Tenure Years of Financial Support (Stipend and institutional Cost-of-Education Allowance) and two Reserve Years. In addition, Forfeit, Medical Deferral, or Military Deferral are included in the Fellowship Period.

In addition to the Federal Register notice, the information collection for the Completion Report was introduced to Coordinating Officials via Webinars in March 2011. The Completion Report was also introduced at two meetings of

the Council of Graduate Schools, in July 2011 and December 2011. The attendees responded positively to the information request from the NSF.

9. **GIFTS OR REMUNERATION**

Not applicable.

10. **CONFIDENTIALITY PROVIDED TO RESPONDENTS**

The NSF will maintain the authoritative copy of all Completion Reports. Collection of information will be consistent with OMB policies as well as agency policies and practices for access to electronic records. FastLane will maintain all transmission records of submitted Annual Reports containing the Completion Report.

11. **QUESTIONS OF A SENSITIVE NATURE**

The Completion Report will not contain specific demographic information such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc. The Completion Report will contain Fellow name, ID number, field of study, degree status, graduate program start date, degree sought, and graduate date information. The data will be collected, maintained, and used in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, and any other applicable OMB and NSF policies and practices.

12. **ESTIMATE OF BURDEN**

Overall average time will be 15 minutes per Fellow (6,886 Fellows) for a total of 1,722 hours for all institutions with Fellows. An estimate for institutions with 12 or fewer Fellows will be less than 4 hours, institutions with 12-48 fellows will be less than 12 hours, and institutions with over 48 Fellows will be more than 12 hours.

ANNUALIZED COST TO RESPONDENTS

Institution	Type of Respondent	Total Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate*	Total Respondent Cost
Accreted Graduate University, USA.	Coordinating Official (CO) and Financial Official (FO)	1 hour per 4 Fellows 4 hours per 16 Fellows 12 hours per 48 Fellows	$27.47	$27.47 $109.88 $329.64

13. CAPITAL/STARTUP COSTS

There are no capital or startup costs to respondents.

14. ANNUALIZED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Each agency currently has existing personnel, systems and processes (or other resources) in place to receive and review the Completion Report, as required by current, established practices mandated by OMB Circulars.

GRFP Program Directors who review progress and Completion Reports generally are in the GS-14 and 15 range. Based on a step one average of these grades (OPM General Schedule Pay Table for 2012), an average hourly salary is $44.00 per hour. It is further estimated that about 30 minutes of time is needed to review a progress report for an institution, and with an estimated 220 institutions, the estimated annual cost to the Federal Government leading is $4840.00.

15. CHANGES IN BURDEN

This is a new collection.

16. PUBLICATION OF COLLECTION

Not applicable.

17. SEEKING APPROVAL TO NOT DISPLAY OMB EXPIRATION DATE

Not applicable because the OMB number and expiration date will be included on the data collection.

18. EXCEPTION(S) TO THE CERTIFICATION STATEMENT (19) ON OMB 83-I

Not applicable.

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

No statistical methods are employed in this information collection.