

Supporting Statement B for

Jurisdictional Survey of Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) Project Directors Made by the National Science Foundation, 1980 - Present

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Attachment 1: Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research Jurisdictional Survey

Attachment 2: Introductory Email from NSF

Attachment 3: Introductory Email from Contractor

Attachment 4: Reminder Email

Attachment 5: Thank You Email

B.1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

The proposed data collection will be targeted at state committee chairs and Project Directors (PDs) on Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) awards made by the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR).⁰ All grantees form the universe for this collection, except for Missouri and Guam. Missouri has submitted an EPSCoR RII Track-1 proposal (currently under review). Guam has recently become EPSCoR-eligible but has not yet submitted an RII Track-1 EPSCoR proposal. Interviews will be scheduled with state committee chairs and the information call will be administered to PDs of awards with the following characteristics:

- Awards funded through the EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement Program (RII Track-1)
- Excluding awards funded through the EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement Program (RII Track-2)
- Excluding awards funded through the EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement Program : Inter-Campus and Intra-Campus Cyber Connectivity (RII C2)
- Excluding awards for workshops, and conferences
- Excluding awards made to support other NSF programs (e.g., ADVANCE, CAREER)
- Excluding awards made through EPSCoR's Co-Funding Mechanism

The Research Infrastructure Improvement Awards are the largest single funding category within the EPSCoR program. Moreover, the Research Infrastructure Improvement awards are intended

⁰ The PDs may solicit input from Project Administrators (PAs), co-Principal Investigators, state committee chairs, Vice President's for Research, amongst other NSF EPSCoR-affiliated stakeholders as deemed necessary by the jurisdiction's designated PD. Because EPSCoR mandates the formation of state committees, and because of the distributed composition of the RII awards, the group of targeted respondents is necessarily broad.

to build sustainable research capacity at a jurisdiction level (unlike either co-funding of standard NSF grants or the workshops), and so only these awards fall under the evaluation objective and primary study questions. Within the RII awards, the focus of the study is on the Track 1 Research Improvement Awards. The Track 2 and C2 awards are recent – they were made using ARRA funding – and so the results of RII EPSCoR support will not be known before the evaluation is complete. Estimates of the respondent universe and an anticipated number of participants for both the online call data collection and the proposed surveys are summarized in Table B.1.

Table B.1. Estimated Respondent Universe and Use of Sampling Methods by Category

Category of participant	Type of data collection proposed	Estimated size of respondent universe	Expected response rate	Expected number of participants
PDs on EPSCoR RII awards	web-based survey	29	100%	29
State committee chairs	Interviews	29	100%	29

Sampling is not feasible within the target group because of the jurisdiction-specific nature of the information being collected. The contractor is conducting an historical investigation, and each jurisdiction has a unique history (including the number of eligible award cycles each has participated in, for example). Thus it is necessary to request information be collected from each eligible jurisdiction separately per funding iteration.

B. 2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

B.2.1 Data Collection Procedures

The open-ended web-based survey will be administered using a secure commercial web-based survey hosting service. The survey consists of 25 mostly free response questions (see Attachment 1), and it is estimated that it will require approximately 10 hours to complete for each iteration, with an average of 5 iterations per jurisdiction.

One week prior to the survey launch, NSF program staff will contact the target population (EPSCoR PDs) via email to describe the purpose of this evaluation activity, re-introduce the contractor, and request their cooperation. This initial email is included as Attachment 2. Within one week, the contractor will contact all participants via email. This introductory letter will include a link to the survey website and individual login information (Attachment 3). Respondents will have 8 weeks to complete the survey during which time the contractor will monitor response rates. At weeks 2, 4, and 7 after survey is initiated, non-respondents will receive a follow-up email (in Attachment 4). When the survey is completed, respondents will receive a thank-you note (in Attachment 5).

B.2.2 Data Analysis Procedures

Responses for each question will be analyzed in concert with the data tabulated from existing sources (e.g. award proposals and annual reports) using content analytic methods in NVivo, a qualitative data management and analysis software package for the social sciences. There will be no quantitative data collected in this information request.

B.3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates

The contractor will employ methods found to be generally effective in maximizing response rates. First, a pre-notification letter will be sent via US mail on NSF letterhead announcing the survey. A week after this first mailing, the contractor will follow up with an email with the weblink embedded. Subsequent email reminders will be sent at a different time and on a different day of the week in order to accommodate different work schedules. For non-respondents, and incompletes, an email reminder will also be sent on different days of the week as well. After three email reminders, a phone call reminder will be made sending respondents back to the weblink. Additionally, a completion bar will be included throughout the survey.

B.4. Test of Procedures or Methods to be Undertaken

As the target respondent group for the survey is specific to EPSCoR-supported PDs, a formal pre-test of the instrument will not be undertaken before the survey is fielded. However, the instruments have been reviewed by NSF and contractor staff, including experts in qualitative research methods and evaluation methods. Additionally, the universe of PDs were introduced to the fact that the evaluation effort would include a survey at the Spring PA/PD meeting held at NSF in May 2012. The topics to be covered by the survey were provided to the Project Directors for comment at this meeting and input received from this solicitation was taken in to account in the final survey design.

B.5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individual Collecting and/or Analyzing Data

The design for this information collection was developed by the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI) in consultation with the NSF, and as explained in the section above, input from the Project Directors was solicited and incorporated in. STPI Research Staff Member Drs. Rachel Parker and Brian Zuckerman will have primary responsibility for data collection and analysis. Dr. Parker and Dr. Zuckerman's contact information is:

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