



DATE: February 22, 2012

TO: Ravi Basavappa, Ph.D.,
Office of Strategic Coordination
Office of the Director

FROM: NIH Privacy Act Officer

SUBJECT: Applicability of the Privacy Act: "A Process Evaluation of the NIH Director's Early Independence Award Program"

I have reviewed the OD/DPCPSI/OSC submission to OMB to conduct a process evaluation for the first four years (FY 2011 – 2014) of the NIH Director's Early Independence Award (EIA) Program. The primary objectives of the study are to: (1) assess if the Requests for Applications (RFAs) are meeting the needs of applicants, (2) document the selection process, (3) document EIA program operations and activities, (4) assess the progress being made by the Principal Investigators (PIs), and (5) assess the support provided by the host institutions to the PIs.

I have determined that the Privacy Act will apply to this data collection for extramural reviewers, applicants, and awardees. The data collection will collect personally identifiable information such as the respondent's name, gender, ethnicity, race, degree status at the time of application, institution, position at host institution (e.g., tenure track faculty, non-tenure track research fellow, etc.).

All participants will receive a user code and a link to a web-based survey that they can complete and submit online. The purpose of the online survey for mail reviewers and the paper survey for the editorial board reviewers is to gather comments and document activities related to the review and scoring of applications. The purpose of the two online customer satisfaction surveys for applicants (one for PIs and one for host institution officials) is to gather opinions about the program, and give applicants an opportunity to share their experiences and provide feedback.

Access to the electronic files will be limited to staff working on the project. All paper files (such as paper surveys and handwritten interview notes) will be stored in locked cabinets. All electronic and paper files will be destroyed two years after the end of the contract. Names and other identifiable information will be redacted in all primary data and replaced with identifier numbers. A separate file will be created that links participant names to the identifier numbers. All data will be reported in aggregate and will not contain any identifying information (such as respondent name or affiliation).

The data collection is covered by NIH Privacy Act Systems of Record 09-25-0156, “Records of Participants in Programs and Respondents in Surveys Used to Evaluate Programs of the Public Health Service, HHS/PHS/NIH/OD.”

If you have any questions, please contact my office at (301) 402-6201.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Plá". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct flourish at the end.

Karen M. Plá

Enclosure:

NIH Privacy Act Systems of Record 09-25-0156

cc: Mikia Currie, Project Clearance Liaison, NIH