

**Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act
Information Collection 3090-0297; Generic Information Collection
Submissions for "Generic Clearance for the Collection of
Qualitative Feedback on Agency Service Delivery"
Part A**

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

Executive Order 12862 directs Federal agencies to provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector. In order to work continuously to ensure that our programs are effective and meet our customers' needs, the General Services Administration (hereafter "the Agency") seeks to obtain OMB approval of a generic clearance to collect qualitative feedback on our service delivery. By qualitative feedback we mean information that provides useful insights on perceptions and opinions, but are not statistical surveys that yield quantitative results that can be generalized to the population of study.

This collection of information is necessary to enable the Agency to garner customer and stakeholder feedback in an efficient, timely manner, in accordance with our commitment to improving service delivery. The information collected from our customers and stakeholders will help ensure that users have an effective, efficient, and satisfying experience with the Agency's programs. This feedback will provide insights into customer or stakeholder perceptions, experiences and expectations; provide an early warning of issues with service; or focus attention on areas where communication, training or changes in operations might improve delivery of products or services. These collections will allow for ongoing, collaborative and actionable communications between the Agency and its customers and stakeholders. It will also allow feedback to contribute directly to the improvement of program management.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

Improving agency programs requires ongoing assessment of service delivery, by which we mean systematic review of the operation of a program compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the continuous improvement of the program. The Agency will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered through this generic clearance to identify strengths and weaknesses of current services and make improvements in service delivery based on feedback. The solicitation of feedback will target areas such as: timeliness, appropriateness, accuracy of information, courtesy, efficiency of service delivery, and resolution of issues with service delivery. Responses will be assessed to plan and inform efforts to improve or maintain the quality of service offered to the public. If this information is not collected, vital feedback from customers and stakeholders on the Agency's services will be unavailable.

The Agency will only submit a collection for approval under this generic clearance if it meets the following conditions:

- Information gathered will be used only internally for general service improvement and program management purposes and is not intended for release outside of the agency (if released, procedures outlined in Question 16 will be followed);
- Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions ;¹
- Information gathered will yield qualitative information; the collections will not be designed or expected to yield statistically reliable results or used as though the results are generalizable to the population of study ;
- The collections are voluntary;
- The collections are low-burden for respondents (based on considerations of total burden hours, total number of respondents, or burden-hours per respondent) and are low-cost for both the respondents and the Federal Government;
- The collections are non-controversial and do not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies;
- Any collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the near future; and
- With the exception of information needed to provide remuneration for participants in focus groups and cognitive laboratory studies, personally identifiable information (PII) is collected only to the extent necessary and will not be retained.

If these conditions are not met, the Agency will submit an information collection request to OMB for approval through the normal PRA process.

To obtain approval for a collection that meets the conditions of this generic clearance, a standardized form will be submitted to OMB along with supporting documentation (e.g., a copy of the comment card). The submission will have automatic approval, unless OMB identifies issues within 5 business days.

The types of collections that this generic clearance covers include, but are not limited to:

- Customer comment cards/complaint forms
- Small discussion groups
- Focus Groups of customers, potential customers, delivery partners, or other stakeholders
- Cognitive laboratory studies, such as those used to refine questions or assess usability of a website;
- Qualitative customer satisfaction surveys (e.g., post-transaction surveys; opt-out web surveys)

¹ As defined in OMB and agency Information Quality Guidelines, "influential" means that "an agency can reasonably determine that dissemination of the information will have or does have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or important private sector decisions."

- In-person observation testing (e.g., website or software usability tests)

The Agency has established a manager/managing entity to serve for this generic clearance and will conduct an independent review of each information collection to ensure compliance with the terms of this clearance prior to submitting each collection to OMB.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

If appropriate, the Agency will collect information electronically and/or use online collaboration tools to reduce burden.

4. Duplication of Information

No similar data are gathered or maintained by the Agency or are available from other sources known to the Agency.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Small businesses or other small entities may be involved in these efforts but the Agency will minimize the burden on them of information collections approved under this clearance by sampling, asking for readily available information, and using short, easy-to-complete information collection instruments.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without these types of feedback, the Agency will not have timely information to adjust its services to meet customer needs.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances. The information collected will be voluntary and will not be used for statistical purposes.

8. Consultations with Persons Outside the Agency

A notice was published in the *Federal Register* at 77 FR 74191 on December 13, 2012. Two respondents submitted public comments on the extension of the previously approved information collection. One comment was not in scope of this collection. The analysis of the public comments is summarized as follows:

Comment 1: The respondent commented that the extension of the information collection would violate the fundamental purposes of the Paperwork Reduction Act because of the burden it puts on the entity submitting the information and the agency collecting the information.

Response: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), agencies can request OMB approval of an existing information collection. The PRA requires that agencies use the Federal Register notice and comment process, to extend OMB's approval, at least every three years. This extension, to a previously approved information collection, pertains to a Paperwork Reduction Act Generic Clearance (also known as Fast Track Process). Generic Clearance Information Collection Requests (ICRs) provide a significantly streamlined process by which agencies may obtain OMB's approval for particular information

collections – voluntary, low-burden, and uncontroversial collections. Generic ICRs are a useful way for agencies to meet the obligations of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 while eliminating unnecessary burdens and delays. They can be used for a number of information collections, including methodological testing, customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups, contests, and website satisfaction surveys. Therefore the extension of this information collection actually serves the purpose of reducing the burden on the entity submitting the information and the agency collecting the information.

Comment 2: The respondent commented that the agency did not accurately estimate the public burden an extension of the information collection requirement would create, and that the agency's methodology for calculating it is insufficient and does not reflect the total burden. The respondent indicated that the Agency's estimate of 145,534 respondents, average burden estimate of 3.82 minutes, and the total burden hours estimated by the Agency of 9,314 appear understated.

Response: Serious consideration is given, during the open comment period, to all comments received and adjustments are made to the paperwork burden estimate based on considerations provided by the public. The burden is prepared taking into consideration the necessary criteria in OMB guidance for estimating the paperwork burden put on the entity submitting the information. Specific to the approved use of a generic clearance, the collections are low-burden for respondents (based on considerations of total burden hours, total number of respondents, or burden-hours per respondent) and are low-cost for both the respondents and the Federal Government. If this among other conditions is not met, the Agency will submit an information collection request to OMB for approval through the normal PRA process. Careful consideration went into assessing the estimated burden hours for this collection, and it is determined that an upward adjustment is not required at this time.

Comment 3: The respondent commented that the collective burden of compliance with information collection requirement greatly exceeds the agency's estimate and outweighs any potential utility of the extension.

Response: The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) was designed to improve the quality and use of Federal information to strengthen decision-making, accountability, and openness in government and society. A key criteria for using the Fast Track Process for data collection is when participation by respondents is voluntary, not mandatory. The collective burden does not outweigh the utility of the extension.

Comment 4: The respondent commented that the government's response to the Paperwork Reduction Act Waiver of FAR case 2009 is instructive on the total burden for respondents.

Response: The details of that particular FAR case are not specifically relevant to this notice.

9. Payment or Gift

The Agency will not provide payment or other forms of remuneration to respondents of its various forms of collecting feedback. Focus groups and cognitive laboratory studies are the exceptions.

In the case of in-person cognitive laboratory and usability studies, the Agency may provide stipends of up to \$40. In the case of in-person focus groups, the Agency may provide stipends of up to \$75. If respondents participate in these kinds of studies remotely, via phone, or Internet, any proposed stipend needs to be justified to OMB and must be considerably less than that provided to respondents in in-person studies, who have to travel to the agency or other facility to participate. If such information collections include hard-to-reach groups and the agency plans to offer non-standard stipends, the Agency will provide OMB with additional justifications in the request for clearance of these specific activities.

10. Confidentiality

If a confidentiality pledge is deemed useful and feasible, the Agency will only include a pledge of confidentiality that is supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, and that does not unnecessarily impede sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use. If the agency includes a pledge of confidentiality, it will include a citation for the statute or regulation supporting the pledge.

11. Sensitive Nature

No questions will be asked that are of a personal or sensitive nature.

12. Burden of Information Collection

A variety of instruments and platforms will be used to collect information from respondents. The annual burden hours previously requested (534) were based on the number of collections we expected to conduct over the requested period for this clearance. A change is being requested due to the increase in participation.

Estimated Annual Reporting Burden				
Type of Collection	No. of Respondents	Annual Frequency per Response	Hours per Response	Total Hours
Web-based or brief comment form surveys of services and products	144,834	1	.063445	9189
Web-based or brief comment form evaluations of programs and events	600	1	.083	50
Focus Groups	50	1	1	50
Usability testing of websites or software	50	1	.5	25
Total	145,534			9314

13. Costs to Respondents

No costs are anticipated.

14. Costs to Federal Government

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is not easily calculable, but will be de minimis, in any event. Any costs will be related to minimal staff/administrative time in analyzing the data. No travel, postage or significant printing costs will be involved as Web-based technologies will be the primary method used to collect the data. Comment forms submitted at events may also be used. Contractor costs are not expected to exceed the cost of current contracts to maintain existing Web technologies used at the Agency.

15. Reason for Change

The request to increase the total number of responses and total burden hours is due to the Agency's increased participation in use of the collection. The agency will identify strengths and weaknesses of current services and make improvements in service delivery based on feedback.

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, Analysis Plans

Feedback collected under this generic clearance provides useful information, but it does not yield data that can be generalized to the overall population. Findings will be used for general service improvement, but are not intended for publication or other public release.

Although the Agency does not intend to publish its findings, the Agency may receive requests to release the information (e.g., congressional inquiry, Freedom of Information Act requests). The Agency will disseminate the findings when appropriate, strictly

following the Agency's "Guidelines for Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public," and will include specific discussion of the limitation of the qualitative results discussed above.

17. Display of OMB Approval Date

We are requesting no exemption.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.