

SECTION B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

B1. Respondent universe, sampling, or other selection procedures

The information gathered will be used mainly for questionnaire development and other research. The studies will cover a broad range of topics designed to improve NCSES data collections. Generally, small purposive samples of respondents/participants will be recruited to participate in the projects.

However, when a sampling plan is necessary (for instance, in the case of a pilot study or split-panel test), this plan will be described in the clearance request for the specific data collection.

B2. Procedures for collection of the information

The techniques that NCSES envisions using are the following widely accepted standard industry methods of developing, testing, and evaluating surveys: focus groups, cognitive and usability laboratory and field techniques, exploratory interviews, behavior coding, respondent debriefing, pilot studies, pretests, and split-panel tests. Descriptions of these methods were given at the beginning of this request. The particular technique (or techniques) chosen will depend on the objectives of the survey improvement study and will be described in the clearance request for each specific data collection.

B3. Methods to maximize response rates and to minimize nonresponse rate

For projects such as pilot studies and pretests that may use personal visits or telephone interviews, callbacks will be used to maximize response rates. For projects using mail surveys, reminder phone calls, reminder mailings, or mailings of another copy of the questionnaire will be used to maximize response rates. For projects using a web survey, NCSES will use email, phone calls, and mailings as appropriate to maximize response rates. Testing alternative combinations or designs of contact materials to determine what seems to produce higher response rates may also be included in some of the generic clearance projects.

B4. Tests or procedures

This submission covers testing of survey instruments and associated survey procedures. NCSES will analyze the results of these projects depending on the focus of each project. Measures to indicate survey improvement will include unit and item nonresponse rates, error patterns, consistency of responses within an instrument, use of “other” categories, and total response time.

In general, new items and procedures will replace existing ones only if they show improvement. The purpose of activities conducted under this generic clearance will be to develop and implement questionnaires and procedures that will increase data quality and minimize respondent burden.

B5. Name and telephone number of individual

NCSES program officers will have primary responsibility for the information gathering efforts, with assistance from Stephen H. Cohen, NCSES Chief Statistician. Questions as to the person in charge of each project should be directed to John Gawalt, NCSES Division Director, at 703-292-7776. Statistical questions should be directed to Dr. Cohen at 703-292-7769.