MEMORANDUM

Date: September 18, 2014

To: Shelly Wilkie Martinez, Desk Officer
                 Office of Management and Budget

From: John R. Gawalt, Division Director
                 National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics

Via: Suzanne Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer
                 National Science Foundation

Subject: Notification of cognitive research under generic clearance

This memorandum is to inform you of the National Science Foundations' (NSF's) plans to conduct cognitive research under the generic clearance for survey improvement projects (OMB number 3145-0174). This research will focus on the investigation of potential new research space data points for the Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities (Facilities Survey).

Background

The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) of NSF is broadly tasked with measuring the role of science and technology (S&T) in the United States' economy and abroad. A component of this activity is its sponsorship of the Congressionally mandated Facilities Survey, which collects information biennially on the amount, construction, repair, renovation, and funding of research facilities, as well as the computing and networking capacities at U.S. colleges and universities. The survey is an establishment-based survey completed by institutional coordinators at academic institutions and is a census of all research-performing colleges and universities in the United States that expended at least $1 million in research and development funds in the prior fiscal year.

While continual reviews have been conducted on the computing and networking capacity section (Part 2) of the Facilities Survey, the section on research space (Part 1) has not been substantially reviewed since 2003. NCSES plans to interview survey participants on the utility of the data, their interest in potential new data points and their ability to provide new data with minimal increased burden.

Research Plan

We will conduct a series of phone interviews and site visits with survey respondents and other data users to assess the data utility, interest in new data points and ability to provide new data. We will conduct approximately 25 site visits with institutions in five metropolitan areas

(Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, southern Michigan and Washington, DC). To ensure budgetary and time efficiencies, we will also interview 15-25 institutional representatives by phone. We are selecting institutions that represent a range of attributes such as varying size, public/private control, underrepresented student composition, level of research activity and geographical location.

The phone calls and site visits will be semi-structured interviews to explore respondents' thoughts on the need for new content. They will incorporate questions from the questionnaire in addition to questions regarding data usage and the interviewee's perspective on relevant issues in the field. Each interviewee will be provided a copy of their FY 2013 survey submission (Appendix A) and a copy of the most recent Facilities Survey data publications (Infobrief, detailed statistical tables and a link to the NSF database access tool, WebCASPAR). The results of the research will be used internally by NCSES for questionnaire development.

To recruit respondents, we will contact recent survey participants by phone and e-mail to make an appointment with the appropriate personnel, which in most cases will be the institutional facilities director and/or the director of institutional research. We anticipate the people in these positions will be familiar with the data and most likely, the questionnaire. After respondents agree to participate, we will send them an e-mail thanking them for their willingness to participate, providing them with the attachments noted above and confirming the appointment. We will audiotape interviews with respondents who give us permission when the interviews begin. The survey questionnaire (Appendix A), contact protocol (Appendix B) and interview protocol (Appendix C) are attached.

The interviews will focus on specific questions relating to total research space, new construction, repairs and renovation of research space and the interviewee's ability and interest in greater breakdown by S&E field. The questions specifically noted in the interview protocol cover the primary focus of the survey and its utility.

To ensure accurate note-taking, interviews will be recorded with the consent of the interviewee. The interviewees will be informed of the intent, privacy and volunteer nature of the interviews (Appendix C). They will be asked to verbally confirm their approval. Interviewees can decline to be recorded, at which point the recorder will be turned off and note-taking will serve as the only means of documentation.

Burden Information

We plan to conduct a maximum of 50 cognitive interviews. We expect up to 2 people may attend each interview on behalf of the institution. The estimated time for completion of the interview is about 1 hour 30 minutes for each two-person interview for a total of 150 hours (50 interviews x two people x 1 hour 30 minutes = 150 hours). We also expect to contact 80 academic institutions for recruiting purposes. We expect the recruiting process to take on average 5 minutes per institution, resulting in less than 7 hours (80 institution contacts x 5

minutes = 6.6 hours).   Thus, we estimate a total burden of no more than 157 hours for this phase of our research.

Incentive Payments

We will not be offering incentive payments.

Contact Information

The contact persons for questions regarding this research are:

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Attachments

Appendix A: 2013 Facilities Questionnaire Part 1
Appendix B: Contact Protocol
Appendix C: Interview Protocol