

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 10, 2014

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

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

Via: Suzanne Plimpton, Clearance Officer
National Science Foundation (NSF)

Subject: Notification of data collection under generic clearance

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of NSF's plan to conduct interviews under the generic clearance for survey improvement projects (OMB #3145-0174).

Background

The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics' (NCSES) surveys of research and development (R&D) cover a broad set of fields, including the social sciences and the humanities. For each of its sector-specific R&D surveys (e.g., HERD, BRDIS) NCSES distinguishes among three kinds of R&D-related activity ("character of work"): basic research, applied research, and experimental development. NCSES has evidence from previous cognitive interviews and reviews from the Committee on National Statistics that these "character of work" distinctions can be difficult for survey respondents to apply. These R&D distinctions are especially difficult to apply in the social sciences and humanities.

NCSES has begun a multi-year effort to design a survey of Non-Profit Research and Development (NPRD). Representatives from the private non-profit community, as well as respondents of other R&D surveys, have stated that they would be able to better apply the character of work distinctions more accurately and consistently if they had field-specific examples of R&D activities in each category, particularly in the social sciences. Consultation with experts in selected fields can help NCSES develop suitable examples of how the character of work distinctions can be applied in their fields. Although the immediate benefit will be used to inform the development of the forthcoming NPRD survey, this effort will benefit multiple NCSES R&D surveys.

Project Description

NSF plans to conduct up to 58 interviews with experts in specific research and development fields. The interviews will be exploratory and focused on collecting field-specific examples of R&D by character of work.

We will schedule 45-minute in-person interviews or telephone interviews with experts specializing in medical, physical sciences, and engineering R&D, as well as those who conduct social science or humanities-based studies. Interviews will be semi-structured. They will focus on respondents' interpretation of the definitions for each type of R&D and will elicit examples of each type. The interview protocol (Appendix A), contact protocol (Appendix B), and consent form (Appendix C) are attached.

The sampling method for the interviews is nonprobabilistic, purposive, and heterogeneous. Experts for each field will be selected to be broadly representative of the field and to have broad knowledge of the field, as represented by the following selection criteria:

- Years (15+) in the field
and
- Recent or present membership on an editorial board or a relevant peer-reviewed journal
or
- Recent or present leadership position in a relevant professional organization.

We plan to recruit participants through targeted email and telephone messages without regard to geography. These interviews will take place as soon as clearance is granted.

To ensure accurate note-taking, interviews will be recorded with the consent of the participants, who 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 expect to conduct one interview with each expert. The estimated time for completion for each interview is 45 minutes for a total of 43.5 hours (58 interviews x 45 minutes = 43.5 hours). We also expect to contact 100 experts for recruiting purposes. We expect the recruiting process to take an average of 5 minutes per expert, resulting in approximately 8 hours (100 experts x 5 minutes = 8.33 hours). Thus, we estimate a total burden of approximately 52 hours.

Incentive Payments

There are no incentive payments.

Contact Information

The contact person for questions regarding this data collection is:

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Attachments

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