



Windwalker Corporation

OMB Clearance Request for Contract ED-FSA-12-O-0032

Deliverable 2.3D PEP Baseline Report Follow-Up Interviews

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Submitted to:

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Clearance Documentation

Documentation for the Generic Clearance of Customer Service Satisfaction Collections

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Data Collection for PEP Participant Baseline Report

SURVEY FOCUS GROUP SOFTWARE USABILITY TESTING

DESCRIPTION OF THIS SPECIFIC COLLECTION

BACKGROUND

Under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which covers the administration of U.S. federal student financial aid programs, Federal Student Aid (FSA) administers the following programs: Pell grants, Stafford loans, PLUS loans, and the “campus-based” programs including Federal Work Study, Perkins Loans, and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants. Federal regulation requires schools to have written policies and procedures for the administration of the Title IV student assistance programs. To ensure institutional regulatory compliance, FSA provides training and technical assistance for financial aid administrators, institutional leaders, and other institutional support staff nationwide via its Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) website and the School Experience Group (SEG). The SEG’s mission is to identify and the unique service needs of all post-secondary education institutions and provide them with tailored resources to meet those needs. Within SEG, the Minority Serving and Under Resourced Schools Division (MSURSD) is responsible for providing support, assessment, and training specifically targeted for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

MSURSD is currently working to enhance the services and resources they provide to the MSIs, with the dual goals of increasing MSI compliance rates and of assisting MSIs in improving student performance outcomes such as increased student retention and graduation rates. This past winter, Windwalker, who was contracted to review MSURSD’s operations and processes, provided MSURSD leadership with recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their division’s operations and processes in the form of a Performance Enhancement Pilot (PEP) program. The PEP recommendations stem from insights garnered from the operational review and business process mapping report that Windwalker finalized for MSURSD in late 2013. To generate a baseline assessment of performance prior to implementing the recommendations outlined in the PEP report, Windwalker conducted onsite interviews with institutional leaders and focus groups with financial aid staff at select MSIs during Spring 2014.

MSURSD leadership is currently interested in conducting follow-up interviews with baseline data collection participants to determine the extent to which perceptions have changed since MSURSD has implemented some of the PEP recommendations. For this wave of interviews, MSURSD is interested in learning the following:

- Identifying the usefulness of various resources and services provided by MSURSD; and
- Discovering ways to further service MSIs.

INTENDED PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE COLLECTION

As was mentioned in the previous section, MSURSD has contracted Windwalker Corporation to identify areas where the division can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations and processes. Windwalker has already conducted an extensive operational review and has completed detailed maps of MSURSD's major processes. A Performance Enhancement Pilot (PEP) program was created by Windwalker, identifying the strategies we recommend MSURSD employ to enhance their operations and processes. MSURSD has been testing several of these recommendations across 11 MSIs they have selected to participate in a pilot program of the PEP recommendations, and Windwalker has worked with MSURSD to conduct interviews at these selected MSIs to collect baseline information in an effort to measure effectiveness of the recommendations. In that data collection effort, Windwalker conducted root cause interviews with institutional leaders and financial aid staff to identify where gaps in compliance-related knowledge and process implementation exist to assess the extent to which the recommendations in the PEP decrease gaps.

This current phase of the research includes conducting phone-based interviews with the participants of the past financial aid staff interviews. This round of interviewing will contain questions covering two specific areas of focus: 1) questions requiring financial aid staff to provide their feedback on specific resources that MSURSD provides or insights into what resources they would like them to provide; and 2) questions requiring financial aid directors to provide their thoughts on what specific topics and tools related to student financial literacy they would think would be of value if provided by FSA. Two protocols were developed for the data collection for each of the different purposes, however, data will be collected during a single call, where financial aid directors will respond to the financial literacy training questions once the interview with the rest of their staff providing feedback on MSURSD resources is completed.

The two protocols together contain between 15 and 40 items to gather the desired information. Specifically, the interviews with financial aid staff will ask respondents between 5 and 19 questions on the following themes:

- identification of resources used by interviewees;
- perceived levels of usefulness of each resource; and
- identification of resources they would like to receive;

The financial aid directors will then be asked between 10 and 21 items to assess their needs when providing financial literacy training to their students. These questions will measure the following themes:

- specification of directors' definitions of financial literacy;
- identification and usefulness of the tools they use to provide financial literacy information to their students;
- identification of topics to be included in financial literacy training; and
- identification of cultural barriers, challenges or opportunities when providing financial literacy to their students.

All interview protocols are provided as appendices in this document.

COLLECTION PROCEDURES

As was mentioned previously, all data collection will occur through the use of phone-based interviews. During each call, the Windwalker researcher who conducted the original onsite interview will conduct the phone-based follow-up interview, while a Windwalker researcher experienced in financial literacy training will conduct the interview with financial aid directors. Two sets of interviews will be administered consecutively: 1) the first will be an interview of all financial aid staff who participated in the first round of data collection efforts participate to obtain feedback on current MSURSD resources and suggestions for additional resources; and 2) the second will be an interview for only financial aid directors to obtain their insights into suggested topics for MSURSD-created financial literacy training.

The interviews will be entirely qualitative in nature and will be administered by phone by the Windwalker researchers experienced in administering the interview/focus group protocols with this population at the given institution. It is expected that up to three financial aid staff, including the financial aid director, will participate in data collection efforts at each institution for the first interview, while only the financial aid director will participate in the second interview. Each interview and focus group session will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and will begin with the researcher explaining the purpose of the research and how the results will be used. The researcher will also ask if the interviewees agree to have the conversations recorded using a tape-recorder provided by the researcher. It will be explained to participants that the recording is for data analysis purposes only and will only be accessible to the research team. However, the researcher will not record the session should any of the participants decline to have their comments recorded.

The interviews will include open-ended questions to obtain feedback on resources currently provided, or proposed to be provided, by MSURSD, as well as to and to identify other resources that respondents would like for MSURSD to provide. The interviews will last approximately 60 minutes each and will contain a total of between 15 and 40 questions across the two, depending upon which group is participating. Both protocols will include both the interview questions and a series of prompts to act as guides for researchers to gather data from respondents who are having difficulty answering the question as intended.

Since relationships have already been established between Windwalker researchers and financial aid directors, the Windwalker researcher who will be conducting the follow-up interview research will email the financial aid director requesting their and their staff's participation in the phone-based interviews. The MSURSD cluster lead of the given institution will be copied on the email for visibility and to assist in email- and phone-based recruitment efforts if the financial aid director is nonresponsive.

Upon completing all data collection activities at each institution, Windwalker researchers will review their notes and will listen to the recorded session, as available. At this time, the researchers will synthesize all of the themes that emerged from the interviews and identify the

main themes that emerged from the interviews. These qualitative findings will be contained in a report as part of deliverable 2.3B of the above-mentioned contract. Greater detail on how these results will be used is provided in the “Planned Use of Data” section below.

DATES, LOCATIONS, AND PARTICIPANTS

The proposed timeframe for the phone-based interviews is August 1 – 15, 2014 to accommodate the delivery of the draft baseline reports to MSURSD leadership by September 1. No payments, stipends, or incentives are proposed. Windwalker will conduct two consecutive interviews: an interview with all financial aid staff and another with only financial aid directors from institutions who have participated in previous data collection efforts, neither of which will exceed 1 hour in length. In total, a population of 33 financial aid staff is expected to participate in the data collection efforts across the 11 schools participating in the PEP, while 11 financial aid directors across the 11 institutions will participate in the interview related to financial literacy training. This timeline meets the contractual requirement that the interviews be conducted between two and three months after initial data collection efforts had been completed and after OMB clearance is obtained. The interview instruments have also been shared with MSURSD leadership for approval, and final approval from them has already been granted.

PLANNED USE OF DATA

The data collected from these efforts will be used for three purposes: 1) to obtain feedback on current MSURSD resources and suggestions for additional resources; 2) to obtain their insights into suggested topics for financial literacy training; and 3) to inform the second phase of MSURSD’s Operational Review. These findings will be presented in an aggregated report, synthesizing the feedback from all institutions, which will then inform MSURSD strategy. The first draft of this report is due to MSURSD leadership by September 1, 2014.

AMOUNT OF ANY PROPOSED STIPEND OR INCENTIVE

Not applicable.

BURDEN HOUR COMPUTATION (*Number of responses (X) estimated response or participation time in minutes (/60) = annual burden hours*):

| Category of Respondent | No. of Respondents | Participation Time | Burden |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Financial aid staff (follow-up interviews) | 33 | 60 minutes | 33 hours |
| Financial aid directors (financial literacy training) | 11 | 60 minutes | 11 hours |
| | | | |
| Totals | 44 | 60 minutes | 44 hours |

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

We expect a 100% response rate in terms of institutional leaders and financial aid staff participating in interviews. Given that all data gathered from these data collection efforts will be qualitative, minimal statistical analysis will be conducted. Frequencies of themes that emerged may be presented, but the vast majority of the findings from these data collection efforts will communicate broad qualitative themes rather than present quantifiable results.

REQUESTED APPROVAL DATE: 10 business days past submission date

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