

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**NASA Astronaut Candidate Selection Qualifications Inquiry**  
**OMB CONTROL NO. 2700-XXXX**

**Type of IC:** Active Information Collection Without OMB Approval

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.**

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Astronaut Selection Office (ASO) (located at the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center (JSC), Building 259, Houston, Texas 77058) is responsible for selecting astronauts for the various United States Space Exploration programs. In evaluating an applicant for the Astronaut Candidate Program, it is important that the ASO have the benefit of qualitative and quantitative information and recommendations from persons who have been directly associated with the applicant over the course of their career.

On average 3,500 applications are received for each Astronaut vacancy announcement. After a thorough applicant review process, which includes NASA Astronauts who participate as subject matter experts, approximately 450 applicants make it into the highly qualified rating category. Once an applicant is placed in the highly qualified category, external references are sought from individuals who have known them personally and professionally. Each applicant provides the ASO with a list of five (5) references, totaling 2,250 responses.

**2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.**

The information collected will be used by the NASA Astronaut Selection Office and NASA Human Resources personnel, as part of the candidate selection process (approx. 2 year duration), to gain insight into the candidates' work ethic and professionalism, as demonstrated in previous employment activities. Preferable respondents/individuals include the candidate's previous employer(s) or direct-reporting manager, as well as same-level co-workers.

The information will be collected using electronic, web-enabled hypertext markup language (HTML) forms (web pages). Respondents who do not have ready access to a computer terminal or prefer not to use a computer, may elect to complete a paper version of the form and submit it to the JSC ASO via the United States Postal Service (USPS). The information will be collected one (1) time per candidate during the selection period (tentatively scheduled annually). Upon completion of the selection process, the information will become a permanent part of the candidates' archived application package. The collected information, associated with personnel who successfully complete the program and are subsequently designated as "Astronauts", will become a permanent part of the Astronauts' Official Personnel File (OPF), and ultimately

designated as a National Archive.

The information collected will not be disseminated to the public as collected; however, it may be used to support information that could potentially be disseminated to the public.

The information collected will be construed as professional performance evaluations, and as such, will be handled as Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU)/Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), subject to exclusion from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Astronaut Candidate Records are managed via Schedule 8/101 of NPR/1441.1, NASA Records Retention Schedule. The **NPR 1441, NASA Records Retention Schedule** is available for the public to review on the NASA Online Directives System:  
[http://nodis3.gsfc.nasa.gov/main\\_lib.html](http://nodis3.gsfc.nasa.gov/main_lib.html)

The System of Record Notice (SORN) was published in the Federal Register as *NASA 10ACSR - Astronaut Candidate Selection Records. FRN 13-071.*

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-07-05/html/2013-16193.htm>

**3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.**

NASA recently transitioned from paper-based process to an electronic collection process.\* The intended method of collection is through the use of an electronic Internet (web-based) form, created using the Adobe® ColdFusion® application development platform, and delivered using Microsoft® Internet Information Server® (IIS). Because of the sensitivity of the information collected in the form, connection to the Internet form will be protected using no less than 128-bit secure socket layer (SSL) encryption, compliant with Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) 140-2 requirements.

Once collected, the information will be stored in a secure database, managed by the Microsoft Structured Query Language (SQL) Server Version 2008, which utilizes transparent Data encryption (TDE). TDE enforces system-level encryption while the data is “at-rest” (stored) within relational database management systems (RDBMS). The data is decrypted only for presentation/display following an authorized query/request.

\*If for some reason a respondent can only submit information by paper, the paper response will be accepted. More detail is provided in item 12 below.

**4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.**

The information is collected directly from respondents, on an on-demand basis. The information is not available from any other sources within NASA, from other government sources, or from outside sources.

**5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.**

The collection of this information will not involve or otherwise affect small businesses or other small entities.

**6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.**

If the information is not collected, the ability of the JSC ASO to adequately assess the qualifications of Astronaut candidates will be adversely impacted; less than acceptable applicants could be considered for candidacy.

If the information is collected less frequently, the Astronaut Selection Process would be adversely affected; less frequent collection means less frequent Astronaut recruitment, which negatively impacts the quality and quantity of the United States Astronaut pool.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.**

There are no special circumstances. The collection of information is conducted in a manner consistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6.

**8. Provide information on the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.**

60-day FRN: Notice 13-063, Volume 78, No 110, Friday, June 7, 2013

No comments received from the public.

30-day FRN: Notice 13-090, Volume 78, No 166, Tuesday, August 27, 2013

No comments were received from the public.

**9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.**

No payments or gifts are provided to respondents.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.**

Each respondent is notified in writing (or via an Internet form notice window/text box) that the voluntary information they provide shall remain confidential.

In specific cases, the NASA ASO considers the collected information to be “performance evaluations” and part of the candidate’s application package, and thus protected from disclosure to the public. However, a copy of the collected information may be provided to the applicant, if the applicant requests it in writing.

As required by the Federal Information System Management Act of 2002 (FISMA), and in accordance with (IAW) NASA Policy Directive (NPD) 2810.1D, *NASA Information Security Policy*, the information system used to collect the information from respondents fully complies with guidelines defined for a system having a Moderate-impact on the overall risk to the agency.

The information system used to collect the information from respondents has been configured to meet or exceed all security control requirements, commensurate with a “moderate-impact” system, as set forth in National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Special Publication (SP) 800-53 Revision 3, *Recommended Security Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations*.

Refer to Supporting Statement #3 (above) for additional technical details regarding the protection of the confidentiality of the collected information.

**11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.**

Questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private, are not included in this information collection.

**12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.**

Total number of respondents annually is two thousand (2,000) – five (5) respondents per each four hundred (400) “Highly Qualified” Astronaut Candidate. Refer to Supporting Statement #1 for explanation.

Through proof of concept use, it is estimated that the collection of information should take no longer than twenty (20) minutes per respondent. Total Annual Hours Requested is seven hundred fifty (750) hours (i.e.,  $2,250 \times 20 / 60$ ).

In the event that the respondent lacks an Internet connection and elects to submit a paper-based response, the agency estimates that collection of information should take no longer than twenty (22) minutes per respondent (additional time to stuff an envelope and affix a postage stamp). Total Annual Hours Requested is eight hundred twenty-five (825) hours; i.e.,  $2,250 \times 22 / 60$ .

**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question**

**12 above).**

Since this collection is electronic, using an Internet web form, the agency anticipates a zero cost (\$0.00) burden to respondents. In the event that the respondent lacks (or chooses not to use) an Internet connection and elects to submit a paper-based response, the agency estimates that collection of information will present each affected respondent with a one-time cost burden of no more than the cost of a postage-stamped envelope (currently, approximately \$0.58). In this case, the current Total Annual Cost Burden to respondents ranges from \$0.58 to \$1,305.00 for 1 to 2,250 respondents.

By using existing, available computer hardware, software, and services, the agency estimates a zero cost (\$0.00) burden to record-keepers.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.**

In the effort to replace the current paper-based collection process to an electronic process, the agency estimates approx. \$50,905.00 in annualized cost, representing contractor labor costs for database management and server hardware maintenance.

**15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments.**

This is an existing collection in use without an OMB Control Number. NASA is seeking to remedy non-compliance with the PRA. To improve efficiency for both NASA and the respondents, NASA transitioned from a paper-based process to an electronic process (Internet form) effective August 2013.

**16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.**

This collection's results will not be published.

**17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.**

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.**

The agency is able to certify compliance with all provisions under Item 19 of OMB Form 83-I.

**B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS**

This information collection does not employ any statistical methods.