



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of the Chief Information Officer
Washington, D.C. 20230

March 10, 2014

Mr. Alex Hunt
Chief, Information Policy Branch
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Hunt:

The Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) request an expedited review of a new information collection entitled "Nomination Applications for Participation in a Forensics Organization of Scientific Area Committees."

In response to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Justice (DOJ) and NIST that was signed in February 2013, NIST took on the task of transitioning existing Forensic Scientific Working Groups to a new transparent and accessible process for standards development and consistency within the forensic science community. The Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) concept was publicly announced on February 4, 2014 to an enthusiastic response from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including the National Commission on Forensic Science, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and the Innocence Project. The key next step for NIST is a broad national call for participants to staff the OSAC, such that the organization can be operational by the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. NIST needs to learn who wants to serve on the OSAC, which of the thirty organizational components of the OSAC they are interested in working on, and the experience they bring to the OSAC (e.g., forensic practitioners, metrologists, statisticians, researchers, attorneys, judges) so those selected will reflect a balance of perspectives. Once this call has been conducted, NIST will work with the DOJ to place appropriate participants into the different roles within the upper level committees of OSAC. An earlier request by NIST was not possible, due to the delay in defining a structure for OSAC and developing applicant requirements.

Also, due to unavoidable delays both in setting up the National Commission on Forensic Science (National Commission), a Federal Advisory Committee for the Attorney General, and in posting and collecting responses to a DOJ Notice of Inquiry informing NIST on issues critical to OSAC's success, public anticipation is extremely high. With the inaugural meeting of the National Commission in February 2014, and the announcement of the OSAC structure, there is heightened interest in the community in launching the organization and making advances to strengthen the scientific credibility of forensic science in the U.S. NIST is committed to hosting the first OSAC meeting in FY 2014.

Because of the high visibility of the shortcomings of the current forensic science disciplines in the U.S., the long delayed Federal response to the National Academies of Science (NAS) report of 2009 "Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward," and the interest in Congress and in the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy, NIST is requesting OMB's approval of this information collection by **March 31, 2014**. This will allow OSAC participants to be identified by May, which will allow sufficient time to train the members on their responsibilities and guideline development, and to host the inaugural OSAC meeting by the end of FY 2014.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Jessup".

Jennifer Jessup
Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer