

Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback” (OMB Control Number: 3145-0215)

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:

Surveys of applicants and reviewers to assess satisfaction with the Preliminary Proposal process introduced by the Biological Sciences Directorate.

PURPOSE:

In 2013 the Divisions of Environmental Biology (DEB) and of Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS) in the Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) made significant changes to the review process of its core programs. Before the change, full proposals could be submitted twice per year. Under the new system, a preliminary proposal requirement was introduced. Only the applicants whose preliminary proposals are considered the most meritorious by a review panel are invited to submit a full proposal. In addition, the semi-annual submission deadlines were replaced with a January deadline for preliminary and August deadline for full proposals. Finally, the number of proposal submissions per year was limited to two per Principal Investigator/Co-Principal Investigator. Intended benefits of the new review process include: (a) reduction in the time and effort for the investigators, reviewers, and NSF Program Officers to prepare and evaluate NSF grant proposals; (b) improvement in review quality; and (c) increase in the funding rates for full proposals.

This request is to conduct on-line surveys of applicants and reviewers to measure satisfaction with the workload to prepare and evaluate applications and other aspects of the new processes. Data collected in the surveys will be used in conjunction with NSF Program Officer interviews and analysis of administrative data.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:

The following groups of applicants will be surveyed:

- DEB/IOS grantees
- DEB/IOS unfunded applicants who were invited to submit a full proposal
- DEB/IOS unfunded applicants who were not invited to submit a full proposal
- Grantees under other programs supporting biology research but not participating in the new review process

The following groups of reviewers will be surveyed:

- Panel reviewers for DEB/IOS preliminary proposals
- Ad hoc reviewers for DEB/IOS full proposals (Ad hocs not used for preliminary proposals)
- Panel reviewers for DEB/IOS full proposals
- Ad hoc reviewers for non-participating programs supporting biology research
- Panel reviewers for non-participating programs supporting biology research

Because of a potential for recall bias, the survey subjects will include only recent participants, those who submitted or reviewed proposals for fiscal year 2015 competitions.

TYPE OF COLLECTION: (Check one)

- Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form
- Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software)
- Focus Group
- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Small Discussion Group
- Other: _____

CERTIFICATION:

I certify the following to be true:

1. The collection is voluntary.
2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
3. The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other federal agencies.
4. The results are not intended to be disseminated to the public.
5. Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions.
6. The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the future.

Name: Suzanne H. Plimpton, NSF Reports Clearance Officer

To assist review, please provide answers to the following question:

Personally Identifiable Information:

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected? Yes No
2. If Yes, is the information that will be collected included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974? Yes No
3. If Applicable, has a System or Records Notice been published? Yes No

Gifts or Payments:

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants? Yes No

BURDEN HOURS

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time, minutes	Burden, hours
Private sector	3,600	10	600
Totals	3,600		600

FEDERAL COST: This survey is requested as part of an ongoing evaluation study, the additional cost to the government is \$0.

If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:

The selection of your targeted respondents

1. Do you have a customer list or something similar that defines the universe of potential respondents and do you have a sampling plan for selecting from this universe?
[x] Yes [] No

If the answer is yes, please provide a description of both below (or attach the sampling plan). If the answer is no, please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them?

FASTLANE data will be used to obtain the full list of applicants and reviewers for 2015. All DEB/IOS grantees, comparison program grantees, and DEB/IOS unsuccessful applicants who submitted a full proposal in that year will be included in the survey. The DEB/IOS applicants who were not invited to submit a full proposal and the reviewers will be randomly chosen from among the available population. The number of respondents included in the burden table above was calculated for 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval and with the assumption of 30% loss of the sample due to non-response.

Administration of the Instrument

1. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)
[x] Web-based or other forms of Social Media
[] Telephone
[] In-person
[] Mail
[] Other, Explain
2. Will interviewers or facilitators be used? [] Yes [x] No

Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.