

Supporting Statement for the NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances of Information Collection

This is a request for revision of the NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program (NURSE Corps LRP) application and participant monitoring forms. The NURSE Corps LRP is authorized by 42 USC 297n(a) (section 846(a) of the Public Health Service Act, as amended by Public Law 107-205, and Public Law 111-148. The application and forms are approved under OMB No. 0915-0140, which expires 4/30/2014.

The NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program (NURSE Corps LRP), formerly known as the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program (NELRP), assists in the recruitment and retention of professional Registered Nurses (RNs), including advanced practice RNs (i.e., nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, certified nurse-midwives, clinical nurse specialists), dedicated to working at eligible health care facilities with a critical shortage of nurses (i.e., a Critical Shortage Facility) or working as nurse faculty in eligible, accredited schools of nursing, by decreasing the financial barriers associated with pursuing a nursing profession.

Under the NURSE Corp LRP, RNs and nurse faculty are offered the opportunity to enter into a contractual agreement with the Secretary to receive loan repayment for up to 60 percent of their qualifying student loans in exchange for a 2-year service commitment, and an additional 25 percent of their original loan balance for an optional third year. In exchange, the nurses agree to serve full-time for a minimum of 2 years at a public or private nonprofit Critical Shortage Facility or in an eligible, accredited school of nursing. The NURSE Corps LRP statute requires that a funding preference be given to eligible applicants with greatest financial need. Applicants whose total qualifying loans are 20 percent or greater than their annual salary will meet the greatest financial need funding preference.

The NURSE Corps LRP application and forms obtain information for applicants and participants. The information is used to consider an applicant for a NURSE Corps LRP contract award, and to monitor a participant's compliance with the service requirements. Individuals must submit an application in order to participate in the program. The application asks for personal, professional, educational, and financial information required to determine the applicant's eligibility to participate in the NURSE Corps LRP. The semi-annual employment verification form asks for personal and employment information to determine if a participant is in compliance with the service requirements.

2. Purpose and Use of Information

Applicants are required to submit an online application that provides data regarding the applicant's identity and contact information, qualifying nursing education, qualifying nursing education loans, nursing licensure, current employment, and other eligibility criteria. This information is necessary to determine whether the applicant meets the NURSE Corp LRP eligibility and funding preference requirements, as outlined in the Application and Program Guidance (APG). With exception to the Authorization to Release Information Form, the Authorization to Release Employment Form, and the Semi-Annual Employment Verification Form, all of the information requested is completed through the online application. The application package was revised to include many of the previous paper forms required with the application, in an effort to reduce the burden for applicants, and to create a more efficient application process.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology

This information collection activity is web-based (with exception to some forms as previously mentioned) the application, application instructions and forms are available at <http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/repayment/nursing/index.html>.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The information collected is specific to the applicant and unique to this program. No other source of this information is known to exist for completion of the application and monitoring forms.

5. Involvement of Small Entities

The information collection will not have a significant impact on small entities.

6. Consequences if Information Collected Less Frequently

This program has a yearly application cycle. If not selected, the applicant may reapply in the next yearly cycle. The selection process for NURSE Corps LRP awards necessitates the collection of information required to determine an applicant's eligibility and funding preference. In the absence of this information collection, the NURSE Corps LRP could not make any awards. In addition, the monitoring process for compliance with contractual requirements necessitates semi-annual employment verification. The consequence of less frequent monitoring is payout of government funds to participants who should not receive them.

7. Consistency with the Guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2)

This information collection fully complies with 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Consultation Outside the Agency

The notice required in 5 CFR 1320.8(d) was published in the *Federal Register* on December 20, 2013 (Vol. 78, No. 245, p. 77136). No comments were received.

Additionally, this program has consulted the following individuals to obtain constructive feedback to improve the application, improve efficiency, and minimize the collection burden. The comments on clarity of the application and forms were positive. The applicants found the application instructions and materials to be clear and straight forward. There were no suggestions for improvement.

Applicants contacted included:

1. Taylor Baesch
Registered Nurse (RN)
University of Maryland Medical Center
(410) 328-8667
2. Johanna Berry
Registered Nurse (RN)
Windham Hospital – Outpatient
(860) 456-6989
3. Jill Boettcher
Registered Nurse (RN)
Cascade City-County Health Department, Community Health Care Center
(406) 791-9263
4. Julia Britt
Registered Nurse (RN)
Children’s National Medical Center – Children’s Health Center
(202) 884-2123
5. Marie Allen
Nurse Practitioner (NP)
Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center
(601) 364-5142 x223

9. Remuneration of Respondents

Respondents will not be remunerated.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

Data collected on the individual Nurse Corps LRP application and monitoring forms constitutes a system of records under the Privacy Act of 1974. The applicable Privacy Act system is the “Public Health Service and National Health Service Corps Health Care Provider Records System” (09-15-0037). Information provided on each selected application will be maintained for at least 2 years and up to 10 years. This is necessary to permit the monitoring of NURSE Corps LRP participants through the completion of their NURSE Corps LRP service commitments.

11. Questions of a Sensitive Nature

The applicant’s social security number is required for purposes of reporting the amount of loan repayments received by an individual to the Internal Revenue Service. It is also required by the Debt Collection Act of 1982, to permit collection of claims resulting from a participant’s breach of the NURSE Corps LRP contract.

The applicant’s annual gross salary and outstanding educational loan balances are required to determine whether the applicant meets the statutory funding preference. The loan information is also needed to determine whether the loans are eligible for repayment. The Right to Financial Privacy Act (RFPA), Public Law 95-630, regulates the Federal Government’s access to the financial records of individuals maintained by a financial institution. The financial information collected through the application complies with the RFPA requirements for customer authorization for disclosure of financial records.

The applicant’s banking information is necessary to electronically transmit loan repayments to the individual’s financial institution, as required by the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 and 31 CFR Parts 208 and 210.

The NURSE Corps obtains a Credit Bureau Report (CBR) as part of the application review process. The CBR is cross-referenced with the financial information provided by the applicant, and also used to verify whether the applicant has a Federal judgment lien. The Privacy Act Notification Statement in the Application and Program Guidance advises applicants that a CBR will be obtained.

12. Estimates of Annualized Hour Burden

The estimates of reporting burden for Applicants are as follows:

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Total Responses	Hours per Response	Total Burden Hours	Hour Cost	Total Hour Cost
NURSE Corps LRP Application*	5,500	1	5,500	2.0	11,000	\$36	\$396,000
Authorization to Release Information Form	5,500	1	5,500	.10	550	\$36	\$19,800
Authorization to Release Employment Information Form	5,500	1	5,500	.10	550	\$36	\$19,800
Total			16,500		12,100	\$36	\$435,600

**Please note that the burden hours associated with this instrument account for both new and continuation applications. Additional (uploaded) supporting documentation is included as part of this instrument and reflected in the burden hours.*

The estimates of reporting burden for Participants are as follows:

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Total Responses	Hours per response	Total Burden Hours	Hour Cost	Total Hour Cost
Participant Semi-Annual Employment Verification Form	2,300	2	4,600	.5	2,300	\$36	\$82,800
Total	2,300	2	4,600	.5	2,300	\$36	\$82,800
Total for Applicants and Participants			21,100		14,400	\$36	\$518,400

Basis for estimates:

Applicants: Based on previous responses, the number of applicants is estimated to average 5,500 per year for the next 3 years. Nurse Corps LRP applicants and participants consist of a diverse nursing workforce (e.g. RNs, Advanced Practice RNs, and nurse faculty). Based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook, the national average hourly wage for registered nurses and nurse faculty is approximately \$31 per hour. For advanced practice nurses the average hourly wage is \$46 per hour. Overall, the nursing workforce (as mentioned above) would earn a mean, hourly wage of approximately \$36 per hour ($\$31 + \$31 + \$46 = \108 ; $\$108/3 = \36). As per calculations based on the BLS wage data, it is estimated that the hour cost associated with completion of the Nurse Corps LRP application and forms would be

\$36 per hour. As such, the combined total burden hours and total hour cost for the Nurse Corps LRP (including both applicant and participant burden hours) would be 14,400 hours and \$518,400 respectively.

Each applicant must complete an online application once per fiscal year. The application consists of: eligibility requirements (license, citizenship, service agreement, employment); general information (name, address, school attended, degree(s) obtained, employment, etc.); educational loan information to be considered (average of 3 documents per applicant), plus any necessary supporting documentation.

13. Estimates of Annualized Cost Burden to Respondents

There are no capital or startup costs to the respondents. All equipment and software are internally maintained at the Nurse Corps LRP as part of its normal business practice. The operation and maintenance costs to applicants consist of the \$.75 cost (per applicant) for converting original loan documentation to an electronic format, which equals an estimated annualized cost burden of \$4,125. There will be no operation or maintenance costs to lenders; all information is maintained for usual business purposes.

14. Estimates of Annualized Cost to Government

Instrument	Base Pay Rate	Project Time per FTE	Number of FTEs	Total Annual Cost
Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program Application	\$88,224 /GS-12, Step 6	1.0	11	\$970,464

The processing of the Nurse Corps LRP application and forms are handled internally, through BCRS' Application and Processing Unit (APU). The variables used to estimate the annualized cost to the government are contained in the table above. There are 11 FTEs involved in the processing of the applications. It is estimated that a base pay rate of \$88,224 (equivalent to a GS-12 step 6) per individual will be received in exchange for a full-time commitment (approximately 100% of the individual's work time) on this project. The total estimated annual cost to the Government is \$970,464.

15. Changes in Burden

Currently, there are 48,925 burden hours in the OMB Inventory. The new request is for 14,400 hours, a decrease of 34,525 hours. This substantial decrease in burden accounts for the streamlined application. The current online application incorporates a majority of the supporting and supplemental documents, thereby significantly reducing the number of burden hours spent by

respondents.

16. Time Schedule, Publication and Analysis Plans

The Nurse Reinvestment Act requires annual reports to Congress regarding participant demographics, service sites, default information, etc. These reports provide information tables as well as analysis of trends and evaluation of the program.

17. Exemption for Display of Expiration Date

The expiration date will be displayed.

18. Exceptions to Certification for PRA Submissions

This information collection fully complies with 5 CFR 1320.9.