

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION SUBMISSION

Customer Satisfaction Survey: NSF Proposal Submission Process

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. CIRCUMSTANCES MAKING COLLECTION OF INFORMATION NECESSARY

On September 11, 1993, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12862, “Setting Customer Service Standards,” which clearly defined his vision that the Federal agencies will put the public first. To accomplish this, President Clinton called for a “revolution within the Federal government to change the way it does business.” He expected this process to require continual reform of government practices and operations to the end that, “when dealing with the Federal agencies, all people receive service that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector.”

Section 1(b) of this E.O. requires agencies to “survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services” and Section 1(a) requires agencies to “survey front-line employees on barriers to, and ideas for, matching the best in business.” These Presidential requirements established an ongoing need for the National Science Foundation (NSF) to engage in an interactive process of collecting information and using it to improve program services and processes.

In 2014, NSF launched the Proposal Submission Modernization (PSM) initiative, which seeks to modernize and migrate NSF’s proposal submission functionality from the current system, FastLane, to Research.gov. Presently, NSF is undertaking a multi-phased planning effort to identify performance gaps that users experience in proposal preparation and submis-

sion processes. The survey seeks to document the experience of NSF's grant applicants in a more holistic effort to ensure that modernization of the current system addresses performance gaps present in the current system while also capitalizing on its strengths.

2. HOW, BY WHOM, AND PURPOSE FOR WHICH INFORMATION IS TO BE USED

The survey will request voluntary feedback from NSF grant applicants (researchers) as well as Sponsored Project Office (SPO) administrative staff with recent experience reviewing and submitting NSF grant proposals. The survey will be sent to researchers who have submitted proposals between FY 2012 – FY 2014. It will also be sent to SPO staff persons that had experience reviewing and submitting proposals between FY 2010 – FY 2014. The data will be used to understand the overall experience users have with FastLane and specific areas of the proposal submission process. This data will ultimately inform PSM planning, prioritization, and implementation efforts.

3. USE OF AUTOMATION

The survey will be administered by NSF staff via the Foundation's SurveyMonkey account. Via the SurveyMonkey tool, the individuals from the research community, described above, will receive an email with a link to complete the survey. Participation in the survey is voluntary.

4. EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY DUPLICATION

Not Applicable.

5. SMALL BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF LESS FREQUENT COLLECTION

Not applicable.

7. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR COLLECTION

Not applicable.

8. FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE.

The agency's notices, as required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), were published in the *Federal Register* on February 25, 2014, at 79 FR 10574 and May 30, 2014 at 79 FR 31145 and no comments were received.

9. OUTSIDE CONSULTATION

NSF estimates that this survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This estimate is based upon previous Foundation experience administering surveys and staff testing of the current survey instrument.

10. GIFTS OR REMUNERATION

Not applicable.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY PROVIDED TO RESPONDENTS

Yes, a confidentiality assurance is provided in the initial survey message: "Please be assured that your answers will remain anonymous and reported in aggregate form only."

12. QUESTIONS OF A SENSITIVE NATURE

No questions of a sensitive nature will be asked.

13. ESTIMATE OF BURDEN

Each respondent will submit only one survey response. There are two main groups of respondents. The first group is comprised of PIs and Co-PIs that have submitted proposals to NSF between FY 2012 – FY 2014. The other group is comprised of Sponsored Project Office (SPO) administrative staff with experience reviewing and submitting proposals on behalf of their institutions. It is anticipated that the average response time for a respondent will be 10

minutes. This estimate is based on the survey length and time required to complete similarly long surveys in the past. It is also based on internal NSF staff testing of the current survey instrument. NSF anticipates that the number of responses to the survey will be approximately 4,000 (3,000 researchers and 1,000 SPO staff persons). The total hourly burden for the researchers is estimated to be 500 hours for researchers (3,000 respondents x 10 minutes / 60 minutes), and 167 hours for SPO staff (1,000 respondents x 10 minutes / 60 minutes).

ANNUALIZED COST TO RESPONDENTS

Tenure-track professors will be the predominant respondent group to the survey. The 2013-2014 American Association of University Professor's Faculty Salary Survey reports in Survey Report Table 4 the Average Salary and Average compensation by Category, Affiliation, and Academic Rank. The average salary at the Associate Professor rank across all categories (e.g. doctoral, masters, baccalaureate, associate's) of \$90,839 is used as an estimate for NSF researchers.

Cost to Respondents (Researchers)

Average salary of faculty (researchers) as described above	\$90,839
Hourly salary based on 1,920 annual hours (40 hours per week for 48 weeks)	\$47.31
Estimate of survey burden (researchers)	500 hours
Cost to Researcher Respondents	\$23,656

The 2013-2014 College and University Professional Association for Human Resources Salary Survey states that the average salary for university administrators, including Chief

Sponsored Research Officers. The average salary at this staff ranking is \$98,088 and is the salary used to estimate cost of burden for SPO respondents to the survey.

Cost to Respondents (SPO Staff)

Average salary of faculty (researchers) as described above	\$98,088
Hourly salary based on 1,920 annual hours (40 hours per week for 48 weeks)	\$51.09
Estimate of survey burden (researchers)	167 hours
Cost to SPO Staff Respondents	\$8,532

In total, the burden cost to the survey respondent population is estimated at \$32,188 (\$25,656 +\$8,532).

14. CAPITAL/STARTUP COSTS

Not applicable.

15. ANNUALIZED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Contractor support for survey data collection and analysis	\$7500
Hourly salary of federal government employee (GS-13-9)	\$54.58
Hours, federal government employee review and oversight	80
Cost of federal government employee review and oversight	\$4366
Cost to the Federal Government	\$11,866

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16. CHANGES IN BURDEN

Not applicable.

17. PUBLICATION OF COLLECTION

Not applicable.

18. SEEKING APPROVAL TO NOT DISPLAY OMB EXPIRATION DATE

Not applicable.

19. EXCEPTION(S) TO THE CERTIFICATION STATEMENT (19) ON OMB 83-I

There are no exceptions.

B. STATISTICAL METHODS

B.1. Universe and Sampling Procedures

Respondents will be from one of two groups and have been assigned as either a 1)researcher or 2)SPO staff person. It is estimated that more respondents will be researchers/professors from research universities, though the group also includes researchers from less traditional grant-seeking organizations, such as small for-profit businesses and informal science learning organizations like museums. For this group, potential respondents will have had experience applying for NSF funding from FY 2012 –FY2014 as either a Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator. The SPO staff group includes individuals that work in the research administration offices of universities and other institutions of higher education. For this group, respondents are limited to those with experience reviewing and submitting NSF grant applications via FastLane between FY 2010 – FY2014.____

B.2. Survey Methodology

The survey will be web-based. NSF will send the survey link out via SurveyMonkey.

B.3. Methods to Maximize Response

NSF seeks to maximize feedback from prospective respondents. Questions have been vetted internally at NSF with survey methodologists for clarity. As part of the survey launch, NSF will send an introductory email and survey link to all potential respondents. To maximize response, NSF will subsequently follow-up with potential respondents via email to encourage participation.

B.4. Testing of Procedures

This time estimate for survey completion is based on the survey length and time required to complete similar surveys in the past. In addition, NSF has tested the survey instrument internally to validate the estimate.

B.5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects of Data Collection

Erika Rissi, NSF Staff Associate, serves as the point-of-contact for data collection and analysis.