

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
HUD USER Customer Satisfaction Website Assessment Survey
 Supporting Statement for OMB Approval

Part A: Justification

A.1 Explanation of the Circumstances that Make Data Collection Necessary

Executive Orders 12862 and 13571 direct federal agencies that provide significant services directly to the public to survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services.^{1,2} The Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) thereby requests approval of surveys of users of the HUD USER Internet site, www.HUDUser.org.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 gave HUD a legislative mandate to provide for full and appropriate consideration, at the national level, of the needs and interests of the Nation's communities and of the people who live in and work in them.³ HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) embodies that mandate in its mission: "To inform policy development and implementation to improve life in American communities through conducting, supporting, and sharing research, surveys, demonstrations, program evaluations, and best practices".⁴

In fulfilling its mission, PD&R has responsibility for conducting primary research to provide the Secretary and policymakers with reliable, objective data and analysis to make informed policy decisions. PD&R's body of research includes research publications, data sets, a bibliographic database, periodicals, and newsletters. Its Internet site, www.HUDUser.org, is the principal means of disseminating housing related research, publications, and data from HUD. The website contains documents and datasets available for visitors to either download or purchase through a Webstore. In addition, eBooks are available for downloading on tablets. Between January 2013 and December 2013, the website hosted nearly 7.7 million visitors who downloaded more than 14.9 million reports, data set, and other electronic files.⁵

A customer satisfaction survey of the HUD USER website visitors was conducted in 2005. The 2005 survey measured user satisfaction with the HUD USER Internet site in order for HUD to comply with Executive Order 12862. This survey reported a high level of satisfaction with the website and was envisioned as the first in a series of surveys⁶. However, there has been no other measure of satisfaction with the website since the 2005 survey. As a result, there are no measures to determine if the enhancements made as a result of the customer feedback have improved customer satisfaction.

¹ Executive Order 12862. Web citation: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12862.pdf>

² Executive Order 13571 Web citation: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-24.pdf>

³ Public law 89-174, Section 2, September 9, 1965, 79 Statue 667. Web citation: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg667.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Mission Statement, Web citation: http://www.huduser.org/portal/about/mission_and_background.html

⁵ Webtrends report from HUD USER.

⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Assessment of the Office of Policy Development and Research Website. *Unpublished results*.

There is a clear need to measure user satisfaction with HUD User Internet site. One web survey of all site users is proposed. However, based on the type of visitor, the survey will be customized (see Appendix A). First-time visitors (as determined by their response to the first few questions) will be asked somewhat different questions than those who are frequent visitors. In addition, visitors to the Office of University Partnership pages, a relatively new section of the website, will be asked slightly different questions. The surveys will obtain both qualitative and quantitative information on HUD USER website satisfaction and usefulness, as well as any new products or services needed by the main users of the website.

Core survey questions seek to obtain numerical ratings from respondents on their satisfaction with various aspects of the product or service they obtained. For example, there will be questions on satisfaction with the usefulness of information on the site and use of the navigation tools. There are questions regarding how the website is used by the respondent and about the type of information they were looking for. All respondents will be given an opportunity to make suggestions for improvement. Questions on the respondent's demographics are included, which will enable PD&R to gain a better understanding of the audience it serves.

Responses to the survey questions will help PD&R determine which aspects of its website are in need of improvement, as well as to identify any barriers to usage and any needed site improvements. A rating system is intended to aid in identification of satisfaction in particular areas and establish a baseline for follow-up surveys.

A.2 Use of the Data

As previously discussed, the main purpose of the proposed research is to promote an Internet site that is easy to access, clear, informative, and useful. Specifically, the research will examine whether the information is presented in an appropriate format and whether it meets the needs of users of www.HUDUser.org. The research will also provide a way to characterize site visitors and better understand how to serve them. Survey results will help establish a framework for future website enhancements.

In addition to customer satisfaction, the surveys will ask respondents to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the HUD USER website. This level of detail will assist in identifying needed improvements and enhance PD&R's marketing and outreach efforts.

The respondent universe is comprised of all visitors to the website during a six to eight week period. Since an attempt will be made to obtain a census of users, inferential statistical analysis will not be needed. As such, statistical power is not germane to this project.

The survey of website visitors will be personalized, based on the user's visit (see Appendix A). The following three categories of visit types are:

1. User is a first-time visitor.
2. User is a not a first-time visitor.
3. User visits the Office of University Partnership pages.

Appendix A shows three different versions of the same core questions that will be displayed depending on the type of visitor. Visitor type will be determined based on the respondents' response to the first few questions.

Data from the website survey, based on a census of users over a six to ten week period, will be used as a source of general feedback and to identify trends. Response is voluntary, so respondents are self-selected, and it is hoped that any biases resulting from self-selection will be overridden by a large number responding. For the survey, we will tabulate and report frequency of responses.

A.3 The Extent of the Use of Technological Collection Techniques or Other Forms of Information Technology

Automated information technology will be used to collect and process data. Responses to survey instruments presented in Appendix A will be shown to website visitors. The survey will be available online for at least six weeks.

A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication

There is no duplication with other existing data collection instruments, nor is the data to be collected through the surveys available elsewhere. Currently, there is no existing quantitative research project that collects feedback from website visitors.

A.5 Collection of Information Impacts on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

There is no requirement that small businesses or other small entities respond to the proposed surveys. While individuals working in small businesses may be respondents to the survey, it would only be the result of their voluntary visit to the website. In any case, the impact on any respondent should be small due to the short length of time required to respond to the survey instrument – usually under two minutes.

A.6 Describe the Consequences to Federal Program or Policy Activities if the Collection is Not Conducted or is Conducted Less Frequently

The Government Performance Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) requires all Federal agencies to focus on results, services, and customer satisfaction.¹ If the collection is not conducted, compliance with GPRA will be diminished. Valuable information that could be used to improve the website would not be available if the surveys are not conducted.

A.7 Explain Any Special Circumstances that Would Cause Information Collection to be Conducted in a Special Manner

There are no known or anticipated special circumstances that would require data collection in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines and the Privacy Act.

A.8 Publication and Consultation

A.8.1 Required Publication in the Federal Register

Federal Register notice is not required for customer satisfaction surveys. This survey will use the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved generic clearance, "HUD Customer Surveys" (OMB No. 2535-0116) to survey customers of PD&R.

A.8.2 Consultation with Persons Outside of the Agency

Sage Computing, Inc. is currently under contract to HUD to support and maintain the HUD USER website, including all programming needed to field the surveys. This company prepared the survey instruments in accordance with industry-standard website evaluation techniques and submitted them to HUD for review and approval.

¹ Government Performance Results Act of 1993, Section 2b, (3). Web citation: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/mgmt-gpra/gplaw2m>

A.9 Payments or Gifts to Respondents

There will be no offer of payment or gifts to respondents who choose to take part in the customer satisfaction survey.

A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality

Names will not be recorded on the questionnaires, nor will personal identifying data be stored in the database. Confidentiality of responses will be maintained throughout the data collection. Any demographic information supplied by respondents will be used for analytical purposes only.

Some users will visit the website more than once during the survey period. We would like to reduce the burden placed on these respondents and show them the survey just once. "Cookies" are the normal means of achieving this goal and will be used in this survey. A cookie is a small file that a website transfers to a user's hard disk to allow the web server to record specific information about the user's session while they are visiting the website. The cookie will be retained only for the period when the survey is active, at least six weeks and not more than ten weeks. Cookies provide information that is essential for customizing the survey; i.e. for tracking a user through the website and asking survey questions pertinent to the web pages visited. All respondents will have the option of rejecting the cookie and continuing with the survey.

A link to the privacy statement will be provided to the respondent. The privacy statement will explain the use of cookies and how the data will be used (see Appendix B).

A.11 Sensitive Information

No questions of a sensitive nature will be asked of respondents.

A.12 Burden and Cost

A.12.1 Estimate of Hour Burden of Information Collection on Respondents

It is estimated that participants will require no more than an average of two minutes to complete each survey. Actual time required will vary based on participant reading speed and level. This length is based upon current estimates and will be verified by a survey pilot test. The survey will be online for a period of at least six weeks but not more than ten weeks starting October 2014.

The annual burden table below shows a total annual burden of 315 hours to participants.

Table A.12.1: Estimate of Respondent Burden

| | Website Survey |
|---|-----------------------|
| Average Number of Unique Visitors per Month | 225,186 |
| Number of Respondents | 10,500 |
| Average Time for Respondent to Complete | .03 hours (2 minutes) |
| Total Hours of Respondent Burden | 315 |

A.12.2 Approval for a Single Form

This request for OMB approval is for nearly identical data collection forms. Although there is some variation in the website survey in order to customize the questions to the user's visit, the items on the surveys basically elicit the same information.

A.12.3 Estimate of Costs to Respondents for Burden of Information Collection

There is no cost to the respondents to complete the survey.

A.13 Costs to Respondents for Record Keeping

There are no costs to the respondents for record keeping.

A.14 Annualized Costs to the Federal Government

Costs to the government include contractor time for the development of the survey instrument, data collection, and data analysis. This task is part of an existing fixed price contract to maintain the HUD USER website. There are no additional costs to the Government.

A.15 Reason for any Program Changes or Adjustments Reported in A.13 or A.14

This is a new data collection.

A.16 Analysis Plan and Time Schedule for Project

A.16.1 Analysis Plan

Analysis will focus on user satisfaction, an overall profile of users, and effectiveness of the website. Special attention will be paid to suggestions for improvement. Analysis will focus on user satisfaction by type of user and an overall profile of users.

During the field period, response rates and raw responses will be monitored to ensure achieving the desired response rate and high quality of data. After the end of the field period, collected data will be tabulated, cleaned, and prepared for analysis. The objective of the analysis is to develop recommendations that will help PD&R prioritize website enhancement and improvement efforts. The first analysis will examine frequencies of all survey question responses. This will assist in developing a profile of respondents and in obtaining a general understanding of users' attitudes toward the website, its features, and offered products and services. The second analysis will be to perform cross-tabulation of all items pertaining to satisfaction by respondent job categories, heavy and light users, and any other variables of interest. Cross-tabulation of data will provide more insight into the different groups of users and how their respective levels of satisfaction with the website varies. Lastly, open-ended responses to the "comments and suggestions" question will be read, comments will be analyzed, and categories of suggestions and comments by the users will be reported.

A.16.2 Time Schedule for Project

The schedule for major activities in this project will be as follows:

Table A.16.2: Schedule for Project

| <u>Activity</u> |
|---|
| Pretest of survey |
| Survey activated online |
| Determination as to whether or not to extend survey availability by two weeks |
| Submission of Final Report |

A.17 Seeking Approval Not to Display OMB Expiration Date

No approval is sought.

A.18 Consistency with 5 CFR 1320.6

~~The data collection will be conducted according to the guidelines specified in 5 CFR 1320.6. No special circumstances that would require inconsistency with these guidelines are known or anticipated.~~