

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Membership Application
OMB Control No. 0693-0070

A. JUSTIFICATION

This is a request to reinstate the Office of Management and Budget approval.

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

NIST has established an Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) to enable a coordinated U.S. approach to Standards for the Forensic Science Disciplines that includes broad participation from forensic science practitioners, researchers, metrologists, accreditation bodies, defense, and prosecution. To inaugurate this process, NIST plans to work with professional forensic societies, science societies, and those who applied for the National Commission on Forensic Science (NCFS) but were not selected. NIST will work with these societies to inform their members of the OSAC application (self-nomination) in order to identify those interested and qualified to contribute.

The information will assist NIST to determine who wants to serve on the OSAC, which of the thirty organizational components of the OSAC they are interested in working on, the experience that they bring to the OSAC so those selected for the OSAC will reflect a balance of perspectives. Once this call has been conducted annually, NIST will work with the Forensic Science Standards Board (the Executive Board of OSAC) to place appropriate participants into the different roles within the leadership positions of the multiple tiers of OSAC (structure chart included with this request).

It is important to note that the OSAC addresses key aspects of a Forensic Science Standards Program that have not previously existed in the United States, including:

- Five Scientific Area Committees (SACs) with an underlying structure of Subcommittees that will develop and identify appropriate standards, provide common web access to standards and best practices, and monitor for duplication and inactivity within the organization;
- Three Support Committees that will provide advice and intellectual resources to the SACs, composed of Legal Resources, Quality Infrastructure, and Human Factors Committees; and
- A Forensic Science Standards Board to resolve overarching issues and to address expectations that span all SACs.

The forensic science community has been anticipating a NIST response in this area since the signing of the MOU with DOJ in February 2013. With the inaugural meeting of the National Commission in February 2014, and the announcement of the OSAC structure, there has been 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 FY2015. NIST must be able to identify new OSAC participants to fill new positions created within OSAC and to replace positions vacated by resignation or rotation of more than 600 current members.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

Self-nominations will provide the OSAC with the information needed to identify interested and qualified respondents with the ability to participate. Now that the initial participants have been identified and appointed, the OSAC will be empowered to fill any vacancies through directed requests to meet specific balance requirements caused by resignation or rotation of appointees. NIST does not intend to disseminate the information that is collected.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

The collection will rely on a web-based application for interested participants to include pull down responses options, name/phone/address responses, and six narratives of 200 words or less. The application will be posted on the existing NIST website: <http://www.nist.gov/forensics/> and the electronic OSAC membership application form can be found at the website: <https://www.nist.gov/forensics/osac-application.cfm>

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

The only information of comparable content that NIST is aware of was gathered in a response to a Request for Information from DOJ in 2013. That request was made prior to the definition of the OSAC structure, and did not allow respondents to identify their interests within OSAC nor to apply for membership or participation.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

While this collection is not focused on small entities, we expect individuals who are part of small entities to respond. By conducting the collection via a web based tool, focusing the questions on specific interests in order to fill the positions available on the OSAC, and by limiting the length of any narrative response request, we have minimized burden on the respondents.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

Without this collection, NIST will not be able to assure the public that a balanced composition has been obtained in the formation of OSAC. The need for balance in an organization such as OSAC was a major conclusion of the National Academy of Science inquiry into forensic science in the United States. Without assurance that the OSAC has realized balance, the Federal government will not be able to make a credible response to these concerns. Furthermore, qualified applicants who are interested in membership will be denied access without the collection being conducted.

NIST has been working with OSTP and the Department of Justice to advance the state of forensic science in the U.S. With the February 3 inaugural meeting of the National Commission on Forensic Science, the next key step has been the establishment and operation of the OSAC. The OSTP interest in Forensics, combined with the keen interest from two senate committees (Leahy – Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Rockefeller – Chairman of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee) highlights the critical need to move forward with OSAC.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

No special circumstances are needed.

8. Provide information of the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

A Federal Register Notice soliciting public comments was published on August 26, 2014, Vol. 79, pages 50889-50890. No comments were received.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

There will be no payments or gifts associated with this questionnaire.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No assurance of confidentiality will be provided.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

No questions of a sensitive nature will be included.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

NIST is estimating that 1,000 respondents may participate per year. The application takes approximately 30 minutes per response for an estimated total of 500 annual burden hours.

1,000 Respondents x 30 minutes per response = **500 Burden Hours.**

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).

Not applicable.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

No cost to the Federal government.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments.

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directed requests to meet specific balance requirements caused by resignation or rotation of appointees.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

Not applicable.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

Not applicable.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

No statistical methods are employed.