



# Windwalker Corporation

## OMB Clearance Request for Contract ED-FSA-14-O-0042

### Deliverable 2.3A

#### Prepared by:

Windwalker Corporation  
1945 Old Gallows Road  
Tysons Corner, VA 22182

#### Submitted to:

Christopher T. Lemmie, Director  
& Project Manager  
FSA Business Practices  
Christopher.Lemmie@ed.gov  
202-377-3225

October 21, 2015



1945 Old Gallows Road Suite 600- Tysons Corner, VA 22182  
703-970-3500 - info@windwalker.com



---

## Table of Contents

---

Table of Contents      i

Clearance Documentation      1

    Documentation for the Generic Clearance of Customer Service Satisfaction Collections 1

## Clearance Documentation

---

### Documentation for the Generic Clearance of Customer Service Satisfaction Collections

---

**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Data Collection for PEP Phase III Reports**

SURVEY     FOCUS GROUP     SOFTWARE USABILITY TESTING

#### DESCRIPTION OF THIS SPECIFIC COLLECTION

##### BACKGROUND

Under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which covers the administration of U.S. federal student financial aid programs, Federal Student Aid (FSA) administers the following programs: Pell grants, Stafford loans, PLUS loans, and the “campus-based” programs including Federal Work Study, Perkins Loans, and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants. Federal regulation requires schools to have written policies and procedures for the administration of the Title IV student assistance programs. To ensure institutional regulatory compliance, FSA provides training and technical assistance for financial aid administrators, institutional leaders, and other institutional support staff nationwide via its Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) website and the School Experience Group (SEG). The SEG’s mission is to identify and the unique service needs of all post-secondary education institutions and provide them with tailored resources to meet those needs. Within SEG, the Minority Serving and Under Resourced Schools Division (MSURSD) is responsible for providing support, assessment, and training specifically targeted for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

MSURSD is currently working to expand the services and resources they provide, with the dual goals of increasing compliance rates and assisting institutions with improving student performance outcomes such as increased student retention and graduation rates. Over the past three years, Windwalker, who was contracted to review MSURSD’s operations and processes, provided MSURSD leadership with recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their division’s operations and processes in the form of a Performance Enhancement Pilot (PEP) program. The PEP recommendations stem from insights garnered from the operational review and business process mapping report that Windwalker finalized for MSURSD in late 2013. MSURSD leadership is currently interested in using the insights gained from PEP and expanding them to the wider SEG audience. Specifically for the current work, MSURSD is interested in gaining insight into the following:

- the challenges and strategies utilized by financial aid staff;
- the resource needs of institutions; and
- feedback on proposed MSURSD offerings.

#### INTENDED PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE COLLECTION

As was mentioned in the previous section, MSURSD has contracted Windwalker Corporation to create a PEP expansion plan to apply the lessons learned from MSI's to the wider SEG audience. Windwalker has already conducted an extensive operational review and has completed detailed maps of MSURSD's major processes. The Performance Enhancement Pilot (PEP) program was created by Windwalker and recommended strategies to enhance operations and processes. MSURSD will be expanding these previous findings to identify which practices that could stand to benefit the greater SEG community. The selected schools will be representative of the greater SEG population in terms of geographic location, enrollment demographics, resources, and institutional level.

This current phase of the research includes conducting interviews and focus groups with institutional leaders and financial aid staff from 4 institutions selected by MSURSD to participate in PEP Phase III. The focus groups and interviews will provide MSURSD with information to identify challenges, resource needs, and feedback to assess the extent to which previous PEP findings can be expanded to the wider SEG audience.

The two protocols contain between 11 and 16 items to gather the desired information. The goal of collecting data from two different audience groups is to compare the feedback collected from each group to identify if gaps in perception found at MSI's are also present at non-MSI institutions. Specifically, the interviews will ask respondents questions on the following themes:

- Campus wide strategies for communicating clearer, more explicit, and less technical communications regarding federal aid compliance;
- Techniques to expand campus-wide leadership buy-in for federal aid compliance; and
- Strategies for engaging students in the financial aid process.

The onsite qualitative data collection is a component of a larger evaluation effort to guide SEG's program development and efforts. All interview protocols are provided as appendices in this document.

## **COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

Each onsite data collection visit will entail a single Windwalker researcher experienced in qualitative data collection spending one business day at the selected institution. Two sets of interviews/focus groups will be conducted during each site visit – an interview with institutional leaders and a focus group with financial aid staff. The interviews will be entirely qualitative in nature and will be administered by one of several Windwalker researchers experienced in administering the interview/focus group protocols. It is expected that one institutional leader and up to three financial aid staff will participate in data collection efforts at each institution. The interviews will take approximately 45 minutes and the focus groups will take 90 minutes. Both interviews and focus groups will begin with the researcher explaining the purpose of the research and how the results will be used. The researcher will also ask if the interviewees agree to have the conversations recorded using a tape-recorder provided by the researcher. It will be explained to participants that the recording is for data analysis purposes only and will only be accessible to

the research team. However, the researcher will not record the session should any of the participants decline to have their comments recorded.

The interviews will include open-ended questions to identify practices that are transferable to the wider SEG audience. The interviews and focus groups will last 45 minutes and 90 minutes, respectively, and will contain between 11 and 16 questions, depending upon which group is participating. Protocols will include both the interview questions and a series of prompts to act as guides for researchers to gather data from respondents who are having difficulty answering the question as intended.

MSURSD will provide the list of institutions that they want to participate in PEP Phase III to Windwalker. This list will contain the contact information for each designated point of contact with whom Windwalker should coordinate the visits, as well as the contact information for institutional leaders and the financial aid staff who will participate in the interviews and focus groups. Once the list is provided to Windwalker, the Windwalker task lead will contact the point of contact to coordinate a time when the Windwalker researcher can come to the institution to conduct the interviews. Windwalker will work with the point of contact at each institution to schedule the individual interviews and focus groups with the relevant participants.

Upon completing all data collection activities at each institution, the Windwalker researcher will review his or her notes and listen to the recorded session, as available. At this time, the researcher will synthesize all of the themes that emerged from the interviews and focus groups and identify areas where the previous findings can be extended to the wider SEG audience. These qualitative findings will be added to each school's reported quantitative data, which will look at each individual school's performance across a variety of outcome performance measures. Greater detail on how these results will be used is provided in the "Planned Use of Data" section below.

## **DATES, LOCATIONS, AND PARTICIPANTS**

The proposed timeframe for site visits and data collection is approximately November 9<sup>th</sup> to November 20<sup>th</sup> to accommodate the delivery of the draft reports to MSURSD leadership by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. One Windwalker researcher will conduct the interviews for a given site over the course of one business day. No payments, stipends, or incentives are proposed. Windwalker will conduct two separate interviews and/or focus groups: an interview with institutional leaders and a focus group of institutional financial aid staff from the institution. In total, a population of 16 leaders and financial aid staff will participate in the data collection efforts across the 4 schools participating in the PEP Phase III. This timeline meets the contractual requirement that the interviews be conducted and will occur after OMB clearance is obtained. The interview/focus group instruments have also been shared with MSURSD leadership for approval, and final approval from them has already been granted.

## **PLANNED USE OF DATA**

As was mentioned in the "Collection Procedures" section, the data collected from these efforts will be used to identify opportunities for MSURSD to take previous PEP findings and apply them to the larger SEG audience. As was also mentioned earlier, these findings will be presented

in an institution-specific report that couples the findings from the onsite data collection efforts with quantitative data. The data will assess each institution's performance across a variety of quantitative outcome metrics, including past compliance, student retention and default rate, which will be gathered through the analysis of secondary data collected by the US federal government, such as from IPEDS. The first draft of the report is due to MSURSD leadership by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The goal of this report is to identify findings that transfer to non-MSI institutions.

#### **AMOUNT OF ANY PROPOSED STIPEND OR INCENTIVE**

Not applicable.

**BURDEN HOUR COMPUTATION** (*Number of responses (X) estimated response or participation time in minutes (/60) = annual burden hours*):

<b>Category of Respondent</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Participation Time</b>	<b>Burden</b>
Presidents/CEOs	4	45 minutes	3 hours
Financial aid staff	12	90 minutes	18 hours
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>21 hours</b>

#### **STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

We expect a 100% response rate in terms of institutional leaders and financial aid staff participating in interviews and focus groups. Given that all data gathered from these data collection efforts will be qualitative, minimal statistical analysis will be conducted. Frequencies of themes that emerged may be presented, but the vast majority of the findings from these data collection efforts will communicate broad qualitative themes rather than present quantifiable results.

**REQUESTED APPROVAL DATE:** November 3, 2015

**NAME OF CONTACT PERSON:** Chris Lemmie

**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** (202) 377-3225

**MAILING LOCATION:** 830 First St. N.E., Washington, DC 20202

**ED DEPARTMENT, OFFICE, DIVISION, BRANCH:** Chief Customer Experience Office, Office of Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education