

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

- 1. Provide a numerical estimate of the potential respondent universe and describe any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., households or persons) in the universe and the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular format for the universe as a whole and for each strata. Indicate expected response rates. If this has been conducted previously include actual response rates achieved.**

The respective target population for this survey is:

- **Survey of Satisfaction with the Board of Veterans' Appeals Appellant Experience:** Veterans and other appellants who have been issued a Board decision on an appeal.

The universe of respondents for the survey and the sampling plan that will be employed to achieve a representative sample for each survey is outlined below.

The targeted population of the Board Appellant Satisfaction Research Study will be those appellants who received a Board decision on their appeal during the fielding period. In FY 2016 the Board issued 45,830 decisions. Each month, the Board will provide names and telephone numbers of appellants who have been issued a Board decision in the prior month. The Contractor will age all sample records by three weeks to ensure potential respondents have had time to receive their decision. Interviewing will be conducted continuously and reported to the Board quarterly.

Table 5 displays the estimated number of appellants to be surveyed, the expected response rate, and the expected yield of completed appellant surveys based on FY 2016 sampling/results. Assuming a 90% incidence and a 30% cooperation rate, VA anticipates a response rate of 20%.

TABLE 5: APPELLANT SATISFACTION SURVEY, EXPECTED RESPONSE RATE AND SURVEY YIELD		
Number of Appellants	Expected Response Rate	Completed Surveys Expected
45,830	20%	9,753 (telephone)
6,166	26%	1,595 (eSurvey)

NOTES:
Expected response rates are based on records available after sample cleaning
Number of appellants (eSurvey) are only those telephone respondents who provide an email address

- 2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information, including:**
 - **Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection**
 - **Estimation procedure**
 - **Degree of accuracy needed**
 - **Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures**
 - **Any use of less frequent than annual data collection to reduce burden**

The Appellant Satisfaction Research Study will entail simple random sampling of all appellants who have received decisions from the Board during eligible fielding period. The Board is using a 95% confidence interval for categorical variables for the survey. There are no unusual procedures that will be required in order to draw a representative sample meeting these criteria.

3. Describe methods to maximize response rate and to deal with issues of non-response.

The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield “reliable” data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

The Board will obtain the services of a Contractor to develop, administer, and analyze this survey.

Strategies to Maximize Response Rates

The Board will employ a variety of methods to minimize respondent burden and to maximize survey response rates. This section identified the strategies to be employed to reach these objectives. Each strategy is outlined below.

- Strategy # 1 to Maximize Response Rates: Using Phone and Web Technology for Ease of Contact and Response

The Contractor will reach out to appellants via telephone. A maximum of 7 attempts will be made on every phone number until the requisite number of surveys has been completed. Attempts will be made during different parts of the day so as to reach the maximum number of appellants. Phone calls for the phone interviews will be made between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Saturdays (no phone calls on Sunday) and between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. on weekdays in the potential respondent’s local time zone. Phone calls will not be made on designated holidays.

Appellants who agree and have an email address will receive an email invitation requesting them to participate in the research. This email invitation will include a URL and password. The sample will be de-duplicated and appellants that appear in the sample list multiple times will only receive one invitation to take the survey. The web address that the surveys will be posted on will be included in all of the email notifications. The online survey technology will incorporate several features to maximize response rates and respondent usability. These include a password system, which prevents any one person from completing more than one survey and allows respondents to begin the survey then come back at a later point to finish it.

Both the phone and web-based surveys will be developed with the end user in mind; a user-friendly form will help maximize response rates.

- Strategy # 2 to Maximize Response Rates: Maintaining a Toll-Free Survey Hotline

During the period that the survey is in the field, the Contractor will provide and maintain a toll-free telephone line to answer any questions respondents and regional office points of contact may have about the survey (e.g., how to interpret questions and response items, the

purpose of the survey, how to get another survey if their copy has been lost/damaged). Project staff will be available to answer telephone calls during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET). A voice messaging system will be available to receive messages after regular business hours so after-hours calls can be responded to within 24 hours.

- Strategy # 3 to Maximize Response Rates: Excluding Questions of a “Sensitive” Nature

None of the questions included in the survey are sensitive, or private in nature, which will encourage compliance.

- Strategy # 4 to Maximize Response Rates: Assuring and Maintaining Privacy, to the Extent Permitted by Law

Survey respondents will be assured that their personal anonymity will be maintained. Upon completion of the field period, the contractor will undertake to destroy any customer information that it has in its possession, in order to ensure that all customer information is kept private to the extent of the law.

- Strategy # 5 to Maximize Response Rates: Secure Networks and Systems

The Contractor will have a secure network infrastructure that will protect the integrity of the databases, the survey application, and all associated server resources. The servers must be protected by a strong firewall system and the operations center must be in a secure temperature-controlled environment with video surveillance, where network services are continually monitored by automated real-time programs to ensure the integrity and availability of all critical components. All key servers will be supported by a backup power supply that can continue to run the systems in the event of a power outage. Additionally, the Contractor must be immediately alerted if critical monitor thresholds are exceeded, so that they can proactively respond before outages occur.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions of 10 or more individuals.

No testing is required.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

For this survey, the Board contracted the services of J.D. Power and Associates to administer the survey. The following is a list of the persons involved in the survey.

- Mr. Greg Truex, MPP, J.D. Power and Associates, 805-418-8078
- Mrs. Tara Porter, J.D. Power and Associates, 202-422-2784