

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 24, 2017

To: Margo Schwab, Desk Officer
Office of Management and Budget

From: John R. Gawalt, Division Director
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics
National Science Foundation

Via: Suzanne Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer
National Science Foundation

Subject: Request for approval to add a question to the Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities (OMB number 3145-0101)

The National Science Foundation's National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) requests approval to add one question to the FY 2017 Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities, in addition to several non-substantive changes. The questionnaire modifications are based on the results of the cognitive testing that was carried out under the generic clearance of survey improvement projects (OMB number 3145-0174) and approved by OMB on April 24, 2017.

NCSES proposes the addition of one question and the modification of wording to three questions. The added question on shared research space will further inform relevant audiences on the usage and management of research space. The testing results identified improved question wording to increase consistency of item interpretation among respondents and reduce inadvertent reporting of new construction projects on successive survey cycles. The changes to survey guidance are expected to improve data quality.

NCSES conducted 17 cognitive interviews with survey respondents during June and July, 2017. These interviews clarified the impact of the additional question and the minor changes to question guidance that stemmed from 32 interviews and site visits conducted from November 2014 to March 2015.

Page 1 of the attached questionnaire notifies respondents of the changes. Additional details are provided below.

Substantive Change

The only major substantive change is the addition of question 6, which asks respondents to provide more information on the research space identified in question 2. Question 2 collects the total amount of research space by science and engineering (S&E) field. Respondents are

asked to prorate their research space if it is shared by S&E field or by purpose (teaching vs. research).

NCSES would also like to understand the how the research space is shared among S&E fields or by purpose. This information would shed light on resource allocation, usability, and the variability of sharing by institutions. Sharing might be more prevalent at different types of institutions (e.g., public/private, high/low research output). During the most recent interviews, several institutions indicated they absolutely do not share research space and they would be surprised if others did. Other institutions noted they are required to share space due to limited resources. These diametric views indicate some institutions aren't aware of how others manage research space. Most of the recent interviewees thought additional information regarding shared research space would be useful.

Question 6 asks respondents to indicate through yes/no checkboxes whether any research space reported in question 2 was shared with another S&E field or used for purposes other than research (e.g., instruction). NSF estimates that the survey burden will be increased by less than 30 minutes for any institution with shared space.

Non-Substantive Changes

There are limited non-substantive changes to the questionnaire. These changes to the question guidance simply clarify the intent of the questions, not their substance, as confirmed through the cognitive interviews. Guidance on questions 10 and 14 was updated to further clarify the "project start date" for new construction projects. This will help ensure that projects aren't reported in successive surveys.

The definition of "research" was updated on survey page 2 to better align it with the Higher Education R&D survey. This definition mirrors the one provided in the Frascati Manual 2015, an international document published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that provides guidelines for collecting and reporting data on R&D.

The disciplines of "Fishing and fisheries sciences and management" and "Forestry" have been moved from the S&E field of "Agricultural sciences" to "Natural resources and conservation" to better coordinate field totals in national academic surveys.

Burden

Based on estimates from the cognitive interviews with respondents regarding the changes, NCSES expects a small increase to the burden. The estimated changes should increase the burden by less than 30 minutes per respondent for the FY 2017 survey, for a total increase of 294 hours. Because this increase in average burden is estimated to be less than one hour, the current burden estimate of 19 hours listed on the questionnaire will be retained. Total burden hours were estimated to be 11,172 for FY 2015 based on 588 responses as confirmed by the

OMB notice dated 08/11/2015. Total burden hours for the FY 2017 Facilities Survey are estimated to be 11,466 based on 588 participants.

Contact Information

The contact persons for questions regarding this research are:

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Attachments

FY 2017 Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities questionnaire