

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**International Trade Administration**  
**Survey of International Air Travelers**  
**OMB CONTROL NO. 0625-0227**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

This supporting statement is to request an extension/revision of OMB Control No. 0625-0227.

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

The National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC), International Trade Administration (ITA), Industry and Analysis Sector. NTTO's efforts support the goals, mandates and mission of DOC (Strategic Plan "America is Open for Business") making the *Survey of International Air Travelers* (SIAT) research program collection necessary.

The collection enables NTTO to identify and analyze international travel trends, for both government internal or external planning purposes. NTTO continues to actively provide leadership in international travel and tourism development activities by other public and private organizations of the U.S. travel industry. The data generated by this survey program, which has a high degree of reliability, validity, accuracy and precision, is required to facilitate and guide the development of the international travel market for the United States.

The data from the SIAT program supports the purpose and mission of the International Trade Administration (ITA). ITA's mission is: "To strengthen the competitiveness of U.S. industry, promote trade and investment, and ensures fair trade through the rigorous enforcement of U.S. trade laws and agreements." This mission is girded by an overarching vision: "ITA works to improve the global business environment and helps U.S. organizations compete at home and abroad.

It also supports the National Travel & Tourism Strategy released in May 2012. The results of the SIAT data will be used to achieve the Strategies goal of "Conducting Research and measuring results. The SIAT will be used to provide some of the performance metrics and accountability measures that will be used to ensure continual progress on the important goals and strategies outlined in this National Strategy, including the goal to reach 100 million visitors from 2021

The **SIAT is a key data source**, and an ITA organization priority whereby NTTO can:

- Be in accord with the 2012 National Travel & Tourism Strategy;
- Comply with mandated provisions of the Travel Promotion Act of 2009;
- Lead strong industry relations through the Travel & Tourism Advisory Board;
  
- Lead a strong promotional platform through the Corporation for Travel Promotion;
- Lead strong interagency work with the Tourism Policy Council;

- Promote a strong cross-team environment with the U.S. Commercial Service (Global Markets) Travel and Tourism Team;
- Define emerging travel and tourism markets; and
- Collaborate with ITA/Industry and Analysis staff.

In 2016, U.S. travel and tourism-related exports totaled \$244.7 billion, positioning travel and tourism as the single largest services export for the United States. Moreover, U.S. travel and tourism exports now account for 33 percent of all U.S. services exports and 11 percent of all U.S. exports, goods and services alike. In fact, the United States has enjoyed a travel and tourism trade surplus for twenty-five consecutive years, a trade surplus that increased appreciably last year to \$83.9 billion, the largest trade surplus ever recorded.

The 2012 revised SIAT questionnaire reflects changes in various questions relating to trip purpose; payment methods; booking/information sources; additional package components, health care/vaccinations/travel insurance information; additional transportation used responses; assessment of the visitor's experience; intentions for further travel to the United States; and ethnicity/race. Survey questions eliminated from the former SIAT questionnaire related to a traveler's general impression of their airline carrier, flight connections, several airline rating attributes, baggage delivery wait time; selected activities, number of trips in the last five years, and whether they had personal safety concerns. The changes made to the questionnaire were made in consultation with the government and travel industry users.

<http://travel.trade.gov/tinews/archive/tinews2011/20110613.html>

### **The Survey of International Air Travelers (SIAT) Research Program Supports U.S. Travel and Tourism Marketing Campaigns and Policy Initiatives**

The SIAT contributes significantly to promotional and policy initiatives:

- (1) Provides the source data to comply with the **U.S. Travel Promotion Act of 2009** (Pub. L. 111-145). The Travel Promotion Act of 2009 mandates (a) **expanding the number of inbound air travelers sampled by the Commerce Department's Survey of International Air Travelers to reach a one percent sample size**; (b) revising the design and format of SIAT questionnaires to accommodate a new survey instrument; (c) improving response rates to at least double the number of states and cities with reliable international visitor estimates; and (d) improving market coverage (currently survey approximately 0.2 percent of international travelers).

[http://travel.trade.gov/about/Travel\\_Promotion\\_Act.html](http://travel.trade.gov/about/Travel_Promotion_Act.html)

- (2) Provides the source data to analyze and report information to the **Corporation for Travel Promotion (CTP)/Brand USA, Inc.**

<http://www.thebrandusa.com>

- (3) Provides the source data to support the **National Export Initiative (NEI)-NEXT** to double U.S. exports. The NEI mandates the Commerce Department to assist U.S.

businesses in improving their competitiveness and effectiveness in the international travel market.

<http://trade.gov/neinext/>

- (4) Complies with the 1945, 1961, 1981 and 1996 travel and tourism related acts to collect and publish comprehensive international travel and tourism statistics and other marketing information. The **Bretton Woods Agreements Act of 1945** requires the Commerce Department to provide export/import and Gross Product data for the United States. The **National Tourism Organization Act of 1996** requires the U.S. Commerce Department to collect and publish comprehensive international travel and tourism statistics and other marketing information.

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ288/pdf/PLAW-104publ288.pdf>

- (5) Congressional appropriations funded two international marketing campaigns, promoting the U.S. as a destination in the United Kingdom and Japan.

[http://travel.trade.gov/about/us\\_promo\\_campaign/index.html](http://travel.trade.gov/about/us_promo_campaign/index.html)

- (6) A. The U.S. DOC signed a memorandum of understanding with the government of the People's Republic of China on December 11, 2007

<http://travel.trade.gov/pdf/MOU.pdf>

- B. Extension of Visa Validity United States – China on November 10, 2014

<http://travel.trade.gov/tinews/archive/tinews2014/20141110.html>

**Interagency agreement with BEA.** The SIAT research program has been the sole source of travel and passenger fare export and import data used by the DOC's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) to estimate the travel balance of trade and to configure the travel and tourism satellite accounts.

The SIAT is this country's performance measure for international travel and passenger fare exports and imports, nationally and by country. NTTO provides the BEA data on exports and imports for this country, and focuses on international travel's contribution to the economy. To track U.S. economic performance and competitiveness, this country will require the continuation of the SIAT.

In 2011, BEA obtained approval to require credit card companies to provide their international transactions data (BE-150). BEA intended to use these data to strengthen the travel and passenger fare export and import data. While this may have provided stronger estimates for travelers who use credit cards, NTTO is unsure how BEA would handle the cash spent by international travelers in the United States and the cash spent by U.S. travelers going abroad. After a trial period, BEA decided in 2014 to forgo substituting the BE-150 for SIAT data and have re-engaged with NTTO to use SIAT data.

**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.**

The collected information is used by numerous public (including governments) and private stakeholders. The SIAT data are collected monthly to properly reflect seasonality of travel, however the processed data are consolidated into quarterly and annually reports. Both data tables (containing details) and aggregate level data are used continuously either from the digital (excel), printed guides and/or the NTTO website. The metrics provide stakeholders with performance data on international (overseas and Mexican) travelers to and from the U.S. including, true origin-destination, traveler characteristics, trip planning, demographics and spending data.

**NTTO usage of SIAT Data:**

NTTO management uses SIAT data to prepare scheduled and ad hoc briefings for the Secretary of Commerce, the Under Secretary (ITA), the Assistant Secretary (I&A) and members of the Travel & Tourism Advisory Board. Many of the briefings are in preparation for Congressional committee meetings and inquiries from the Congressional Budget Office.

Examples of SIAT data can be seen, printed and downloaded from the NTTO web site <http://travel.trade.gov/>. Examples of SIAT data on the web can be found in the “Latest Inbound and Outbound Statistics” areas, and in the “Research Programs” icon. For a program description, link to: <http://travel.trade.gov/research/programs/ifs/index.html>

The SIAT is the largest research program for NTTO and the data obtained serves as a cornerstone for many other reports and programs. NTTO issues quarterly and annual summary reports on **Overseas (non-resident) Travelers to the United States, U.S. Residents to Overseas Destinations, and U.S. Air Travel to Mexico.**

**SIAT (non-resident) inbound** statistics (2016) are also used to create a market profile of overseas visitors, five sector profiles on lodging, car rental, business, leisure and cultural heritage, nine regions of origin profiles and 24 non-resident inbound country reports. The regional profiles are for Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, the Middle East, Oceania, South America and Overseas. The 22 country reports are for Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Columbia, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico (air), the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. NTTO also produces a report on the **Top Cities, Top States and Regions for Overseas Travelers to the United States.** Which currently reports over 20 states/territory estimates and over 20 city visitation estimates. The TPA calls for a doubling of the destinations visited and to expand market coverage beyond the 20 plus countries provided.

**SIAT (U.S. Resident) Outbound** statistics are used to create regional profiles for U.S. travel to Europe and Asia and top countries. Also, an annual analysis of outbound travel is produced.

‘Customized’ reports on both inbound and outbound data are developed for and subscribed to by the public and used by destination management organizations (convention and visitors’ bureaus and state tourism offices) to assist in increasing non-resident visitation to the United States. ‘Customized’ reports are also sold to U.S. airports, airlines, regional travel associations, hotel companies, consultants, advertising firms, universities, foreign national tourism offices, and other travel related businesses. These reports are available in a print and/or Excel format.

Data from SIAT reports and the SIAT database are also used for the **Outlook for International Travel to and from the United States** and the **Impact of International Visitor Spending on State Economies**, NTTO research reports and/or programs. The Impact study was published by the private sector (U.S. Travel Association) and it detailed the annual distribution and economic impact (employment, payroll, business receipts, and tax revenues) of spending by foreign visitors. But, U.S. Travel no longer develops the report, detailing the international impact at the state level. When it was issued, it also provided national, regional and state totals for each of the categories listed above. Finally, it provided information on the different types of expenditures that were incurred by international travelers by industry sectors in the country and regions of the country. This report was the only comparable source of information for the states with this type of data. This may be one of the reasons the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 requires that the U.S. Department of Commerce develop “estimates of international travel exports (expenditures) on a State-by-State basis to enable each State to compare its comparative position to national totals and other States.”

SIAT program data are used for NTTO presentations and informational materials distributed to states, cities, travel industry association meetings and travel trade shows, for example, the U.S. Travel Association IPW (formerly known as ‘POW WOW’) trade show, the Marketing Outlook Forum, and La Cita Latin travel trade show. SIAT data is also used at numerous trade shows supported by Department of Commerce Travel & Tourism Team (Team) members in the United States and in 80 posts around the world. The Team uses the SIAT data to deliver presentations at trade shows and to provide market intelligence to their clients. Reports from travel and tourism industry sector analyses or the industry market insights source the SIAT data. NTTO provides very detailed characteristics of international travelers to the industry in these and other presentations.

NTTO also responds to industry requests for research information by attending specific industry group meetings (i.e., National Tour Association and the American Hotel & Motel Association, etc.) and regional or state/city marketing conferences, U.S. Governors’ Conferences and seminars. NTTO provides the survey research data to the attendees through presentations and handout materials. These materials detail the international travelers’ characteristics specific to their USA travel industry, region or area. Over 50 major presentations were delivered in FY2015-2016 including Africa Tourism, American Indian Conference, Boyd Aviation Conference, Visit USA committees, Go West Summit, Shop America, World Travel Monitor Forum, Governors’ Conferences, the Travel and Tourism Research Association and to the Air Transport Association.

In 2017 NTTO delivered an overview presentation of the SIAT to the full board of the Travel & Tourism Advisory Board (TT&B). This included one-on-one meetings with airline industry representatives (United Airlines and JetBlue) to the TT&B.

SIAT is the sole source of information available to provide comparable estimates of overseas and Mexican air travel to U.S. destinations (states/territories and cities). See NTTO's website for 24 states/territories and 25 cities estimates at:

[https://travel.trade.gov/outreachpages/download\\_data\\_table/2016%20Excel%20PDF%20Top%20States.pdf](https://travel.trade.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/2016%20Excel%20PDF%20Top%20States.pdf)

[https://travel.trade.gov/outreachpages/download\\_data\\_table/Top%20Cities%202016.pdf](https://travel.trade.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/Top%20Cities%202016.pdf)

Following is a list of entities (e.g., Federal agencies and travel industry groups) other than Commerce that 'routinely' utilize SIAT data:

#### Federal Agencies

- White House
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Department of Transportation (FAA, Office of International Aviation, Scenic Byways Program)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- U.S. Department of Interior: U.S. National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and Fish & Wildlife Service
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

#### Travel Industry Groups

- Participating Airlines
- Airport Authorities
- Convention and Visitors Bureaus
- State Tourism Offices
- Regional Tourism Groups

#### Other Public and Private Sector Users

- Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME's)
- Large Corporations (Aircraft Manufacturers and Credit Card Companies)

An analysis of subscribers to the SIAT reports, or those accessing NTTO's website was developed for this clearance package. The major users of the research data are: regional, state and city tourism agencies, consulting firms/advertising firms, magazines, trade associations, attractions, communication companies, foreign national tourism offices, travel cards/credit card companies, travel agents and tour operators.

Another example of an important user of SIAT data is the University Health System Consortium (UHC), a recent Cooperator Project (receiving funds from Market Development Cooperator Program (MCDP) that created a forum for international patient programs, UHC purchased SIAT data on the demographics of U.S. inbound and outbound travelers. With SIAT statistics, UHC can better market their health care services and successfully develop markets in the European

Union, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan and Latin America.

Note: the MDCP is currently inactive due to lack of funding

<https://www.trade.gov/mdcp/contact.asp>

The NTTO Survey of International Air Travelers (SIAT) has also been used by travel and tourism firms that have obtained Market Development Cooperator Program awards. Recently, the Capital Region USA is using the NTTO data to support its efforts in its MDCP, as well as the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA <https://www.aianta.org/>) use of the Survey data to support its inbound tourism. Other past MDCP award winners have also used the data.

SIAT information will be published as it is determined data processing has followed the applicable Information Quality Guidelines. Reference current SIAT contract section 2.0.b 'Quality Assurance and Control', the contractor has developed a system to 1) determine that survey targets are properly selected given the sampling universe, 2) track survey collections, 3) enhance data entry measures, and 4) ensure that responses properly reflect the regional travel populations.

**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.**

Presently, the SIAT is only in paper form. However, several attempts have been made to test the SIAT in a digital or electronic form.

**E-Survey Pilot Tests:** NTTO and its contractor (CIC Research, Inc.) have tested three different electronic approaches to the Survey with the intent of replacing the paper-based system when appropriate. In 2008 the test was conducted during the booking process. In 2012 the test was done pre-departure as it was in 2014.

- **2008:** Several airlines and industry booking engines (Global Distribution Systems) participated. The e-Survey was divided into pre-trip and post-trip sections. After the booking of an international flight itinerary the booking engine or airline.com offered a 'pop-up' to the booker inquiring if he/she would like to complete the pre-trip portion. Upon completion of the pre-trip the booker was invited to participate in the post-trip section of the questionnaire after the trip was complete. The results were less than stellar. (results available).
- **2012:** NTTO/CIC partnered with Lufthansa Airlines on 13 of their flights departing from Dulles (IAD), Orlando (MCO) and San Francisco (SFO) during early August. An invitation card, containing a URL, was handed out to passengers in the boarding area and the lounge (IAD). Respondents were asked to access the URL (directing them to the e-version of the questionnaire in English or German) either during pre-departure, or while on-board the flight, or once having arrived at their destination. Respondents could use their personal electronic devices (PED). The results, while modest, do indicate this path is feasible and warrants further study as Wi-Fi technology improves. (results available)
- **2014:** NTTO/CIC partnered with JetBlue Airlines and several other international carriers at New York JFK Airport in October. As with the 2012 test an invitation card, containing a URL, was

handed out to passengers in the boarding area. Respondents were asked to access the URL (directing them to the e-version of the questionnaire in English, German, French and Spanish) either during pre-departure, or while on-board the flight, or once having arrived at their destination. Respondents could use their personal electronic devices (PED). These data indicate that the number of responses were lower than in 2012. (results available)

- **2015:** Passenger respondents were asked to use hand-held tablets (android). This e-test was administered at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Test results yielded approximately eight (8) completed responses per flight compared to the current, paper-based method, which produced 14 surveys per flight. The results do not warrant the immediate adoption of the tablet methodology as a replacement for the current approach. However, the results were positive enough to warrant additional testing of this method. The major caveats are that the tablet approach requires more field service interaction than the legacy (paper) method and appears to increase passenger response time. (results available)

Although the current Survey questionnaire is paper-based, NTTO encourages its contractor to provide proven innovative solutions regarding the distribution and collection process by proposing state-of-the-art technological improvements to include, but not limited to, scan technologies, use of on-board entertainment systems, internet connections to personal display devices, and/or other electronic collection mechanisms.

One of the optional line items in the SIAT contract directs the contractor to identify and test new methodologies and innovative solutions. Specifically, the contractor is asked to research new methodologies for a feasible system to replace the existing SIAT paper and pencil data collection methodology. The goal is for the contractor to propose survey methodologies that will be technically feasible and cost efficient and would collect more responses with greater coverage of global origin markets and destinations. The proposed data collection method should result in respondent data that will be of better quality, increased quantity than the existing SIAT and at a lower per unit cost. To date, all tests conducted have not reduced the cost per complete. The paper survey method still collects more surveys per attempt than any of the electronic tests. Therefore, we are using the most efficient method available.

NTTO and CIC Research, Inc. are planning to fund another ‘e-tests’ during 2018.

Note: The Travel & Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB), Data and Research Subcommittee, has recommended that NTTO review and assess different methodologies for data collection. See section 8.

#### **4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.**

NTTO reviewed the components of many private sector and U.S. Government data sources that were closely related to the SIAT program as part of our dialogue with the **Corporation for Travel Promotion (CTP)/Brand USA, Inc.** and **NYC & Company**, a private non-profit corporation that is the official tourism marketing organization for New York City. It was found there would be no duplication of NTTO efforts and all data sources were found to be deficient for NTTO needs because of their limited scope.



Although other travel surveys have similar basic questions about the traveler (e.g., age, gender, purpose of trip), there is no existing national survey that gathers the same information in terms of content, scope, and duration. We, and other industry users, have found this to be the case with credit card systems (Visa's 'VisaVue', which is limited to details of spending.)

NTTO and other government agencies, party to the **Tourism Policy Council (TPC)**, have conducted an inventory of all federal agency data collection efforts. No duplication or redundancies were noted. The TTAB and TPC are tasked with determining how the federal travel and tourism data collection programs can be melded or integrated into a useful vehicle. This inventory is available upon request.

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

This collection does not involve small businesses or entities as respondents.

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

We would be in violation of the Travel Promotion Act and:

- (1) NTTO will not have consistent reportable data for historical value and performance measures at a time when the travel and tourism industry has been identified as one of the top industries expected to successfully deliver on the President's National Export Initiative.
- (2) NTTO will not have the capability to support the National Economic Council and the Jobs Council which have both focused on travel and tourism as a key instrument for economic recovery and an employment generator, for which the export value will contribute significantly.
- (3) The Corporation for Travel Promotion (CTP) d/b/a Brand USA, Inc.), established by the Travel Promotion Act, continuously develops their international travel promotion and marketing campaigns to stimulate this top services export. The Corporation is recognizing the value of the SIAT resource and the accompanying statistical system elements to guide their strategic direction and to measure their performance once their efforts are launched.

- (4) The SIAT data is used in the ongoing production of the Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts (TTSA) for which we pay \$300,000 a year for BEA to produce. The government and industry rely upon the TTSA as the only measure of employment generated by travel and tourism exports, which are crucial to the President's National Export Initiative.
- (5) The discontinuance of the SIAT collection would seriously impede BEA's effort to estimate international travel and tourism services (Exports, Imports, Balance of Trade, as mandated by Congress). Visitor spending in the U.S. and various countries, and spending on air fares are estimated. As reported earlier, BEA recently decided to re-engage usage of SIAT data after 1) their trial with credit card data and 2) their independent evaluation of the SIAT program.

If the SIAT were collected less frequently NTTO would be out of compliance with the Travel Promotion Act which requires an increase in collections. Also,

- (1) Collection of the SIAT data on a less frequent basis (less than monthly) would impede the purpose and reliability of the statistics generated from this program.
- (2) There are significant seasonality differences in the characteristics of international travelers. Like all travel, certain areas are more popular during different times of the year. There are also significant variances among the different countries that make up the international travel market. To maintain a representative sample of all overseas and Mexican travelers, the current collection process must be maintained.

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

The SIAT collection will be conducted monthly to allow NTTO to meet the needs of other federal agencies and public stakeholders.

**8. Provide a copy 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.**

The 60 day Federal Register Notice was published on February 15, 2018 (Vol. 83, No. 32, Pages 6839-40, FR doc 2018-03132).

In response, one comment was received from Jean Public, an e-mail dated Thursday, February 15, 2018 at 4:21:39 pm. (e-mail address: [jeanpublic1@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanpublic1@yahoo.com)).

Jean Public informed NTTTO the following: “general taxpayers of this country should not be gouged so that the travel industry can ask them to assume costs which should legitimately be borne by the travel industry itself. because they secured an insider position, this industry thinks they can put all the costs of their business on taxpayers. that is wrong. that is gross. that needs to be changed. We have no need of who is travelling for international flights. we can get accurate information on flights by just asking the airlines. this is not a necessary survey in any sense of the world. It should be shut down. this agency wants to spend on our tax dollars and put us through hell to provide them for their profiteers. This is gross. Shut down this spending. budget to zero. This comment is for the public record. Please receipt.”

On Friday, February 16, 2018 at 9:20 am, NTTTO reached out to Jean Public by e-mail and acknowledged receipt of the February 15<sup>th</sup> e-mail.

#### Persons Consulted Outside this Agency:

NTTTO Staff consults with U.S. industry to assess the impact of proposed domestic and international regulatory policies that affect U.S. industry’s competitiveness and the expansion of U.S. exports.

NTTTO, through its presentations at conferences and industry meetings, regularly discusses the SIAT. Continuous efforts have been made by the staff to improve this program. Input from the private sector is constantly sought. Examples to consult outside this office include the following:

#### **Request for Information (RFI) issued on November 21, 2017**

<https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&tab=core&id=d1f4b2aa7d845011280f40838359f2ea>

This RFI offers the opportunity for interested individuals and organizations to identify actions that have the potential to accelerate the development, rigorous evaluation, and widespread adoption of high-impact survey technologies.

The focus of this RFI is on determining the best approach for survey design, development, deployment, data collection, processing, and dissemination. Results of the RFI will enable improvements in reliability and an increase in cost efficiency to improve or replace the SIAT, including improved data on expenditures and travel characteristics on overseas and Mexico (air) travelers traveling to and from the United States (current trip).

The results of this RFI will help NTTTO determine how many sources are interested, the level of experience and qualifications, and whether this procurement is suitable as a small business set-aside. Results will help improve the quality of data on international travel to and from the United

States used by the government and industry. And will be used to inform the next request for proposals for the SIAT program.

Eight vendors responded to the RFI by December 7, 2017. Seven of these vendors participated in a 'Vendor Day' conference call on February 7, 2018. The seven also requested one-on-one 'breakout sessions' conducted from February 8 through February 16. A second follow-up was conducted in February and an additional is scheduled for two vendors in April 2018.

The results of this RFI will be updated periodically. Salient and appropriate processes will be incorporated into the statement of work requirements for the next SIAT contract. A request for proposals will be issued circa April 2019.

An anthology of previous discussions germane to SIAT methodology:

**U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported on July 18, 2013:**

“The Research Branch continued its assessment into the validity and quality of survey responses in the SIAT (Survey of International Air Travelers) related to air traveler average expenditures to improve estimates of receipts (exports) and payments (imports) for total international travel and for expenditures due to travel (tourism, business). This stage of analysis focused on comparing the SIAT data to comparable partner country data over time.” Based on four countries (United Kingdom, Italy, Australia, and New Zealand) the **conclusions** are:

“This detailed comparison of the average expenditure data from the SIAT with comparable average expenditure data from four partner countries generally reflects positively on the results of the SIAT. SIAT and partner country air traveler average expenditures generally follow the same long-run patterns, for both tourism and business travel. At shorter time intervals, the correlation is better for some countries, and purposes of travel, than for others, but is reasonably good overall. Moreover, the volatility of the average expenditure from the SIAT is comparable to that of the partner countries. These consistencies are observed even though the sample size, in percentage terms, for the SIAT is smaller than those of the other countries. These consistencies are observed even though respondents to the U.S. export questions on the SIAT must forecast their expenditures, whereas partner country surveys are based on respondents' recall of expenditures. In comparing the SIAT to partner country data, there is no evidence of a bias in any direction in the SIAT data. The difference between the levels of average expenditure of the SIAT and partner countries ranged from a low of \$147.54 to a high of \$1008.05. In percentage terms, the average difference ranged from 2 percent to 25 percent.

Despite these encouraging results, this comparison cannot be viewed as a definitive assessment of the quality of the SIAT data. Partner countries use a sample survey-based method like the SIAT to collect their data, therefore their data could have some of the same inherent weaknesses as ours. And finally, this analysis has been conducted on only 4 partner countries, so it is not possible to say that the conclusions apply to all other partner countries. The latest available data

indicate that these 4 countries comprise 14 percent of total travel receipts (U.S. exports) and 13 percent of total travel payments (U.S. imports).”

### **U.S. Census Bureau Analysis**

“The impetus for this meeting (September 11, 2013) was a request by the OTTI for Census to assess the current SIAT methodology to identify improvements that would maintain or even decrease costs of the existing survey. The OTTI requested that Census quickly identify alternative methodologies that would maintain or improve data quality but at a lower cost. Noteworthy to the assumptions was the fact that the OTTI was recently told that they would have a legal requirement to expand the number of inbound air travelers sampled by the SIAT to reach a 1 percent sample size (a four-fold increase over the current sample size) without additional funding.

To address this request, Census participants held internal brainstorming sessions to discuss the current methods and offer suggestions for improvement of the existing processes in the survey lifecycle. (Christopher Laskey, Director-Demographic Survey Operations)

February 28, 2014

The suggestions that came from our brainstorming session are as follows. I don’t think anyone felt that this survey could be made more efficient or less costly if done by Census, but there were some suggestions (based of course on our limited knowledge/experience of this survey and its history).” [Census report available upon request]

**U.S. Travel Association**, Roger Dow, President & CEO, on May 18, 2014.

Testimony before Senate Commerce Committee on Tourism, Competitiveness and Innovation

“...One additional priority that often gets overlooked is the need for baseline travel data on international visitors. The most important – and seemingly vulnerable – is the monthly Survey of International Air Travelers (SIAT). Initiated by the Commerce Department in 1983, the SIAT provides information on visitors’ length of stay, level of spending and activities during their stay. **These data help determine policies which, in turn, have helped drive industry jobs growth and we urge approval of the modest funding to grow and improve the SIAT.**”

### **U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB)**

On June 9, 2015 the TTAB made recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce on achieving the national goal of a best-in-class international arrivals experience. A working group study looked at current measurement techniques on customer service and the quality of actionable data that comes from that analysis. Key recommendations focused on the need for immediate changes to Question 28 of the SIAT, broadening the scope so that non-U.S. resident travelers could better **rate their entry experience** into the United States. A revised Q.28 version of the SIAT

questionnaire went into the field April 2016. TTAB letter available upon request. Also, the monthly (unweighted data) analysis reports are available for review.

Previously....

In a November 18, 2014 memo to the Secretary of Commerce, the Data and Research Subcommittee recommended the following:

- The proposed SIAT evaluation study be funded and completed
- SIAT sample size be increased and that survey methodology improved
- DOC should establish a dedicated budget for SIAT to maintain and enhance program goals

The TTAB has issued the following recommendations and each have references that support the SIAT:

#### **2014 – 2016 United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board Recommendations**

[Recommendations for Integrating Travel and Tourism into the U.S. Government’s Infrastructure Strategy - November 18, 2014](#)

#### **2012 - 2014 United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board Recommendations**

[Research Recommendations - June 10, 2013](#)

#### **Recommendations of the 2009 - 2011 United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board**

[Research Recommendations - September 14, 2011](#)

#### **>Request for a Non-Substantive Change to the Survey Instrument**

On September 16, 2015 the International Trade Administration’s National Travel & Tourism Office (NTTO) requested approval to change one question (**Q.28**) in the Survey questionnaire. The change enabled NTTO to comply with the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board’s (TTAB) recommendation to Secretary Pritzker.

The June 9, 2015 letter [[attachment 1](#)] focuses on the improvement of the international traveler’s perception of the international arrivals experience and decision to visit the U.S. again. In short this will assist in the President’s national goal of a best-in-class international arrivals experience. The revised question [[attachment 2](#)] helps the passenger respondent better assess his/her experience with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) processes and personnel during the admissions process.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has access to the resulting data will be able to compare and evaluate all U.S. ports of entry and changes over time in the assessment of entry procedures and personnel. Progress reports are issued to the TTAB and Secretary of Commerce. This change was minimal and no burden change was estimated.

NTTO concluded its dialogue with academics from the **University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill** regarding a joint project to study travel data. The joint project includes a comparative study of SIAT data and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) International Origin-Destination survey data. Focus was on O&D air itineraries and international air fares. This included both non-resident and U.S. resident populations, but was limited to U.S. carriers who, unlike foreign carriers, are required to file this data with DOT. **Initial results indicate that there is a strong correlation between SIAT airfares and airfares reported to the DOT by carriers.**

<https://travel.trade.gov/research/programs/ifs/Synopsis%20SIAT-DB1B%20Results.pdf>

**In 2016 a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued** for what is now the current contract covering the period of performance from calendar 2017 through 2019. The current contract was based on bids received from the GSA Schedule (General Services Administration)

- The Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued with the overarching requirement, “NTTO’s goal is to improve the current Survey program which has been in existence since 1983.” The new contract was issued by NIST Procurement, as a blanket purchase order, on 9/30/16 with a base year and two option years.

**In 2012 the revised questionnaire** was fielded based on the following process that spanned from 2009 through 2011.

- On August 20, 2009, NTTO solicited recommendations from the travel industry sectors for a questionnaire revision.  
<http://travel.trade.gov/tinews/archive/tinews2009/20090820.html>
- On June 13, 2011, NTTO released the proposed draft SIAT questionnaire to the travel industry sector. The new questionnaire (English version plus its translations into eleven foreign languages) reflects input from over 70 respondents, including segments of the travel industry (airlines, travel associations, destinations, lodging); consultants; financial firms; educational institutions; and U.S. government agencies.  
<http://travel.trade.gov/tinews/archive/tinews2011/20110613.html>

The U.S. Travel Association (U.S. Travel) annual Marketing Outlook Forum in October, from 2012 through 2014. NTTO staff met with the state travel researchers group each year to obtain feedback from the industry.

NTTO is in continuous discussions with key participating airlines, both U.S. and foreign, regarding methodology and usefulness of data. This includes trade associations, Air Transport Association (ATA), the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and meetings with airlines at the World Routes Conference (2014). NTTO also plans to engage U.S. airports at a higher level regarding its potential usage of SIAT data.

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

Not applicable.

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

The confidentiality of a respondent is assured in the opening statement of the SIAT questionnaire. Additionally, the names of respondents are not solicited or recorded. The seat number is not recorded, which prevents any tracking of the respondent's identity.

**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.**

The current questionnaire asks questions about annual household income and travel expenditures that could be considered "sensitive." These questions are required by DOC (NTTO and BEA) to analyze international money flows from travel and tourism for the configuration of the travel account and the balance-of-trade, expenditure patterns, and the socio-economic levels of travelers.

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

The estimated number of respondents (approved) was changed from 99,400 to 300,000 air travelers to help NTTO better comply with provisions of the Travel Promotion Act. The estimated time to complete the survey is 15 minutes. Therefore, the estimated burden hours total changed from 24,850 to 75,000 hours.

Please note that the respondents reply to the questionnaire **voluntarily**. Also, note that on average only 45 percent of respondents are U.S. citizens.

**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.**

Cost of contractor services and/or other reimbursements to individuals or organizations:



The estimated CY2017 cost to the federal government, based on 80,383 surveys was: **estimated at \$2.688 million**. For CY2018 the estimated cost is 3.1 million, based on 90,000 surveys. The method used to estimate these costs includes:

The contractor must run the following base programs to support the SIAT: the DHS I-94 for non-resident arrivals to the United States, DHS Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) (formerly I-92) for U.S. residents traveling overseas and the Airline Data Inc. flight schedule database to randomly select flights departing the United States.

This estimated CY2017 cost to the federal government also includes the following labor estimate: The cost of federal employee labor in contract management (contract officer representative) plus monitoring, quality control and administration of collected information (this includes working with both the contractor and NIST Procurement/NIST Payables and U.S. Department of Interior Procurement) - 45 percent (COR/ staff in charge) and 20 percent, respectively of two staff members' salary and benefits of the project: **estimated \$90,000**.

Note: Data collection costs via airport gate intercept method are contained in contract costs with the major SIAT contractor (above). The boarding area intercept method has increased to about 92% of total collections. For the on-board method survey collection, 'costs' are in-kind contributions from the participating airlines, specifically from the airlines' airport managers who arrange to put the flight kits on the flights and mail completed kits back to the contractor. The flight attendant's hand-out and collect completed surveys.

This estimate will be reduced somewhat by the sale of 'Customized' reports using SIAT data. In FY2017, the **'net' sales of 'Customized' reports using SIAT data totaled \$256,276.00**.

Another offset in the costs is through the Supplemental Airport Survey Program (SASP). This program obtains the support from local travel firms to collect additional surveys at 14 airports in 2017. The data collections are at no cost to the government and are added to the program to improve market coverage, obtain access to passengers on airlines who do not allow us access to their travelers because we are not allowed access to their crews to survey passengers onboard the aircraft.

NTTO estimates that in 2017 we collected over 8,855 surveys for the program under the SASP. The average cost for airport intercepts at the ports has been estimated at \$8.50 per survey. Therefore, in 2017, the savings to the U.S. government was \$75,000 in data collection costs.

The proposed FY2019 DOC Budget proposal could be adding \$5.0 million to the annual SIAT program to increase collections. (this would come from DHS ESTA fees)

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

The expected increase in the number of respondents and burden hours as reported in section 12 is due to increasing compliance with the Travel Promotion Act. The TPA mandates that NTTO collect a SIAT sample equal to one percent of non-resident inbound visitors. In 2016, overseas

visitors to the U.S. exceeded 37,000,000. One percent of this total is 376,000. (Note: Since about 55 percent of total respondents were non-U.S. residents, approximately 206,000 would be a significant increase from the 46,615 non-resident surveys collected in 2016.

As cited above Q.28 was revised (minor) to reflect the recommendations of the Travel & Tourism Advisory Board as accepted by the Secretary of Commerce.

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

The following schedules reflect the survey's information collection and publications dates.

Tabulation and Publication Plans:

a) Data to Participating Airlines and Airports: Each participating airline and airport will receive a set of inbound and outbound reports. The airlines also receive their individual semi-annual airline reports of passengers in excel format.

b) Outputs for General Users: There are several separate annual statistical publications. One of these reports is United States Residents' Travel Abroad to Overseas Destinations (excluding Canada). Another report provides data on Overseas Visitors' Travel to the United States. Both reports are designed to provide essential market information for users requiring an in-depth knowledge of the characteristics and travel patterns of international travelers. The reports contain data on the residence of travelers, the purpose of their trip, the port at which they enter and leave the country, the multiple destinations they visit, the length of stay, their type of lodging, as well as how much they spend on major items. Other useful marketing data include their use of travel agents in providing information and booking trips, other travel information sources, and domestic transportation selected. A breakdown of expenditures include data on tour packages, international airfares, lodging, transportation, food and beverage, entertainment, gifts, souvenirs and other purchases.

The design of the tabular formats for the published reports was initiated to include as many important market segmentations as feasible. The major variables shown appear on the horizontal axis of tables as column headings. They are cross tabulated with all relevant items from the survey. The various data elements from the questionnaire appear on the vertical axis, essentially providing profiles of each major market group represented by the column headings.

The annual 2017 inbound and outbound national report is sold for \$1,580 (print version) and \$4,050 (Excel files). Additionally, annual country reports for the 11 inbound country markets are sold. The cost for an annual country report is \$735 (print) and \$1,745 (excel). The 2017 United States to Mexico report is sold for \$1,705 (print) and \$3,715 (excel). The cost for the Top U.S. State and Top U.S. City Report is \$3,965 (print version) and \$4,980 (Excel files). Custom reports are also developed and sold.

c) Outputs for Special Users: The statistics produced from the SIAT can be tabulated and analyzed in a great variety of ways. No single standard published report or series of reports can meet all the possible needs of outside users. Therefore, through data-mining techniques **customized reports** from the database are developed to assist users in obtaining the data they need. This type of report is becoming a popular option.

Data files further enable serious data users to cross tabulate and combine data, on their own, in ways that are not published or available in the pre-programmed tabulation series. The data files are available in various electronic media and the cost is based upon the sample size of the data request.

BEA receives data files and reports produced from the database as part of a negotiated cost reimbursable inter-agency agreement. The data is used by BEA to estimate this nation's travel balance of payments, contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and the Travel and Tourism Satellite Account (TTSA). Since FY2014, BEA asked for more information from NTTO due to its renewed plans to use the SIAT data.

**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. The expiration date is displayed on the front page of the questionnaire.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.**

Not applicable.