

**Supporting Statement for the
NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Program**

OMB Control Number: 0915-0140

Revision

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

This is a request for revision to the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program (NURSE Corps LRP) information clearance request, which is currently approved under OMB No. 0915-0140, Expiration Date: 6/30/2020.

The NURSE Corps LRP is authorized by 42 USC 297n(a) (section 846(a) of the Public Health Service Act, as amended by Public Law 107-205, and Public Law 111-148. The NURSE Corps LRP assists in the recruitment and retention of professional Registered Nurses (RNs), including advanced practice RNs (i.e., nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, certified nurse-midwives, and clinical nurse specialists), dedicated to working at eligible health care facilities with a critical shortage of nurses (i.e., a Critical Shortage Facility) or working as nurse faculty in eligible, accredited schools of nursing, by decreasing the financial barriers associated with pursuing a nursing profession.

Under the NURSE Corps LRP, RNs and nurse faculty are offered the opportunity to enter into a contractual agreement with the Secretary to receive loan repayment for up to 60 percent of their qualifying student loans in exchange for a two-year service commitment, and an additional 25 percent of their original loan balance for an optional third year. In exchange, the participants agree to serve full-time for a minimum of two years at a public or private nonprofit Critical Shortage Facility or in an eligible, accredited school of nursing. The NURSE Corps LRP statute requires that a funding preference be given to eligible applicants with greatest financial need. Applicants whose total qualifying loans are 100 percent or greater than their annual salary will meet the greatest financial need funding preference.

The NURSE Corps LRP application and forms collect information from applicants and participants. The information is used to consider an applicant for a NURSE Corps LRP contract award, and to monitor a participant's compliance with the service requirements. Individuals must submit an application in order to participate in the program. The application asks for personal, professional, educational, and financial information required to determine the applicant's eligibility to participate in the NURSE Corps LRP. The semi-annual employment verification form asks for personal and employment information to determine if a participant is

in compliance with the service requirements.

2. Purpose and Use of Information Collection

The need and purpose of this information collection is to obtain information for NURSE Corps LRP applicants and participants. The information is used to consider an applicant for a NURSE Corps LRP contract award and to monitor a participant's compliance with the service requirements. Individuals must submit an application to participate in the program. The application asks for personal, professional, educational, and financial information required to determine the applicant's eligibility to participate in the NURSE Corps LRP. The semi-annual employment verification form asks for personal and employment information to determine if a participant is in compliance with the service requirements. The Authorization to Release Employment Information form is available as a self-certification within the NURSE Corps LRP application process with applicants clicking a box, but may be filled out by hand. This decreases the overall time burden by eliminating a form and not increasing the average time required to complete the NURSE Corps LRP application.

This revision to the clearance package will incorporate two new forms: 1) The CSF Verification Form is used to verify transfers to critical shortage facilities not already recorded in the online portal; and 2) the NURSE Corps Nurse Faculty Employment Verification Form asks for personal and employment information to specifically determine if nurse faculty participants are eligible to transfer to another approved accredited school of nursing.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

This information collection activity is web-based (with exception of some forms as previously mentioned); the application, application instructions and forms are available at <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/loansscholarships/nursecorps/lrp>

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

The information collected is specific to the applicant and unique to this program. No other source of this information is known to exist for completion of the application and monitoring forms.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

No small businesses will be involved in this study.

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

This program has a yearly application cycle. If not selected, the applicant may reapply in the next yearly cycle. The selection process for NURSE Corps LRP awards necessitates the collection of information required to determine an applicant's eligibility and funding preference. In the absence of this information collection, the NURSE Corps LRP could not make any awards. In addition, the monitoring process for compliance with contractual requirements necessitates semi-annual employment verification. The consequence of less frequent monitoring is payout of government funds to participants who should not receive them.

7. Special Circumstances Related to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5

This information collection fully complies with 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice/Outside Consultation

The notice required in 5 CFR 1320.8(d) was published in the *Federal Register* on November 27, 2017, Vol. 82, No. 226, p. 56040 (<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-11-27/pdf/2017-25507.pdf>). No comments were received.

Additionally, this program has consulted with the following individuals to obtain constructive feedback to improve the application, improve efficiency, and minimize the collection burden. The comments on clarity of the application and forms were positive. The applicants found the application instructions and materials to be clear and straight forward. There were no suggestions for improvement.

Applicants contacted included:

1. Elizabeth Alvear
Registered Nurse (RN)
People's Community Clinic – Camino La Costa
(512) 289-3100
2. Cassie Packer
Registered Nurse (RN)
Bingham Memorial Hospital
(208) 221-4080
3. Becca Ward
Nurse Practitioner (NP)
Frontier Health Watauga Behavioral Health
(812) 890-0256
4. Hester Ferguson
Nurse Practitioner (NP)
Caney Valley Medical Clinic

(918) 350-8852

5. Misti Braun
Registered Nurse (RN)
Coalition Family Health Center
(307) 363-3089

9. Explanation of any Payment/Gift to Respondents

Respondents will not receive any payments or gifts.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

Data collected on the individual NURSE Corps LRP application and monitoring forms constitutes a system of records under the Privacy Act of 1974. The applicable Privacy Act system is the “Public Health Service and National Health Service Corps Health Care Provider Records System” (09-15-0037). Information provided on each selected application will be maintained for at least two years and up to 10 years. This is necessary to permit the monitoring of NURSE Corps LRP participants through the completion of the Program’s service commitments.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The applicant’s social security number is required for purposes of reporting the amount of loan repayments received by an individual to the Internal Revenue Service. It is also required by the Debt Collection Act of 1982, to permit collection of claims resulting from a participant’s breach of the NURSE Corps LRP contract.

The applicant’s annual gross salary and outstanding educational loan balances are required to determine whether the applicant meets the statutory funding preference. The loan information is also needed to determine whether the loans are eligible for repayment. The Right to Financial Privacy Act (RFPA), Public Law 95-630, regulates the Federal Government’s access to the financial records of individuals maintained by a financial institution. The financial information collected through the application complies with the RFPA requirements for customer authorization for disclosure of financial records.

The applicant’s banking information is necessary to electronically transmit loan repayments to the individual’s financial institution, as required by the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 and 31 CFR Parts 208 and 210.

The NURSE Corps LRP obtains a Credit Bureau Report (CBR) as part of the application review process. The CBR is cross-referenced with the financial information provided by the applicant, and is also used to verify whether the applicant has a Federal judgment lien. The Privacy Act

Notification Statement in the Application and Program Guidance advises applicants that a CBR will be obtained.

12. Estimates of Annualized Hour and Cost Burden

The estimates of reporting burden for Applicants are as follows:

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Responses/ Respondents	Total Responses	Hours per Response	Total Burden Hours	Hour Cost	Total Hour Cost
NURSE Corps LRP Application*	5,500	1	5,500	2.0	11,000	\$39.33	\$432,630
Authorization to Release Information Form**	5,500	1	5,500	.10	550	\$39.33	\$21,632
Total	5,500		11,000		11,550		\$454,262

*The burden hours associated with this instrument account for both new and continuation applications. Additional (uploaded) supporting documentation is included as part of this instrument and reflected in the burden hours.

**The same respondents are completing these instruments.

The estimates of reporting burden for Participants are as follows:

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Responses/ Respondents	Total Responses	Hours per response	Total Burden Hours	Hour Cost	Total Hour Cost
Participant Semi-Annual Employment Verification Form	2,300	2	4,600	.5	2,300	\$39.33	\$90,459
NURSE Corps CSF Verification Form	550	1	550	.10	55	\$39.33	\$2,163.15
NURSE Corps NF Employment Verification Form	250	1	250	.20	50	\$39.33	1,966.50
Total	3,100		5,400		2,405		\$94,588.65
Total for Applicants and Participants	8,600		16,400		13,955*		\$548,850.65

* The 13,955 figure is a combination of burden hours for applicants and participants. This revision adds two forms (the CSF Verification Form and NURSE Corps Nurse Faculty Employment Verification Form). Participants, not applicants, only use these forms. The 13,955 total burden hours represents the net decrease in applicant burden, and the net increase in participant burden.

Basis for estimates:

Applicants: Based on previous responses, the number of applicants is estimated to average 5,500 per year for the next 3 years. NURSE Corps LRP applicants and participants consist of a diverse nursing workforce (e.g. RNs, Advanced Practice RNs, and nurse faculty). Based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook, the national average hourly wage for registered nurses and nurse faculty is approximately \$34.14 and \$35.17 per hour. For advanced practice nurses the average hourly wage is \$48.68 per hour. Overall, the nursing workforce (as mentioned above) would earn a mean, hourly wage of approximately \$39.33 per hour ($\$34.1 + \$35.17 + \$48.68 = \117.99 ; $\$117.99/3 = \39.33). As per calculations based on the BLS wage data, it is estimated that the hour cost associated with completion of the NURSE Corps LRP application and forms would be \$39.33 per hour. As such, the combined total burden hours and total hour cost for the Nurse Corps LRP (including both applicant and participant burden hours) would be 13,955 hours and \$548,850.65 respectively.

Each applicant must complete an online application once per fiscal year. The application consists of eligibility requirements (license, citizenship, service agreement, employment); general information (name, address, school attended, degree(s) obtained, employment, etc.); educational loan information to be considered (average of 3 documents per applicant), plus any necessary supporting documentation.

13. Estimates of other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Recordkeepers/Capital Costs

There are no capital or startup costs to the respondents. All equipment and software are internally maintained at the NURSE Corps LRP as part of its normal business practice. The operation and maintenance costs to applicants consist of the \$.75 cost (per applicant, n = 5,500) for converting original loan documentation to an electronic format, which equals an estimated annualized cost burden of \$4,125. There will be no operation or maintenance costs to lenders; all information is maintained for usual business purposes.

14. Annualized Cost to Federal Government

Instrument	Base Pay Rate	Project Time per FTE	Number of FTEs	Total Annual Cost
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Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program Application	\$95,139 GS-12, Step 6	1.0	11	\$1,046,529
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The processing of the NURSE Corps LRP application and forms are handled internally, through the Bureau of Health Workforce’s NURSE Corps Loan Repayment Branch. The variables used to estimate the annualized cost to the government are contained in the table above. There are 11 FTEs involved in the processing of the applications. It is estimated that a base pay rate of \$95,139 (equivalent to a GS-12 step 6) per individual will be received in exchange for a full-time commitment (approximately 100% of the individual’s work time) on this project. The total estimated annual cost to the Government is \$1,046,529.

15. Explanation of Program Changes or Adjustments

Currently, there are 13,850 burden hours in the OMB Inventory. The new request is for 13,955 hours with the increase due to the additional forms.

16. Plans for Tabulation, Publication and Project Time Schedule

The Nurse Reinvestment Act requires annual reports to Congress regarding participant demographics, service sites, default information, etc. These reports provide information tables as well as analysis of trends and evaluation of the program.

17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate

The OMB number and expiration date will be displayed on every page of every form/instrument.

18. Exceptions to Certification for PRA Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification.