

Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback” (OMB Control Number: 3245-0398

Expiration Date: January 31, 2021

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:

Small Business Administration Online Digital Learning Platform Pre-Launch Research

PURPOSE:

The SBA plans to launch Ascent, its new online learning platform for women small business owners, on October 1, 2019. To prepare for a successful product launch, the SBA intends to conduct a two-phased research effort:

- **Phase 1: Market/audience research:** Online survey among select target audience members to inform outreach efforts that will promote Ascent.
- **Phase 2: Product beta testing:** Usability testing among select target audience members to test the product’s content, functionality, and UX among actual users.

The purpose of the research is to test receptivity to Ascent among potential users of the product; to validate the viability of the overall product concept; identify any barriers to the successful launch, adoption, and ongoing use of the platform; determine the likelihood that users will recommend Ascent to their peers; inform and guide product refinements prior to launch; and inform marketing/outreach efforts and messaging to promote Ascent.

Online surveys (Phase 1) are useful and efficient research tools for obtaining audience insights about the appeal and potential use of a new product as well as understanding potential end users’ preferences for content, messaging, and marketing outreach channels. Findings from the survey will help the SBA conceive and execute research-informed outreach initiatives to promote the product as well as refine messages and develop creative work products to encourage adoption and use of the product. Additionally, the SBA intends to invite survey respondents to participate in the product beta testing (Phase 2).

Product beta testing (Phase 2) is an industry best practice for gaining insights on behaviors, motivations, and usage patterns from actual members of the target audience. Product beta testing will also reveal any challenges that users encounter when testing the product, and assist the product development team in correcting “glitches” and making any adjustments to Ascent’s content, design, functionality that will improve the user experience. Additionally, to support outreach efforts, testers will be asked if they would like to provide a testimonial about their experience using the product and how Ascent will help them in growing their businesses. This will be a separate effort that occurs after the testing.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:

Growth-oriented women entrepreneurs with existing small businesses that are:

- Generating revenue;
- Interested in scaling/growing their business;
- Geographically diverse (from various parts of the country, including urban, suburban, and rural markets); and
- Representative of a wide variety of industries—service industries, STEM/tech, construction, manufacturing, etc.

TYPE OF COLLECTION: (Check one)

- Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form
- Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software)
- Focus Group
- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Small Discussion Group
- Other: Online Survey

CERTIFICATION:

I certify the following to be true:

1. The collection is voluntary.
2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
3. The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other federal agencies.
4. The results are not intended to be disseminated to the public.
5. Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions.
6. The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the future.

Name: Allen Gutierrez, Associate Administrator, Office of Entrepreneurial Development

To assist review, please provide answers to the following question:

Personally Identifiable Information:

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected? Yes No
 - Phase 1: In the survey, first and last names and email addresses of participants will be collected to help recruit testers for the product beta testing phase (Phase 2).
 - Phase 2: Testing participants interested in providing a product testimonial will be asked to provide their first and last names and email addresses for future follow up.
2. If Yes, will any information that is collected be included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974? Yes No (Information will be batched processed not by individual identifier)
3. If Yes, has an up-to-date System of Records Notice (SORN) been published? Yes No
 - SORN information and privacy policy information are included and linked in the research instruments (see attached).

Gifts or Payments:

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants? Yes No

BURDEN HOURS

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Respondent Participation Time	Total Burden Hours
Phase 1: Online Survey: Women Small Business Owners	1,000	10 minutes each	167 hours
Phase 2: Product Beta Testing: Women Small	500	45 minutes	225

Business Owners		each	hours
Totals	1,500		392 hours

FEDERAL COST: The estimated annual cost to the Federal government is \$74,898, which is attributed to the contractor that will be conducting both phases of the research and the cost of the product testing tool.

If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:

The selection of your targeted respondents

1. Do you have a customer list or something similar that defines the universe of potential respondents and do you have a sampling plan for selecting from this universe?
 Yes No

If the answer is yes, please provide a description of both below (or attach the sampling plan). If the answer is no, please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them?

Response:

Sources of participants:

- **Listening sessions:** Ascent project team representatives will be conducting meetings/listening sessions across the country with women’s business organizations (e.g., National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP), and Women Presidents' Organization, Inc. (WPO) and business trade associations (e.g. Small Business Entrepreneurship Council, US Chamber of Commerce, US Women’s Chamber of Commerce, US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Job Creators Network). Session participants will be asked if they would like to participate in a brief survey about Ascent. Session organizers will be given an online link (www.SBA.gov/AscentFeedback) to forward to their members who will be asked to enter their email and zip code if they would be interested in participating in a survey or the beta testing. This information will be collected for the purpose of the survey and beta test only. Any additional use, such as follow-up for testimonials as noted above, will require participants’ authorization.
- **Universities:** Stakeholders (e.g., academics, researchers, faculty, students) who study female entrepreneurship or lead entrepreneurship development initiatives.
- **District Offices/Regional Directors:** The Ascent project team will ask SBA District Offices/Regional Directors to identify and create lists of local women’s business organizations and individual women business owners in their areas. The SBA will provide a pre-formatted Excel spreadsheet to Regional Directors to collect this data.

Recruitment methods:SBA will email an invitation to potential participants with a link to the survey.

- For Phase 1, the email invitation will include a link to the online survey.
- For Phase 2, survey participants will be asked in the survey if they would like to participate in product beta testing, and to provide their email address to receive additional

communication about the testing. The willing participants will receive an additional email invitation with a link to the testing site.

Administration of the Instrument

1. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)

Web-based or other forms of Social Media

Telephone

In-person

Mail

Other, invitations will be distributed by email.

2. Will interviewers or facilitators be used? Yes No

- The online survey will be unguided (i.e., respondents will complete the survey independently).
- Depending on the capabilities of the product beta testing tool, facilitators may or may not be required to guide participants through the testing.

Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.

Attachments:

- Draft email invitations for both Phase 1 and Phase 2
- Research Plan
- Online Survey
- Product Beta Testing Guide