

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

**FEDERAL AND STATE TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP (FAST) PROGRAM
QUARTERLY REPORTING FORM**

OMB CONTROL NO. 3245-xxxx

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Relevant Statutes or Regulations

Small Business Act, Section 34 (15 USC 657d); Federal and State Technology Partnership Program

Federal and State Technology (FAST) Partnership Program FY 2019 Funding Opportunity No. FAST-2019-R-0013, Section 6.3

60-Day Notice and Request for Comments

A. JUSTIFICATION

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

The Small Business Administration (SBA) is requesting approval to collect data from FAST award recipients (grantees) in the Federal and State Technology Partnership (FAST) Program using the Quarterly Reporting Form. As stated in the FAST Program's FY 2019 Funding Opportunity Announcement, Section 6.3.2, reporting is a requirement of the award: "Recipients will be required to submit quarterly performance reports to SBA using SF-PPR, Performance Progress Report (or a form of their own devising that includes all the same information sought by the SF-PPR), including SBA's FAST Quarterly Reporting Form...."

The FAST Program is a competitive grants program that is designed to strengthen the technological competitiveness of small businesses seeking funding from the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. Congress authorized the FAST Program under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2001, Pub. L. 106-554 (12/21/2000). The program, which was codified in section 34 of the Small Business Act, 15 U.S.C. §657d, expired on September 30, 2005. However, it has been funded since FY 2010 through annual appropriations acts, e.g., Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019, Pub. L. 116-6 (2/15/19).

The FAST program provides funding to organizations to execute state and regional programs that: increase the number of SBIR/STTR proposals (through outreach and financial support); increase the number of SBIR/STTR awards (through technical assistance and mentoring); and better prepare SBIR/STTR awardees for commercialization success (through technical assistance and mentoring). SBA is required to submit an annual report to the Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship; the House Committee on Science, Space, & Technology; and the House Small Business Committee. 15 U.S.C. 657d(f)(2).

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

The reports will collect ongoing performance and outcome data from FAST grantees on a quarterly basis. The data will support basic performance measurement and program improvement and will provide some data that can be used to support a future evaluation of the FAST Program. This collection will be responsive to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 and the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 by helping the program measure its effectiveness, improve its performance, and report its results. The data collected will also inform the annual reports to Congress.

Finally, a recent study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that SBA and other federal agencies need to improve their tracking and data collection for the SBIR and STTR programs.¹ This data collection can help address the findings in the GAO report.

¹ United States Government Accountability Office. *Small Business Research Programs: Agencies Need to Take Steps to Assess Progress Toward Commercializing Technologies*. January 2018.

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, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Data will be collected in a simple Excel spreadsheet and submitted by electronic mail. Based on SBA's experience with FAST grantees and consideration of the submission options, the Agency concluded this is the least burdensome way to collect the information.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

The data that will be collected through the Quarterly Reporting Form is highly customized to the work of the economic development organizations that receive FAST awards. SBA reviewed existing data sources and concluded that existing data is not sufficient for the purposes of this data collection. No other source of information exists for these data except that collected through the Quarterly Reporting Form.

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

The proposed information collection will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. FAST grantees serve small businesses but are not themselves small businesses. Among the 24 current FAST grantees, many are state economic development agencies. Although the burden of this collection is low and will not affect a significant number of small entities, SBA is prepared to answer questions and talk with any grantees who require assistance filling out the form. Approximately 24 grantees receive a FAST award each year, and the reporting requirements are basic and ask for information that grantees are already likely collecting in their normal course of business. This collection should not require grantees to develop any new data.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

If the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, SBA will not be able to obtain information that is critical for understanding the performance of the FAST program. The program will be less capable of fulfilling its reporting requirements to Congress and addressing the issues raised in the previously noted GAO report.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines. (a) requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly; (b) requiring respondents to prepare a written

response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it; (c) requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document; (d) requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years; (e) in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to product valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study; (f) requiring the use of statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB; (g) that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in stature of regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; (h) requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information’s confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

None of these circumstances are applicable to this proposed information collection.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency’s notice, required by 5 CFR 320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken in response to the comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside SBA 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 report.

A 60-Day Notice and Request for Comments was published in the Federal Register at 83 FR 62397 on December 3, 2018. No comments were received in response to that notice. However, SBA conducted pre-tests with four FAST grantees in March 2019 and took their input into consideration when finalizing the Quarterly Reporting Form. All four pre-testers confirmed that the form is well-structured, captures important information about their programs, and response burden is not a concern as they currently track most of the information requested in the form as part of their normal operations. The most extensive feedback concerned the definitions of terms. The pre-testers requested greater clarity of definitions and consistency between the definitions in the form and other FAST program documents. In response to their feedback, SBA harmonized the definitions in the Quarterly Reporting Form with those in the Funding Opportunity Announcement and defined all key terms in the form. Additional changes in response to the pre-test were relatively minor and included: instructions to clearly distinguish “not applicable” from zero; allowing participants to clarify or expand on their reported metrics in the text box at the bottom of page 2; and changing the order of some questions.

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

No other payment payments or gifts will be offered to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for

assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

We are not making any assurance of confidentiality. The data collected is not confidential and will be collected from the grantees in the aggregate. SBA will not collect any data specific to the participating business.

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.

No questions of a sensitive nature will be asked. The data collection does not contain any questions about sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, or other matters that are commonly considered private.

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

Total number of respondents	24 (number of current FAST grantees)	--
Responses per respondent	4 (quarterly)	--
Total estimated annual responses	96 (24 x 4)	--
Hour burden per response	2 hours	\$71.04*
Total estimated annual hour burden	192 hours (96 x 2)	\$6819.84*

* SBA's experience with previous FAST grantees suggests that Business Operations Specialists will be completing the Quarterly Reporting Form. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates a mean hourly wage for Business Operations Specialists of \$35.52.² Multiplying the burden hours by this mean hourly wage yields a total labor cost of \$6819.84.

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).

There is no other annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

SBA will spend an estimated 5 hours per quarter, or 20 hours per year, sending out and processing the Quarterly Reporting Forms. SBA expects that a Program Analyst, GS-13, step 1 will be processing the reports. The General Schedule (GS) classification and pay system sets an

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2018 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates United States. https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#13-0000.

annual salary of \$99,172 for a Program Analyst, GS-13, step 1, in Washington, DC.³ This equates to an hourly wage of \$47.68 based on 2080 hours per year. Multiplying the hours by this hourly wage yields total Federal labor costs of \$953.60. No contractor time will be used.

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

This is a new information collection, so no changes or adjustments have been made to previous estimates of burden.

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

Other than reporting the results to Congress, SBA does not anticipate publishing the 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.

The expiration date for OMB approval will be displayed on the Quarterly Reporting Form.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used.

Not Applicable, statistical methods will not be used.

³ Office of Personnel Management, Salary Table 2019-DCB. <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2019/DCB.pdf>.