Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission
Generic Information Improving Customer Experience
(OMB Circular A-11, Section 280 Implementation)
OMB No. 0960-NEW

A. Justification

1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations

On September 11, 1993, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards" which clearly define his vision that the Federal agencies will put the people first. Executive Order 12862 directs Federal agencies to provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector. Section 1(b) of Executive Order 12862 requires government agencies to "survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services" and Section 1(e) requires agencies "survey front-line employees on barriers to, and ideas for, matching the best in business."

On March 30, 2016, President Obama established the Core Federal Services Council, which again emphasized the need to deliver world-class customer service to the American people. The Council, composed of the major high-volume, high-impact Federal programs that provide transactional services directly to the public, were encouraged "to improve the customer experience by using public and private sector management best practices, such as conducting self-assessments and journey mapping, collecting transactional feedback data, and sharing such data with frontline and other staff."

In March 2018, the Administration of President Trump launched the President's Management Agenda (PMA) and established new Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goals. Excellent service was established as a core component of the mission, service, stewardship model that frames the entire PMA, embedding a customer-focused approach in all of the PMA's initiatives. This model was also included in the 2018 update of the Federal Performance Framework in Circular A-11, ensuring 'excellent service' as a focus in future agency strategic planning efforts. The PMA included a CAP Goal on Improving Customer Experience with Federal Services, with a primary strategy to drive improvements within 25 of the nation's highest impact programs. This effort is supported by an interagency team and guidance in Circular A-11 requiring the collection of customer feedback data and increasing the use of industry best practices to conduct customer research.

These Presidential actions and requirements establish an ongoing process of collecting customer insights and using them to improve services. This new request will enable The Social Security Administration (SSA) to act in accordance with OMB Circular A-11 Section 280 to ultimately transform the experience of its customers to improve both efficiency and mission delivery, and increase accountability by communicating about these efforts with the public.

2. **Description of Collection**

SSA will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered through this generic clearance to identify services' accessibility, navigation, and use by customers, and make improvements in service delivery based on customer insights gathered through developing an understanding of the user experience interacting with Government.

For the purposes of this request, "customers" are individuals, businesses, and organizations that interact with a Federal Government agency or program, either directly or via a Federal contractor.

"Service delivery" or "services" refers to the multitude of diverse interactions between a customer and Federal agency such as applying for a benefit or loan, receiving a service such as healthcare or small business counseling, requesting a document such as a passport or social security card, complying with a rule or regulation such as filing taxes or declaring goods, utilizing resources such as a park or historical site, or seeking information such as public health or consumer protection notices.

Under this request, three types of activities will be conducted to generate customer insights:

Customer Research (User Persona and Journey Map Development): A critical first component of understanding customer experience is to develop customer personas and journey maps. This process enables the Agency to more deeply understand the customer segments they serve and to organize the processes customers interact with throughout their engagement with the Federal entity to accomplish a task or meet a need. In order to adequately capture the perspective of the customer and the barriers or supports that exist as they navigate these journeys, it is necessary to directly interact with customers rather than relying solely upon the Agency's stated policy of how a process should work or employees' interpretation of how services are delivered. This can occur through a variety of information collection mechanisms that include focus groups, individual intercept interviews at a service site, shadowing a user as they navigate a Federal service and documenting their reactions and frustrations, customer free-response comment cards, or informal small discussion groups.

Regardless of the format, the Agency will apply Human Centered Design (HCD) Discovery methods to generate personas and journey maps, ultimately identifying customer insights. An approach to recruiting participants, resources for preparing and structuring interviews, and a consent form for interviewees can be found at https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/HCD-Discovery-Guide-Interagency-v12-1.pdf. This document is also included in the package.

Insights documented, summarized and presented in customer personas and journey maps can then be shared across the program, the Agency, other Federal, State, and Local government stakeholders and even with the public to validate and discuss common themes identified. These products can be used as "indicator lights" for where more rigorous qualitative and quantitative research can be conducted to improve Federal service delivery.

Publicly shared personas and journey maps will include language that qualifies their use (see question #16), and high-level, non-identifying descriptive statistics of the population(s) interviewed to develop it (ex. "25 Service members that transitioned to civilian employment within the last decade, 14 female, 11 male, 21 enlisted and 4 officers) to ensure that the perspective represented is understood. Quotes or insights will never be associated with an actual individual unless they have signed a release form (see link above for template) and this was included in the specific collection request.

Customer Feedback (Satisfaction Survey): Surveys to be considered under this generic clearance will only include those surveys modeled on the OMB Circular A-11 CX Feedback survey to improve customer service by collecting feedback at a specific point during a customer journey. This could include upon submitting a form online on a Federal website, speaking with a call center representative, paying off a loan, or visiting a Federal service center.

In an effort to develop comparable, government-wide scores that will enable cross-agency or industry benchmarking (when relevant) and a general indication of an agency's overall customer satisfaction, OMB Circular A-11 Section 280 requires high impact services to measure their touchpoint/transactional performance in as a real-time manner as possible, with respect to satisfaction and confidence/trust using the following questions, without modification. Responses will be assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). These questions were developed in consultation with leading organizations in customer experience both in the private sector and industry groups that study the most critical drivers of customer experience.

- 5 point Likert scale: *I am satisfied with the service I received from [Program/Service name].*
- 5 point Likert scale: *This interaction increased my confidence in [Program/Service name]*. OR *I trust [Agency/Program/Service name] to fulfill our country's commitment to [relevant population]*.
- Free response: *Any additional feedback on your scores above?*
- 5 point Likert scale: *My need was addressed* OR *My issue was resolved.* OR *I found what I was looking for*.
- 5 point Likert scale: *It was easy to complete what I needed to do.*
- 5 point Likert scale: *It took a reasonable amount of time to do what I needed to do.*
- 5 point Likert scale: *I was treated fairly*.
- 5 point Likert scale: *Employees I interacted with were helpful.*

- Free response: *Any additional feedback for [Program/Service name]?*

The surveys shall include no more than 15 questions in total. The Agency may add a few additional questions to those listed above to clarify type of service received, inquiry type, service center location, or other program-specific questions that can help program managers to filter and make use of the feedback data.

As part of the Customer Experience CAP goal's strategy to increase transparency to drive accountability, the feedback data collected through the A-11 Standard Feedback survey is meant to be shared with the public. This collection is part of the government-wide effort to embed standardized customer metrics within high-impact programs to create government-wide performance dashboards. Data collected from the questions listed above will be submitted by the Agency to OMB quarterly for updating of customer experience dashboards on performance.gov. This dashboard will also include the total volume of customers that passed through the transaction point at which the survey was offered, the number of customers the survey was presented to, the number of responses, and the mode of presentation and response (online survey, in-person, post-call touchtone, mobile, email). This will help to qualify the data's representation by showing both the response rate and total number of actual responses.

User Testing of Services and Digital Products: Agencies should continually review, update and refine their service delivery, including communication materials, processes, supporting reference materials, and digital products associated with a Federal program. This often requires "field testing" program informational materials, process updates, forms, or digital products (such as websites or mobile applications) by interacting with past, existing, or future customers and soliciting feedback. These activities can include cognitive laboratory studies, such as those used to refine questions on a program form to ensure clarity, demo kiosks at a service center where customers can provide informal feedback while waiting for a service, or more formally scheduled in-person observation testing (e.g., website or software usability tests). These information collection activities are more specific than broad customer research and related to a particular artifact / product of a Federal program. As such, there will be a more structured interview / set of questions than more open-ended customer research. Findings from these activities are meant to support the design and implementation of Federal program services and digital products, and may only be shared in an anonymized / in aggregate if a particular insight is useful to include as part of a customer persona, journey map, or common lesson learned for improving service delivery.

SSA will only submit under this generic clearance if it meets the following conditions:

- The collections are voluntary;
- The collections are low-burden for respondents (based on considerations of total burden hours or burden-hours per respondent) and are low-cost for both the respondents and the Federal Government;
- The collections are non-controversial and do not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies;
- Any 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 near future;
- Personally identifiable information (PII) is collected only to the extent necessary and is not retained;
- Information gathered is intended to be used for general service improvement and program management purposes
- Upon agreement between OMB and the agency all or a subset of information may be released as part of A-11, Section 280 requirements only on performance.gov. Additionally, summaries of customer research and user testing activities may be included in public-facing customer journey maps.
- Additional release of data must be done coordinated with OMB.

This clearance will help SSA to establish a process where customer experience is regularly monitored and measured. The results will assist SSA in the planning and decision-making processes to improve the quality of the SSA's products and services.

SSA will use the results from feedback activities and surveys to measure against established baseline standards and for measuring progress toward defined goals.

3. **Use of Information Technology to Collect the Information**
There are neither legal nor technical obstacles to the use of technology in these information collection activities. The determination to use technology, and which technology to use, will be based on the type of information SSA collects, and the utility and availability of specific technology to each respondent in a proposed customer research activity or feedback survey. When soliciting written responses from respondents using this Generic Clearance (e.g. when conducting customer satisfaction surveys), the agency will strive to provide an online modality option for submitting responses.

4. **Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information**
SSA will work to ensure the streamlining of all customer research and feedback surveys under this clearance. SSA will also work to reduce existing customer feedback surveys, and questions into alignment with the A-11 Standard CX Feedback survey as part of a coordinated Agency-wide customer program. The information we supply on these surveys will not duplicate on any other information collection.

5. **Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents**

The information SSA collects in these surveys will represent the minimum burden necessary to evaluate customer experience with the SSA's programs and processes. SSA will minimize the burden on respondents by sampling as appropriate, asking for readily available information, and using short, easy-to-complete information collection instruments.

6. **Consequence of Not Collecting Information or Collecting it Less Frequently**

Without regular mechanisms for collecting and generating customer insights, SSA is not able to provide the public with the highest level of service. SSA will coordinate these activities to ensure we will not ask most individual respondents to respond to more than one survey instrument per transaction, or to participate in more than one qualitative feedback or testing activity.

7. **Special Circumstances**

These surveys will be consistent with all the guidelines in *5 CFR 1320.5*, especially those provisions in subsection (g) which require that a statistical survey be designed to produce results that can be generalized to the universe of study. There are no special circumstances that would cause this information collection to be conducted in an unusual or intrusive manner. All participation will be voluntary. Should the SSA need to deviate from the requirements outlined in *5 CFR 1320*, individual justification will be provided to OMB on a case-by-case basis.

8. **Federal Register Notices/Public Comment.**

In accordance with *5 CFR 1320.8(d)*, on March 18, 2020 (85 FR 15556), SSA published the 60-day Federal Register Notice and we received no public comments. SSA published the 30-day Federal Register Notice on June 9, 2020 (85 FR 35360). If we receive any public comments in response to the 30-day Notice, we will forward them to OMB.

9. **Payment or Gift to the Respondents.**

Respondents for activities conducted in a "laboratory"–type setting (that is, in-depth interviews, usability testing, etc.) under this clearance may receive a small stipend. This practice has proven necessary and effective in recruiting subjects to participate in this research, and is employed by the other Federal cognitive laboratories. The incentive for participation in a one-on-one interview or usability session is $40, and for participation in a focus group is $50-$75. SSA may provide smaller incentives than these amounts at its discretion; however, SSA will justify to OMB any requests for larger amounts. Respondents for quantitative satisfaction surveys will not receive payment for participation. We will provide specific information with each individual generic clearance request.

10. **Assurances of Confidentiality.**
SSA protects and holds confidential the information we collect in accordance with *42 U.S.C. 1306*, *20 CFR 401* and *402*, *5 U.S.C. 552 (Freedom of Information Act)*, *5 U.S.C. 552a (Privacy Act of 1974)*, and OMB Circular No. A-130.

11. **Justification for Sensitive Questions**
None of our generic clearances will contain any questions of a sensitive nature.

12. **Estimates of Public Reporting Burden**
Below is a chart listing the total number of respondents and the number of burden hours for each year in the collection.

GC PLAN YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	TOTAL HOURS (FOR ALL FIVE CATEGORIES)
Year 1 (February 2019 through February 2020)	5,955,560	1,142,192
Year 2 (February 2020 through February 2021)	5,955,560	1,142,192
Year 3 (February 2021 through February 2022)	5,955,560	1,142,192
3-YEAR TOTAL	**17,866,680**	**3,426,575**

The total burden of **3,426,575** hours. We based these figures on current management information data. This figure represents burden hours, and we did not calculate a separate cost burden. For a complete listing of each proposed generic clearance activity and its projected burden, see the document entitled "Categorization of GC activities w totals," posted in the "Mange ICR Documents" page of ROCIS.

13. **Annual Cost Burden to the Respondents (Other)**
There is no known cost burden to the respondents.

14. **Annual Cost to the Federal Government.**
Below are the annual and triennial costs to the Federal Government for these generic clearance activities.

GC Plan Year	Cost to the Federal Government
Year 1	$2,997,681
Year 2	$2,997,679
Year 3	$2,997,679
3-YEAR TOTAL	**$8,933,039**

The total cost to the Federal government for conducting these generic clearances is **$8,933,039**. This represents the costs for conducting the surveys, payment to contractors, payment to respondents, and printing/distributing/mailing survey materials. For a complete listing of the cost of each generic clearance activity, see the document entitled "Categorization of GC Activities /w Totals," posted in the "Manage ICR Documents" page in ROCIS.

15. **Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection Request**
This is a new collection in a program change of **3,426,575** burden hours

16. **Plans for Publication of Information Collection Results**
No attempt will be made to generalize the findings from these three groups of activities to be nationally representative or statistically valid. They are meant to compliment and help to contextualize performance and evaluation data as part of a three-pronged approach to understanding Federal program implementation and opportunities for improvement (Performance, Evaluation, and "Feedback" data[1]).

Customer Research: Insights gleaned from qualitative customer research may be presented publicly in the format of a conceptual user persona or customer journey map. Customer research can take anywhere from 6 weeks for a short sprint to a full fiscal year, depending on the specific project. The Agency expects most journey mapping efforts to last approximately 6 months, with a user persona and journey maps ready for feedback (both from internal and external to government stakeholders) within one month of completing customer research.
Publicly available Journey maps will include specific language to contextualize their use and will be included in specific requests. This language can include something like:

What should I know about journey maps?
Journey maps are living documents—continually refined and revisited. There is nevera "final" version, and these maps are meant to serve as a summary of the voices of actual customers of U.S. Government services. A map may not precisely document the way a Government program is meant to be navigated, accessed, or used. It might not capture every government program or resource available to a customer segment. However, it is the product of a qualitative research approach to gather insights from customers' actual experiences. These findings can help us to identify areas for high-impact improvements across delivery channels and organizational silos.

Customer Feedback: Once touchpoint surveys are implemented at transaction points along the customer journey interacting with Federal services, data from the A-11 Standard CX Feedback survey will be submitted to OMB quarterly for review and publication in a summary dashboard on performance.gov.

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1 https://ssir.org/articles/entry/time_for_a_three_legged_measurement_stool

This data will include:

- Specific transaction point at which the survey was administered
- Total volume of customers that interacted at this transaction point during the given quarter
- Total volume of customers that were presented the survey
- Total number of customers who completed the survey
- Mode(s) of collection (ex. online, over mobile, over the phone, paper form)
- Specific survey instrument that shows the Agency's wording of standard A-11 CX Feedback survey
- Distribution of the responses across the 5 point Likert scale for each of the standard questions

The purpose of collecting volume and response numbers is to share customer feedback measures in context of the response rate and total volume of responses to qualify interpretation of the CX feedback data.

Testing of Services and Digital Products: Similar to Customer Research, this can range from a short two-day rapid feedback from users within an Agile product development sprint or longer effort to gather more extensive feedback from multiple physical locations.

17. **Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date**
SSA will include the OMB Control Number and collection expiration date at any qualitative feedback or testing activity and on each survey.

18. **Exception to Certification Requirements.**
SSA is not requesting an exception to the certification statement identified in Item 20, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB Form 83-I.