

## **Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback” (OMB Control Number: 0960-0788)**

**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:** Usability Testing of SSA Electronic Projects

**SSA SUB-NUMBER:**

### **PURPOSE:**

The mission of the User eXperience Group (UXG) is to provide the Social Security Administration (SSA) with well-designed, well-executed usability evaluations for all data collection and information dissemination vehicles SSA uses to interface with the public. Thus, we ensure these vehicles are customer-centered and effective.

Given the approaching retirement wave of both SSA employees and the general public, it is critical SSA’s self-service forms, applications, and other service delivery vehicles provide viable alternatives to SSA’s in-office and telephone interview service channel. To this end, User-Centered Design Activities and Evaluations are a critical success factor. We will design all of SSA’s public facing information dissemination and self-service forms, and applications to ensure user success and accurate data collection. SSA’s goal is to provide American citizens; businesses; and state and local governments with self-service applications that are extremely secure, highly rated, and easy to use.

SSA currently conducts usability evaluations within our design activities, which obtains the same type of data sets for each project. Because of our short timeframes and inability to stop and obtain clearance for each Usability session, we limit our usability groups to nine or less participants.

SSA would like to seek clearance for an expanded list of usability activities. Citizen-centered design activities, conducted early and iteratively during the design of a vehicle would allow SSA to design more usable, effective and accepted self-service vehicles. Conducting these citizen-centered design activities with more participants would allow SSA to satisfy the needs of a broader segment of the public. Conducting a series of tests iteratively with design refinements would allow design refinement and confirmation that design changes actually improved participant performance.

Some of the specific types of User-Centered Design Activities and Evaluations that this clearance pertains to are as follows:

- **User Interviews** - Interviewing one or more users is an effective method to gather information about their tasks, issues, goals, and the environment in which they work. Interviewing a small group of users can elicit multiple perspectives about the work. Interviewing can also be done from a distance and may involve traditional or newer technologies ranging from the telephone to internet-based applications such as NetMeeting. Interviewing users at remote locations can provide access to more users and to users who might not otherwise be able to participate.
- **Contextual Inquiries** - Contextual inquiry combines interviewing with work observation and allows teams to watch users perform tasks. Teams listen to users explain what they

are doing as they work, and can interject questions to elicit more about the user, the work, and the environment.

- **Card-sorting** - Card sorting is a simple design technique that can help structure the content of an application. We give users a pile of cards, with a description of the menu or content item written on each card, and told to sort them into logical groups. Card sorting streamlines the process of structuring content, such as pages on a web site or menus. It also provides an excellent way of finding out what terminology is best for labels and links. We believe card-sorting works best when used early in the design phase before making decisions about the structure of the web site or the grouping of menu options. It is an effective tool for capturing feedback from target users before producing a paper mock-up.
- **Usability Testing** - Usability testing is an iterative process that involves testing a design with users and then using the test results to improve the design. Tests can be informal or formal and done in person or at a distance using a combination of telephone and remote technologies such as NetMeeting. The purpose of usability testing is always to see what is working well and what is not working well – with the goal of improving the design based on feedback from users.

Team members of UXG, which consists of SSA personnel and contractor staff, conduct these activities and evaluations. Study participants are members of the public or members of a group, such as state and local government agencies, employers, and advocates, who use the vehicle under evaluation in conducting their business task(s) with SSA. The vehicles may be paper, such as forms and pamphlets; or automated, such as computer systems, the Internet, or voice-response telephone menus.

The UXG team records information related to the effectiveness of the vehicle's design in enabling the participants to conduct their tasks accurately, efficiently, and to the participant's satisfaction, such as:

- Task completion percentages and time;
- Task completion accuracy;
- Problems the participants encountered; and,
- Comments the participants make regarding the vehicle's ease-of-use.

The study participants provide feedback consisting of one or more of the following:

- Completion of the System Usability Scale (SUS) questionnaire or other standardized usability rating surveys;
- Specific suggestions for change; and,
- Both their positive and negative reactions to the system including general comments.

We typically select study participants from SSA’s beneficiary rolls or by contacting organizations and businesses that would meet the user requirements for the application or website undergoing testing. For example, if the UXG were to test an application designed for disabled people, we may randomly select people from those receiving disability benefits. If the UXG were to test a form that attorneys would complete, we would contact law firms for test participants. If the UXG were to test an application designed for wage reporting, we would contact employers and payroll service providers.

In this Generic Clearance Request, we are requesting clearance for all usability sessions through the end of fiscal year 2018. Although the subject of the usability sessions may change, the questions and procedures remain constant. Therefore, instead of requesting individual clearance for each usability session, we have attached for your review a list of projected projects for which we will conduct usability testing next year, and the questions we will use for each of these projects.

**DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:**

Study participants are members of the general public or members of a group, such as state and local government agencies, employers, advocates, who use the vehicle under evaluation in conducting their business task(s) with SSA.

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** (Check one)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Satisfaction Survey |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software) | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Discussion Group       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus Group  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                 |

**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: Naomi Sipple, Reports Clearance Team Leader, Social Security Administration

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

**Personally Identifiable Information:**

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected?  Yes  No
2. If Yes, is the information that will be collected included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974?  Yes  No
3. If Applicable, has a System or Records Notice been published?  Yes  No

**Gifts or Payments:**

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

If a vendor assists in recruiting and hosting our evaluations for this generic clearance, we contract with them to provide the compensation for the participants. For example, recruiting physicians to participate in evaluating a Consultative Examination Scheduling System may require higher incentives. The vendor will provide an average payment of \$75 unless another amount is required.

**BURDEN HOURS**

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time (minutes)	Burden (hours)
Individuals	1,800	120	3,600

**FEDERAL COST:** The estimated annual cost to the Federal government is \$300,000.

**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?  
[ X ] 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?

We typically select study participants from SSA’s beneficiary rolls or by contacting organizations and businesses that would meet the user requirements for the application or website undergoing testing. For example, if the UXG were to test an application designed for disabled people, we may randomly select people from those receiving disability benefits. If the UXG were to test a form that attorneys would complete, we would contact law firms for test participants. If the UXG were to test an application designed for wage reporting, we would contact employers and payroll service providers.

**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, Explain: Emailed surveys
2. Will interviewers or facilitators be used? [ X ] Yes [ ] No

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