

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Customer Surveys
OMB Control No. 0648-0342

Abstract

This is a request for revision and extension of a generic information collection to collect qualitative and quantitative feedback for voluntary customer surveys to be conducted by NOAA program offices. The question bank has been revised to more accurately reflect information required by NOAA in order to carry out its mission.

Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

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.

This collection of information is necessary to enable the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to garner customer and stakeholder feedback in an efficient, timely manner, in accordance with our commitment to improving service delivery. The information collected from our customers and stakeholders will help ensure that users have an effective, efficient, and satisfying experience with NOAA’s programs. This feedback will provide insights into customer or stakeholder

perceptions, experiences, and expectations, provide an early warning of issues with service, or focus attention on areas where communication, training or changes in operations might improve delivery of products or services. These collections will allow for ongoing, collaborative, and actionable communications between NOAA and its customers and stakeholders. It will also allow feedback to contribute directly to the improvement of program management.

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.

NOAA 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.

Under this generic clearance, individual offices would use approved questionnaires and develop new questionnaires, as needed, by selecting subsets of the approved set of collection questions and tailoring those specific questions to be meaningful for their particular programs. The generic clearance will not be used to survey any bodies NOAA regulates unless precautions are taken to ensure that the respondents believe that they are not under any risk for responding or for the contents of their responses; e.g., in no survey of such a population will the names and addresses of respondents be required. Currently there are no such surveys being submitted for approval. In some instances there are options to provide contact information for voluntary follow-up.

Two sets of survey questions (included as supplementary documents) are used for generation of program-level questionnaires:

- 1) "Quantitative Questions" seeks to obtain numerical ratings from respondents on their satisfaction with various aspects of the product or service they obtained – satisfaction with the quality of the product, the courtesy of the staff, the format of and documentation for data received, and similar standard types of questions. The offices using such questions are able to determine which aspects of their program need improvement, or have improved. The rating system is intended to aid the respondents in identifying their relative level of satisfaction in particular areas, and is not generally intended to be used to establish numerical performance goals or as part of any complex statistical analyses over time. The potential benefits of the latter are outweighed by the difficulties in ensuring that the data is unbiased and fully representational of customers.
- 2) "Qualitative Questions" are more focused on who is using the product and service, how it is being used, and the medium or format in which the respondent would like to see data provided. The respondent is also given an opportunity to make specific suggestions on what new products or services should be offered or on how existing products or services could be improved.

The uses of the qualitative questions are somewhat different. Rather than seeking information on the degree of customer satisfaction, the objectives are more complex. Questions seek information on what product/service was received, suggestions about improving the product or its format, and suggestions for other products or services. This information will assist the program office in better identifying the needs of customers by providing more specific data. Other questions seek information that will help the

program office identify the types of users for specific products and how they use those products.

NOAA 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

If these conditions are not met, NOAA will submit an information collection request to OMB for approval through the normal PRA process.

NOAA has established a managing entity to serve for this generic clearance and will conduct an independent review of each information collection to ensure compliance with the terms of this clearance prior to submitting each collection to OMB.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

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 collected and the utility and the availability of specific technology to each respondent in a proposed customer research activity or feedback survey .

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2

NOAA will work to ensure the streamlining of all customer research and feedback surveys under this clearance. The information to be supplied on these surveys will not be duplicated on any other information collection.

DOC has an overlapping generic information collection which includes customer surveys (OMB Control No. 0690-0030). NOAA uses this vehicle for surveys for which less robust results are needed, as very little description/documentation is needed. DOC also has an overlapping generic information collection for improving customer experiences (0690-0035). However, NOAA is not authorized to use that survey

instrument.

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

Small business or other small entities may be involved in these information collections but NOAA will minimize the burden on them by sampling, asking for readily available information, or using short, easy-to-complete information collection instruments.

6. Describe the consequence to 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 these surveys were not conducted, the program offices have significantly less information for determining which areas of their programs should be modified, and how they might be modified, to provide better service to the public. The frequency of surveys will vary: some will be conducted once a year, while others will be ongoing. The ongoing approach is deemed especially useful when asking questions about specific products and formats, rather than about general satisfaction with a program. This more frequent feedback may allow the program office to get helpful information from respondents at the time a product is received or a Home Page is used, rather than later as part of an annual survey.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

There are no special circumstances. Surveys will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (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 by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

A Federal Register Notice soliciting public comments was published on March 2, 2021 (86 FR 12179). No comments were received.

A notice soliciting public comments for an additional 30 days will be published concurrently with the submission to OMB of this information collection package.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payment or gift will be given to any respondent.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.

This generic information collection request proposes to collect information via a variety of voluntary information collection activities (see section 12). Although the agency is not invoking statutory support for confidentiality, the quality of this type of information requires respondent candor and anonymity.

Therefore, the agency pledges to keep the information collected private unless otherwise required by law. Respondents will be notified on the data collection forms that their information will only be reported in aggregated form and no personally identifiable responses will be publicly released.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

No sensitive questions will be asked.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

A variety of instruments and platforms will be used to collect information from respondents. The annual burden hours requested are based on the number of collections we expect to conduct over the requested period for this clearance.

Information Collection	# of Respondents/year (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Burden Hrs / Response (d)	Total Annual Burden Hrs (e) = (c) x (d)
Customer Satisfaction Surveys (includes web site, IT annual surveys)	32000	1	32000	10 min	5333
Focus Groups/Interviews	300	1	300	2 hours	600
*NWS Impact Decision Support Services (IDSS)	7320	1	7320	7 min	854
*NWS Customer Survey for Official and Experimental Products/Services	19440	1	19440	6 min	1944
*NWS Hazard Simplification Surveys	6000	1	6000	5 min	500
*NOS Get in Your Sanctuary Day	800	1	800	5 min	67
Totals (3-Year Period)			65,860 (197,580)		9,298 (27,894)

* These recurring surveys are program specific. The number of responses and burden hours is included since these are known quantities.

Customer Feedback (Satisfaction Survey): Industry best practice is to present every customer the opportunity to provide feedback at each instrumented touchpoint/transaction in a customer journey (ex., After submitting a service request, completing a call at a call center, or visiting an in-person service center). NOAA will specify the total possible number of respondents based on estimated annual volume.

This clearance estimates that each member of a focus group is expected to spend an average of 2 hours per group. NOAA estimates that there will be approximately 10 segmented focus groups held each year with an average of thirty participants per group for an average of 300 participants.

13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection. There is no additional cost burden as the majority of surveys are email or web-based.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

All surveys will be conducted and analyzed in-house as part of program planning and thus there is no additional cost beyond regular staff time.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.

A comparison of the information collections listed in the Supporting Statement Part A for the previous renewal period with the actual submitted information collections has identified irregularities. In order to eliminate confusion, NOAA is no longer listing ‘previously approved’ collections unless they are known to be ongoing/recurring and all collections will be submitted to OMB for approval prior to dissemination.

A thorough scrub of approved information collections as well as those identified in the Supporting Statement – but not submitted – has been conducted. The current number of responses and burden hours is believed to be more accurate. However, NOAA will continue to evaluate this generic collection to refine the burden in future submissions.

	2018 estimates	2018 -2021 actuals	2021 estimates
Responses (3 yr period)	400,037	133,727	197,580
Hours (3 yr period)	51,752	17,250	27,894

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Feedback collected under this generic clearance will provide useful information, but will not yield (and is not aimed at yielding) data that can be generalized to the population of study. Findings will be used for general service improvement; they are not intended for publication.

Although NOAA does not intend to publish its findings, NOAA may receive requests to release the information (e.g., congressional inquiry, Freedom of Information Act requests). The Agency will disseminate the findings when appropriate, strictly following the Department of Commerce’s "Guidelines for Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public." and will include specific discussion of the limitation of the qualitative results discussed above.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”

The agency certifies compliance with [5 CFR 1320.9](#) and the related provisions of [5 CFR 1320.8\(b\)\(3\)](#).