

# Supporting Statement A

## Generic Clearance for Application Information for Fellowship, Internships, Training Programs, and Specialty Positions (National Cancer Institute)

May 24, 2022

(OMB No.: 0925-0761, Expiration Date: 7/31/2022)

Check off which applies:

- New
- Revision
- Reinstatement with Change
- Reinstatement without Change
- Extension
- Emergency
- Existing Collection in Use Without an OMB Number

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**Attachments**

Attachment 1: Mini-Supporting Statement A (SSA) Request Template

Attachment 2: List of Currently Approved NCI Applications

Attachment 3: Application Example

Attachment 4: Request for Reference Letter Example

## **A. Abstract**

This is a request for OMB to approve this information collection request for an extension for three years. The request “Generic Clearance for Application Information for Fellowships, Internships, Training Programs, and Specialty Positions” supports the science and research in a multidisciplinary environment at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), a part of the National Institutes of Health. Applicants may possess a variety of degrees including, but not limited to, *high school, post-baccalaureate, graduate, postdoctoral, Registered Nurse, and Doctor of Medicine (MD)*. Potential applicants may apply for cancer-related positions by submitting applications, resumes, curriculum vitae (CV), reference letters, letters of intent and interest, and other related documentation directly to the Divisions, Offices, and Centers. This information is necessary to evaluate the eligibility, merits, and quality of potential candidates and will also assist in matching potential candidates to various training and internship programs, and specialty positions. The information is for internal use to make decisions about candidates invited to visit and attend NCI fellowships, internships, training opportunities, and apply for specialized staff and faculty positions.

### **A.1 Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary**

The National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) goal is to train cancer researchers for the 21st Century. To that end, applications and supporting documentation involving fellows, interns, trainees, and research faculty (including, but not limited to, scientists, nurses, tenure-track investigators, and clinicians) enables the development of a workforce capable of advancing cancer research through a scientifically integrated approach. This request fulfills the requirements stated in the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S. Code § 285: “The general purpose of the National Cancer Institute is the conduct and support of research, training, health information dissemination, and other programs with respect to the cause diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of cancer, rehabilitation from cancer, and the continuing care of cancer patients and the families of cancer patients.”

NCI has applications for fellows, trainees, interns, specialized staff, and faculty positions throughout the research and administrative programs. The NCI announcements encourage content-specific applications from populations who are found to be underrepresented in biomedical research, as well as by individuals with a specific focus on cancer research. Since different programs are uniquely rich, interdisciplinary, and foster a dynamic environment, there are various requirements, qualifications, deadlines for applications, and application materials needed to apply for each position. Applicants would submit this information to gather a pool of suitable and qualified candidates based on the program and expertise, and to encourage scientists, researchers, and MDs to apply for specialty positions.

This generic collection will allow diverse NCI programs to mature and change the application content, while also accepting the development of new program applications for fellows, interns, trainees and specialty positions. All applications would serve the same function; however, the generic clearance process allows programs an abbreviated PRA clearance process to gather a tailored pool of candidates to meet the education needs of a rapidly changing science and workforce. In addition, this generic clearance would allow for central administration of the PRA Clearance process, form sharing among programs, and potentially fewer on-line application systems at NCI.

If available, these applications will be electronically submitted. All applications will be voluntary, low-burden, non-controversial, and will not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies. The results are not intended to be disseminated to the public. The information is for internal use to make decisions about candidates invited to visit and attend NCI fellowships, internships, training opportunities, and apply for specialized staff and faculty positions.

## **A.2 Purpose and Use of the Information Collection**

This generic clearance will permit the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to more efficiently collect applications and related documentation so that potential candidates may directly apply to a program of their choice. It is important to ensure that NCI's applications are targeted and streamlined, and work in conjunction with the research efforts of both the intramural and extramural scientists.

In addition, these generic applications would allow NCI to make changes and modify application information and related documentation in a rapid fashion to accommodate changing needs, programs, and specialties. The information collected would be evaluated to assess the candidates and their potential match for the various fellowship, internship, trainee programs, and specialty positions. A proposal for every application would be made through the Mini-Supporting Statement A Request Template (Attachment 1).

The purpose of the proposed information collection activity is to:

- Assure that prospective candidates meet basic eligibility requirements;
- Assess their potential as future researchers, physicians, and health care professionals;
- Determine where mutual research interests exist; and
- Make decisions regarding which applicants will be recommended and approved for a variety of awards.

In each case, completing the application is voluntary, but in order to receive due consideration, the prospective candidate is encouraged to complete all relevant fields. The information is for internal use to make decisions about who could benefit from the various fellowship, internship, training programs, and specialty positions at NCI.

Specific information that is collected varies depending on the position, program and length of fellowship or training program. Most applications collect information about personal information, citizenship information, educational history, research interests, employment history and experience, and motivation in pursuing research can assist in the review of the application. In addition to an application, a cover letter, resume, CV, transcript, work and/or writing samples, personal statement, diversity statement, tax forms (if claiming financial disadvantage), and contact information for three references may be requested. Reference letters are requested from Principal Investigators, professors, and supervisors to provide confirmation of an applicant's degree and expected graduation date and/or previous experience.

Since the previous submission, there have been 15 approved sub-studies with an approved request of 2,440 burden hours over 2.5 years. Attachment 2 contains a listing of studies approved from 07/31/2022.

### **A.3 Use of Information Technology and Burden Reduction**

Prospective candidates can complete an application online or through fillable PDFs (or Word documents) and submit by email. Most programs are developing an electronic application system, if one is not already in place.

Information collected is only made available through encrypted emails or folders with restricted access to NIH account holders who are NCI or NIH scientific and program officials who recommend or approve fellowship awards and to administrative, human resources, and financial officials who prepare the necessary documentation to arrange for stipend payments and to activate the approved awards. These authorized individuals will access their emails or the folders with restricted access through NIH credentials. The applications, including the applicant data, are stored on government-issued desktop computers and information systems that are protected at all entry points by firewalls and intrusion detection devices.

The NCI Privacy Act Coordinator was consulted, and it was determined that a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) is needed for every application system since personally identifiable information is collected and maintained. As a result, every generic clearance that is submitted, will be submitted with either a draft of an approved PIA by the NCI Privacy Coordinator, or a signed NIH PIA by the NIH Privacy Act Officer.

### **A.4 Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information**

An extensive search to identify duplication and similar information collections as is proposed here was undertaken. The National Institutes of Health, Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE), has a fellowship application and review process (OMB No. 0925-0299, Expiration Date 06/30/2019). However, OITE's information collection does not target underrepresented trainees and trainees with a specialized cancer research interest. OITE's

application does not include questions designed to describe the applicant's interests in the areas of cancer research that would determine their alignment with NCI interests. Also, OITE's applications are directed at primarily lab-based trainees and does not reflect the interests of the NCI programs outside of the lab (for instance the communications fellowship). The approved OITE clearance is ideally situated to help identify candidates from diverse backgrounds, however lacks the specificity to isolate candidates with a strong interest in cancer research and an intent to conduct research at the NCI.

In addition, NCI has several approved information collections for application programs and systems (Attachment 2) which are useful for specific programs, however none allow for the development of new program applications for fellows, interns, trainees, or specialty positions. The generic clearance process would allow newly identified programs to quickly gather a tailored pool of candidates to meet the needs of a rapidly changing cancer science and field. The specific applications, described in every Mini-SSA Request (Attachment 1), would allow NCI to identify and communicate with potential candidates expeditiously and provide information specific to their interests. These generic information collections will be program-based, not generalizable, and the information would only be used internally to make decisions about candidates' eligibility and assess on-going monitoring or improvement to increase or attract potential candidates for fellowships, internships, training programs, and specialty positions.

This proposed generic would cover the different programs within NCI that recruit individuals and have specific application questions, different time frames for applications, and different applicant requirements and accommodate the changing needs, programs, and specialties within the National Cancer Institute. For the existing NCI application programs (Attachment 2) that plan on continuing to collect information, a Mini-SSA Request would be submitted to OMB prior to their expiration date.

#### **A.5 Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities**

No small businesses or other small entities will be affected by this information collection.

#### **A.6 Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently**

Applications are voluntary information collections that may be completed at different times of the year, and with different frequency. The specific generic information collection will state how frequently the candidate may apply and how long the application will be retained.

#### **A.7 Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5**

There are no special circumstances relating to the guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5 that would impact the information collection.

#### **A.8.1 Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice Agency**

The 60-day Federal Register notice soliciting comments was published on March 17, 2022, Vol. 87, No. 52, Page 15257. **No comments were received.**

#### **A.8.2 Efforts to Consult Outside Agency**

No outside agency was consulted.

#### **A.9 Explanation of Any Payment of Gift to Respondents**

No payments, gifts to respondents, or incentives will be provided to respondents.

#### **A.10 Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents**

There is no assurance of confidentiality provided to the applicants, however their information will be kept private, to the extent provided by law. Personal identifiable information (PII) is collected, maintained and stored on secured computers requiring password entry to access. Information collected is available only to NCI scientific and program officials who recommend or approve awards and to administrative, human resources, and financial officials who prepare the necessary documentation to arrange for stipend payments and to activate, renew, and terminate approved awards. These individuals are assigned login credentials, including "strong" passwords that conform to standards used by the NIH Center for Information Technology, and the online tools these individuals use to access applicant data are restricted to NCI-approved users. Applicants receive login credentials, including randomly generated or user-defined passwords, when they first apply. Also, references submit their letters of recommendation via a password-protected Web site. The information collected is subject to the Privacy Act System of Records Notice, 09-25-0014 – Clinical Research: Student Records, HHS/NIH/OD/OIR/OE (Attachment 5).

#### **A.11 Justification for Sensitive Questions**

These applications do collect Personally Identifiable Information (PII), including: name, contact information, education, socioeconomic status, and employment history. In addition, sensitive questions are asked including race/ethnicity, gender, birth year, and disabilities. All questions are voluntary and used to assess equitable access. In addition, responses to these questions allows the NCI offices to accommodate special needs.

#### **A.12 Estimates of Hour Burden Including Annualized Hourly Costs**

The estimated annualized burden are 7,500 hours. It is anticipated there will be 3,000 applicants and it will take approximately 1 hour to complete the application form, resume, and CV. In addition, it is expected that there will be 3 reference letters per applicant with an estimated 9,000 respondents (Table A.12-1).



A.12-1 Estimated Annualized Burden Hours

Category of Respondent	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Average Time Per Response (in hours)	Total Annual Burden Hours
Individuals (Applicants)	3,000	1	60/60	3,000
Individuals (Reference Letters)	9,000	1	30/60	4,500
<b>Totals</b>		<b>12,000</b>		<b>7,500</b>

The annualized cost to the respondents (applicants and references) is estimated to be \$243,480.00 (Table A.12-2).

A.12-2 Annualized Cost to the Respondents

Category of Respondents	Total Annual Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate*	Respondent Cost
Individuals (Applicants)	3,000	\$27.07	\$81,210.00
Individuals (Professional Reference)	4,500	\$36.06	\$162,270.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$243,480.00</b>

\*For applicants, the Mean Hourly Wage Rate was obtained from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), title "All-Occupations" 00-0000, [https://www.bls.gov/oes/2020/May/oes\\_nat.htm#00-0000](https://www.bls.gov/oes/2020/May/oes_nat.htm#00-0000). For professional references, the Annual Mean Wage Rate was obtained from Occupation Title (25-1081), Postsecondary Teachers, and divided by 2,080 (to account for an estimated Hourly Wage Rate).

**A.13 Estimate of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers**

There is no capital, operating or maintenance costs to report.

**A.14 Annualized Cost to the Federal Government**

The total annualized cost to the Federal Government is estimated to be \$61,750.00 (Table A.14-1). The program manager will be responsible to keeping up the website, distributing, and reviewing the applications. In some cases, a contractor may be involved in setting up and maintaining the electronic application system.

Table A.14-1. Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

Staff	Grade/Step	Salary**	% of Effort	Fringe (if applicable)	Total Cost to Gov't
<b>Federal Oversight</b>					
Program Manager	13/4	\$117,505	10%		\$11,750.50
<b>Contractor Cost</b>					\$50,000.00
Travel					\$0
Other Cost					\$0
<b>Total</b>					<b>\$61,750.50</b>

\*\*The salary in the table above is cited from <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/22Tables/html/DCB.aspx>

**A.15 Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments**

This is an Extension of a currently approved submission. There are no substantive changes to this submission, however the burden hours have decreased by 7,500 hours, also reducing the Annualized Cost to Respondents by 215,850.00 to reflect a more accurate estimate based on actual data.

**A.16 Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule**

There are no plans for tabulation or publication. Different programs have different opening and closing times for their applications.

**A.17 Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate**

There is no request for exemption from displaying the expiration date for OMB approval.

**A.18 Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

There are no exceptions to the Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.