Request for Approval under the "Generic Clearance for Formative Data Collections for Evaluation, Research, and Evidence-Building"

(OMB Control Number: 3245-4025)

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Evaluation of Field Office Performance 8(a) Survey

PURPOSE:

This data collection effort is part of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) field operations performance evaluation. The goal is to enhance the SBA's understanding of the role of the district offices in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. This survey data collection effort focuses on firms participating in the 8(a) Business Development Program (8(a) Program). The survey aims to connect with operators of small businesses that district offices work within the 8(a) Program. These individuals have first-hand experience working with district offices and can provide unique insight into this relationship and the role of district offices in local small business ecosystems. Findings from this effort and the companion 8(a) Program focus groups will contribute to the Office of Field Operation's effort to promote continuous improvement, align activities around equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem building, enable strategic decision-making, and support communication and collaboration within the ecosystem.

TYPE OF COLLECTION: (Check of	ne)
[X] Survey/ questionnaire	[] Cognitive interview
[] Focus group/small group discussion	[] User testing
[] Interviews	[] Observation/field study
[] Other:	

CERTIFICATION:

I certify the following to be true:

- 1. The collections are voluntary.
- 2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
- 3. The collections are non-controversial and do not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies.
- 4. 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 near future.
- 5. Personally identifiable information (PII) is collected only to the extent necessary and is not retained.
- 6. Information gathered is intended to be used for general service improvement and program management purposes.
- 7. Summaries and aggregate results may be included in public-facing evaluation or similar report.
- 8. Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of <u>substantially</u> informing <u>influential</u> policy decisions.

Name: Katherine Aaby

Title: Associate Administrator, OPPCFO

All instruments used to collect information must include:

OMB Control No. 3245-0425 Expiration Date: 10/31/2025

DESCRIPTION OF THIS SPECIFIC COLLECTION

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

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a.	How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)
	[X] Web-based or other forms of Social Media
	[] Telephone or other audio technology
	[] Video
	[] In-person
	[] Mail
	[] Other

b. Will interviewers or facilitators be used? [] Yes [X] No

2. Description of respondents/participants

Individuals representing 8(a) Program firms will participate in this data collection effort. The SBA maintains a list of approximately 4,800 firms participating in the 8(a) Program. Approximately 20% of all firms will be invited to participate. Half of the invitees will represent firms in the developmental stage (years one through 4), and half will represent firms in the transitional stage (the last five years). Based on prior evaluation efforts, the response rate for this group is estimated to be 35%.

3. Activity timeframe

The survey will be deployed in late Spring remain open through early Summer of 2024.

4. Collection procedures

The official SBA introduction email introducing the study will be followed by a recruitment email containing personalized survey links. Personalized links facilitate targeted reminders and reduce any burden on those who have already completed the survey. Up to three reminder emails will be sent to invitees who have not responded. If the targeted response rates listed above are unmet, the survey may be held open for three additional weeks with up to three additional reminder emails sent. Based on pre-testing the survey with five individuals, the anticipated time to complete the survey is 10-20 minutes.

5. Provide the question list (Submit all instruments, instructions, and scripts with this request).

See Appendix A (Survey Correspondence and Communication) and B (Web Survey Informed Consent and Instrument).

6. Use and dissemination of the results

Aggregated results will be shared in a one-page summary report, evaluation report, and briefings. They will also be used to inform a customer journey map specific to 8(a) participants, the development of performance measure recommendations, and a visualization depicting the role of the SBA with the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected? [] Yes [X] No

- 2. If Yes, will any information that is collected be included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974? [] Yes [] No
- 3. If Yes, has an up-to-date System of Records Notice (SORN) been published? [] Yes [] No

GIFTS OR PAYMENTS

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

BURDEN HOUR COMPUTATION

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden Hours
Individuals	350	20 minutes	117
Totals	350	20 minutes	117

BURDEN COST COMPUTATION

Respondent cost estimates are based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2023 median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers of \$28.63 per hour.

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Hourly Rate	Response Time	Total Estimated Cost
Individuals	350	\$28.63	20 minutes	\$3,349.71
Totals	350	\$28.63	20 minutes	\$3,349.71

FEDERAL COST: The estimated annual cost to the Federal government is \$3,130, which includes 10 hours for a GS-14 evaluator, 5 hours for a GS-15 manager, and \$2,335 for an independent third-party contractor.

OTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION

REQUESTED APPROVAL DATE: April 8, 2024

ICR REQUEST CONTACT:

Name: Shay Meinzer

Title: Lead Program Evaluator/COR **Telephone Number:** (202) 539-1429 **Email Address:** shay.meinzer@sba.gov

Appendix A Survey Correspondence and Communication

Initial Communication Introducing Study and Upcoming Data Collection Requests

Email Subject Line: Requesting your participation in an important research study

highlighting the role of district offices within the SBA

Email To: [8(a) firms]

Cc: shay.meinzer@sba.gov; shalyn@pacific-research.org

Email From: [SBA]

Good morning/afternoon,

The purpose of this email is to **inform you of an important research study** coming out of the Small Business Administration (SBA). The SBA has contracted Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) to study the role of district offices within the SBA and the local areas that they serve. The results of this work will be used by the SBA to better understand the impact of district offices and to identify ways the SBA can continue to serve small businesses such as yours in the years ahead.

In the next week you will receive an email from PRE asking you to **participate in a survey** focused on your experience with your local SBA district office. You may also receive an invitation to **participate in a focus group**. We would like to ask for your help and encourage you to provide your input and participate in these important efforts.

If you have any questions, please email Shay Meinzer at shay.meinzer@sba.gov or Shalyn Stevens at shalyn@pacific-research.org who will be managing these efforts.

Sincerely,
[INSERT SIGNATURE BLOCK]

Invitation to Participate in External Survey from PRE

Email Subject Line: Your input needed – Participate in a survey to support the SBA's district

office research efforts

Email To: [8(a) firms]

Cc: shay.meinzer@sba.gov

Email From: Shalyn Stevens

Good morning/afternoon,

As [SBA] shared with you on [DATE], the SBA has contracted the team at Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) to conduct an **important research study** on the role of district offices

within the SBA and the local areas that they serve. To assist in this effort, **we are asking for your participation in a brief 10-20 minute survey** about your experience with your local SBA district office.

Please complete the survey by [DATE] using the following link:

[INSERT LINK]

Each link is individualized, so please do not forward your link to other staff at your organization.

Your participation is greatly appreciated! If you have any questions, please email me at shalyn@pacific-research.org or Shay Meinzer at shalyn@pacific-research.org or shalyn@pacific-research.org or shalyn@pacific-research.org

Thank you,

Shalyn Stevens, Ph.D.

Senior Research Associate, Pacific Research and Evaluation

Follow-Up Invitation to Participate in External Survey from PRE

Email Subject Line: REMINDER: Your input needed – Participate in a survey to support the

SBA's district office research efforts

Email To: [8(a) firms]
Cc: shay.meinzer@sba.gov
Email From: Shalyn Stevens

Good morning/afternoon,

This email is a **reminder to participate in a brief 10-20 minute survey** about your experience with your local SBA district office.

Please complete the survey by [DATE] using the following link:

[INSERT LINK]

Each link is individualized, so please do not forward your link to other staff at your organization.

Your participation is greatly appreciated! If you have any questions, please email me at shalyn@pacific-research.org or Shay Meinzer at shay.meinzer@sba.gov.

Thank you,

Shalyn Stevens, Ph.D. Senior Research Associate, Pacific Research and Evaluation

Final Invitation to Participate in External Survey from PRE

Email Subject Line: FINAL REMINDER: Your input needed – Participate in a survey to

support the SBA's district office research efforts

Email To: [8(a) firms]
Cc: shay.meinzer@sba.gov
Email From: Shalyn Stevens

Good morning/afternoon,

This email is a **final reminder to participate in a brief 10-20 minute survey** about your experience with your local SBA district office. The survey is **set to close at the end of the day tomorrow**, [DATE].

Please complete the survey by tomorrow, [DATE] using the following link:

[INSERT LINK]

Each link is individualized, so please do not forward your link to other staff at your organization.

Your participation is greatly appreciated! If you have any questions, please email me at shalyn@pacific-research.org or Shay Meinzer at shalyn@pacific-research.org or shalyn@pacific-research.org or shalyn@pacific-research.org

Thank you,

Shalyn Stevens, Ph.D.

Senior Research Associate, Pacific Research and Evaluation

Appendix B Web Survey Informed Consent and Instrument

Informed Consent:

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has contracted with Pacific Research and Evaluation, an independent expert in evaluation, to conduct an important research study designed to better understand the impact of SBA district offices and to identify ways the SBA can continue to serve organizations like yours in the years ahead. It's time to add your voice!

- The survey should take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete.
- Your survey link is unique; please do not forward to anyone else.
- Do not enter any sensitive information (e.g., personally identifiable information, specific names of specific individuals, etc.).

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Pacific Research and Evaluation's Project Director for this work, Dr. Shalyn Stevens, at shalyn@pacific-research.org. If you have additional questions or concerns about the research efforts, please contact the SBA Contracting Officer Representative (COR) for this project, Shay Meinzer, at shay.meinzer@sba.gov.

Q1)	Would you	like to proceed	with the	survey?
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Yes, I agree to participate
1 Co, 1 agree to participate

No, I do NOT agree to participate.

[If "No, I do NOT agree to participate" is selected, the participant will be directed to the "End of Survey – No Consent" message detailed in the ""End of Survey" Messages" section below.]

Web Survey Instrument			
Instructions/Item	Response Options		
Q2) Is your organization currently a participant in the 8(a) small business development program? [If option "2" is selected, direct participant to "End of Survey – Ineligible" message detailed in the "Closing for External Survey" section below.]	1 = Yes 2 = No		
Q3) How did you or your organization first learn about working with the SBA? (Select all that apply)	1 = From another organization already participating in the 8(a) program 2 = From the SBA website 3 = From an APEX		

Web Survey Instrument			
Instructions/Item	Response Options		
	Accelerator (formerly, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers) 4 = From a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) 5 = From a SCORE business mentor 6 = From a Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) 7 = From a Women's Business Center (WBC) 8 = From a media advertisement (e.g., email, flyer, radio) 9 = By attending a community event 10 = Directly contacted by the SBA 11 = By reaching out and contacting my local SBA district office 12 = Other, please specify: 13 = I don't know		
Q4) Considering your needs right now, how would you prefer to learn about services and resources offered by the SBA to small business owners? (Select all that apply)	 1 = Email 2 = Phone 3 = Virtual meetings 4 = In-person meetings 5 = SBA website 6 = Other, please specify: 		
Q5) In what year of the 8(a) small business development program is your business?	1 = Year 1 2 = Year 2 3 = Year 3 4 = Year 4 5 = Year 5 6 = Year 6 7 = Year 7 8 = Year 8 9 = Year 9 10 = I don't know		
Q6) What was the reason(s) your organization was first motivated to apply to the 8(a) small business development program? (Select all that apply)	1 = To increase access to contracting opportunities in the federal marketplace.		

Web Survey Instrument		
Instructions/Item	Response Options	
	2 = To receive contracting preferences. 3 = To access business development services. 4 = To gain access to mentorship opportunities. 5 = To receive federal surplus property on a priority basis. 6 = To increase capacity. 7 = To increase revenue. 8 = To be competitive. 9 = To grow technical competence to engage agencies about federal contracts. 10 = To grow technical competence in the business development process. 11 = Other, please specify: 12 = I don't know	
Q7) How long had your organization been in business when it was accepted into the 8(a) program?	1 = Less than 1 year 2 = Between 1 and 2 years 3 = Between 2 and 5 years 4 = Between 5 and 10 years 5 = More than 10 years 6 = I don't know	
Q8) From the time of your application submission, how long did it take for your organization to be approved for the 8(a) program?	1 = Less than 1 month 2 = 1 to 3 months 3 = 4 to 6 months 4 = 7 to 11 months 5 = 1 to 2 years 6 = More than 2 years 7 = I don't know	
Q9) How complex was the process of becoming an 8(a) certified business?	1 = Extremely complex 2 = Somewhat complex 3 = Neither complex nor simple 4 = Somewhat simple 5 = Extremely simple 6 = I don't know	
Q10) Which of the following was your organization's first point of contact at the SBA when you were trying to learn about the 8(a) program?	1 = Local District Office2 = Office of GovernmentContracting and BusinessDevelopment	

Web Survey Instrument			
Instructions/Item	Response Options		
Q11a) Since joining the 8(a) program, the number of federal contracts my organization has won is	3 = Office of Business Development 3 = Other, please specify: 4 = I don't know 1 = Significantly fewer than I was expecting. 2 = Somewhat fewer than I was expecting. 3 = About what I was expecting. 4 = Somewhat greater than I was expecting. 5 = Significantly greater than I was expecting. 6 = I did not have any expectations when first joining the program. 7 = I have not applied for a		
Q11b) Please estimate how many federal contracts your organization has won since joining the 8(a) program.	federal contract since joining the program. [drop-down list: 0 to 20+, I don't know]		
Q12) Since joining the 8(a) program, please indicate how your organization's needs have changed with respect to support needed in each of the following areas:	1 = Significantly less support needed in this area now		
 a) Accessing contracting opportunities in the federal marketplace b) Receiving preference in contracting opportunities c) Accessing business development services d) Accessing mentorship opportunities e) Receiving federal surplus property on a priority basis f) Increasing capacity g) Increasing revenue h) Increasing competitiveness i) Growing technical competence to engage agencies about federal contracts j) Growing technical competence in the business development 	2 = Somewhat less support needed in this area now 3 = There has been no change in the support needed in this area 4 = Somewhat more support needed in this area now 5 = Significantly more support needed in this area now 6 = Not applicable		
Q13) How else have your needs changed since joining the 8(a) program?	Write-in		
For the next set of questions, please consider your interactions with your local SBA district office or Business Opportunity Specialist	1= Region 1 (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)		

Web Survey Instrument			
Instructions/Item	Response Options		
(BOS). Q14) SBA district offices are broken into regions based on the state they serve. Please select your organization's region/state from the following list.	2 = Region 2 (NJ, NY, PR, USVI) 3 = Region 3 (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV) 4 = Region 4 (AL, FL, KY, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN) 5 = Region 5 (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI) 6 = Region 6 (AR, LA, NM, OK, TX) 7 = Region 7 (IA, KS, MO, NE) 8 = Region 8 (CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY) 9 = Region 9 (AZ, CA, GU, HI, NV) 10 = Region 10 (AK, ID, OR, WA)		
Q15) How frequently does your organization interact with your local SBA district office?	1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Very frequently 6 = I don't know		
Q16) How has your organization's frequency of contact with your local SBA district office changed over time?	1 = Interactions have become significantly less frequent over time. 2 = Interactions have become somewhat less frequent over time. 3 = The amount of interaction has remained similar over time. 4 = Interactions have become somewhat more frequent over time. 5 = Interactions have become significantly more frequent over time. 6 = I don't know.		
Q18) How frequently do you personally use each of the following methods to communicate with your local SBA district office ? a) Email	1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often		
b) Phone	5 = Very frequently		

Web Survey Instrument		
Instructions/Item	Response Options	
c) Virtual meetings d) In-person meetings Q19) Please list any other methods you use to communicate with your local SBA district office .	Write-in	
Q20) How easy is it to get in touch with someone from your local SBA district office when needed?	1 = Very difficult 2 = Somewhat difficult 3 = Neither difficult nor easy 4 = Somewhat easy 5 = Very easy 6 = I don't directly contact my local SBA district office	
21a) Have you or staff in your organization received training (e.g., briefings, informational sessions) from your local SBA district office ?	1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = I don't know	
[If "1" is selected, Q21b will be displayed to the participant]		
21b) How helpful was the training that you received from your local SBA district office? [Q21b is only displayed to those that select "1" for Q21a]	1 = Not at all helpful 2 = Somewhat unhelpful 3 = Neither unhelpful nor helpful 4 = Somewhat helpful 5 = Very helpful 6 = I do not recall 7 = Training was offered but I did not attend	
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement.	1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither disagree nor	
Q23) My local SBA district office is effective at helping small disadvantaged businesses procure federal contracts.	agree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree 6 = I don't know	
Q24) How satisfied are you with the amount of collaboration between your organization and your local SBA district office ?	1 = Very dissatisfied 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied 3 = Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied 4 = Somewhat satisfied 5 = Very satisfied	

Web Survey Instrument		
Instructions/Item	Response Options	
Q25) Please describe why you are [insert selected response from Q24] with the amount of collaboration between your organization and your local SBA district office .	Write-in	
Q26) What could your local SBA district office do to better support 8(a) organizations like yours?	Write-in	
For the next set of questions, please consider your interactions with SBA program offices (e.g., Office of Capital Access; Office of Government Contracting and Business Development).		
Q27) How frequently does your organization interact with SBA program offices? [Responses of: "Never," "Rarely," or "I don't know" will be branched to the next question set in the survey (Q33), skipping the remainder of questions referring to "program offices".] Q28) How has your organization's frequency of contact with your SBA program offices changed over time? [Q28 is only displayed to those that select "3," "4," or "5" for Q27]	1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Very frequently 6 = I don't know 1 = Interactions have become significantly less frequent over time. 2 = Interactions have become somewhat less frequent over time. 3 = The amount of interaction has remained	
	similar over time. 4 = Interactions have become somewhat more frequent over time. 5 = Interactions have become significantly more frequent over time. 6 = I don't know.	
Q29) How many staff from your organization directly interact with SBA program offices ?	1 = I'm the only one from my organization who directly interacts with the	
[Q29 is only displayed to those that select "3," "4," or "5" for Q27]	SBA. 2 = Less than half of the staff in my organization directly interact with the SBA. 3 = About half of the staff in my organization directly interact with the SBA. 4 = More than half of the staff in my organization	

Web Survey Instrument		
Instructions/Item	Response Options	
	directly interact with the SBA. 5 = Nearly everyone in my organization directly interacts with the SBA. 6 = I don't know	
Q30) How frequently do you personally use each of the following methods to communicate with SBA program offices? a) Email b) Phone c) Virtual meetings d) In-person meetings [Q30 is only displayed to those that select "3," "4," or "5" for Q27]	1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Very frequently	
Q31) Please list any other methods you use to communicate with SBA program offices . [Q31 is only displayed to those that select "3," "4," or "5" for Q27]	Write-in	
Q32) How easy is it to get in touch with someone from an SBA program office when needed? [Q32 is only displayed to those that select "3," "4," or "5" for Q27]	1 = Very difficult 2 = Somewhat difficult 3 = Neither difficult nor easy 4 = Somewhat easy 5 = Very easy 6 = I don't directly contact SBA program offices	
Q33) Thinking about all of your work and interactions with the SBA so far, what do you consider to be particular strengths or benefits of working with the SBA?	Write-in	
Q34) Considering all interactions with the SBA since your organization joined the 8(a) program, which aspects of the relationship or process have you been <u>most</u> satisfied with?	Write-in	
Q35) Considering all interactions with the SBA since your organization joined the 8(a) program, which aspects of the relationship or process have you been <u>least</u> satisfied with?	Write-in	
Q36) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences working with the SBA?	Write-in	

Web Survey Instrument		
Instructions/Item	Response Options	
[If "Yes, I agree to participate" is selected for Q1 and the participant completes the survey, the "End of Survey – Complete" message detailed in the "Closing for External Survey" section below will be displayed after Q36.]		

"End of Survey" Messages

"End of Survey - No Consent" Message

Thank you for your interest in completing this survey. If you have additional questions or input, please email Pacific Research and Evaluation's Project Director for this evaluation, Dr. Shalyn Stevens, at shalyn@pacific-research.org.

"End of Survey – Ineligible" Message

Thank you for your interest in completing this survey. While your willingness to participate is appreciated, you do not currently qualify to participate.

If you have additional questions or input, please email Pacific Research and Evaluation's Project Director for this evaluation, Dr. Shalyn Stevens, at shalyn@pacific-research.org.

"End of Survey - Complete" Message

Thank you for completing this survey. We are grateful for your participation. Your responses will be combined with those of other SBA partners and will be used by the SBA to better understand the impact of district offices and to identify ways the SBA can continue to serve organizations like yours in the years ahead.

If you have additional questions or input, please email Pacific Research and Evaluation's Project Director for this evaluation, Dr. Shalyn Stevens, at shalyn@pacific-research.org.