

**Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission  
Research Agreement Application for the Use of OPM Record-Level Data  
OMB Control # 3206-NEW**

**A. Justification**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.**

The United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) collects and maintains record-level data on job applicants, Federal employees, annuitants, and other beneficiaries of its programs and services, the confidentiality of which is protected by the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a). OPM is seeking to share this information with researchers, subject to stringent requirements to protect the identity of the individuals in the data from unauthorized disclosure of information. The purpose for sharing is to further policy-relevant Federal workforce research, with the intent of informing and evaluating OPM's policies, programs, and services.

Under the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA), OPM is required to “establish and maintain (and assist in the establishment and maintenance of) research programs to study improved methods and technologies in Federal personnel management.” OPM must also evaluate these research programs and “establish and maintain a program for the collection and public dissemination of information relating to personnel management research and for encouraging and facilitating the exchange of information among interested persons and entities.”

The CSRA authorizes OPM to carry out its research functions “directly or through agreement or contract.” When OPM chooses to conduct or evaluate research programs through agreement or contract, it can do so with “Federal agencies, State and local governments, institutions of higher education and other public and private institutions or organizations, profit or nonprofit.”

OPM is seeking to advance its ability to share data through agreements with legitimate research entities that have conceived policy-relevant analyses and that are able and willing to protect the data from unauthorized disclosure. These agreements are termed “Research Agreements” and OPM has developed an internal policy and procedures for engaging in these Research Agreements.

OPM seeks to make the data available for statistical, research, or evaluation purposes to entities qualified and capable of research and analysis consistent with the statistical, research, or evaluation purposes for which the data were provided or are maintained, but only if the data are used and protected in accordance with the terms and condition stated in the Research Agreement, upon receipt of such assurance of qualification and capability, including relevant data security provisions, and it is agreed by the entity requesting such information and OPM.

All data containing record-level data maintained by OPM that are provided to the research entity and all information derived from that data are subject to the Research Agreement. The research entity may only use the Research Agreement data in a manner consistent with the terms stipulated in a Memorandum of Understanding for Research Agreements.

- 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.**

Researchers will complete the application form, detailing their proposed use of OPM's de-identified record-level data to conduct a research study, including the study objective and uses of the study findings. The application form also asks them to describe how they will secure any data provided by OPM.

The information collected will enable OPM to determine whether a Research Agreement permitting access to record-level by legitimate research entities is in the public interest.

- 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.**

Documents will be completed in the PDF format and returned to OPM via email and digital signatures may be used. Given the low number of expected applications, development of a web form would likely be cost prohibitive for OPM at this time.

- 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 Item 2 above.**

There is no other source of the required information. Research Agreements are issued only for unique research projects, which must be uniquely described. Assurances by research entities and affidavits by research staff promising to follow all relevant federal laws and regulations and not to disclose the data provided to them must be uniquely described.

- 5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I) describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

There is no negative impact on small business or other small entities. They may benefit from either participating in a Research Agreement or may benefit from programs, policies, or services that are impacted from the findings of a Research Agreement.

- 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 the information is not collected, OPM would not be able to enter into a Research Agreement with the applicant. The applicant would not be able to conduct the research, and OPM and the public would not be able to realize the research and benefit from the findings.

- 7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:**
  - **requiring respondents to report information to the agency more than quarterly;**
  - **requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
  - **requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**
  - **requiring respondents to retain records other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;**
  - **in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results than can be generalized to the universe of study;**
  - **requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**
  - **that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or**
  - **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

The proposed data collection activities are consistent with the guidelines set forth in 5 CFR 1320 (Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public). There are no special circumstances that require deviation from these guidelines as far as respondent follow-up requirements, record retention, and/or statistical data.

- 8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication 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.**
  - **Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping disclosure, or reporting format (if any) and the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.**

- **Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years -- even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.**

On November 25, 2022, OPM published a 60 Day Notice requesting comment on this collection. Only one comment was received under Document Citation: 87 FR 72518, Page: 72518 which stated that OPM does not pick up its phone calls. Therefore, the comment has been adjudicated to be outside of the scope of this collection.

On April 3, 2024, OPM published a 30 Day Notice at 89 FR 23076 requesting further comments.

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

None – payment and gifts will not be provided.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation or agency policy.**

With respect to the entities and affiliated researchers applying for the licenses: we make no assurance of confidentiality with respect to the documents submitted in support of any Research Agreement.

With respect to the parties whose record-level or sensitive information is requested, the research entity undertakes to share that information only with members of the research team, to protect the information from disclosure to others, to store the data on a secure system, and to publish research based on the information only after review by OPM to prevent unlawful disclosures.

Any forms in this information collection that do contain record-level/sensitive information do contain the appropriate Privacy Act Notice in the document and are protected under the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) - 5 U.S. Code § 552.

**11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and 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.**

Not applicable - there are no questions of a sensitive nature in this collection.

**12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:**

- **indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices;**
- **if this request covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I; and**
- **provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead this cost should be included in Item 13.**

Table 1: Data Collection Activities and Anticipated Burden

Information Collection	Number of Respondents	Frequency of Response	Responses Per Annum	Burden Hour Per Response	Annual Burden Hours	Hourly Cost Per Response	Annual Cost
Application	20	1	20	1	20	\$40.00	\$800.00
<b>Total</b>	20						\$1800.00

**Costs to Applicants.** Estimate assumes each applicant spends about 1 person-hour to complete the application. Most of this time is invested by a professor or other senior researcher in a social science occupation or similar. Average hourly rate is assumed to be \$40 as per the Bureau of Labor Statistics Each applicant would incur costs equal to 1 hour x \$40 = \$40. Total costs to applicants, assuming 20 applicants, will equal 20 x \$40= \$800.

**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information (do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).**

- **The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life); and (b) a total operation and maintenance purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information. Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of**

capital equipment, the discount rate(s) and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities;

- If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10) utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.
- generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

There is no additional total annual cost burden to respondents or record-keepers beyond the labor cost of burden-hours described in item 12 above.

**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. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.**

The Research Agreement application is reviewed by a Research Agreement Board consisting of eight individuals. The Board members each review the application for specific criteria including:

- 1) Applicant presents a plausible policy-relevant scientific hypothesis to be tested that is within the scope of OPM Research Agreements and is aligned to OPM's priorities.
- 2) Data is available, is covered by a system of records notice, and can be generated for the questions posed.
- 3) Applicant proposes data security provisions consistent with OPM regulations.
- 4) Applicant's proposal would not unreasonably burden OPM's resources.
- 5) The proposed research does not pose a significant risk to OPM or the individuals whose data is contained within the requested data assets.

Each board member reviews for criteria relevant to their area of expertise and may spend .5 hours on reviewing a single application. Thus, each application is expected to result in 4 hours of review. The average board member may be a GS-15, with an average hourly rate of \$62.21. Expecting 20 applications per year, the total review cost will be  $8 \times .5 \times \$62.21 \times 20 = \$4,976.80$ .

Additionally, one staff member would be responsible for conducting recordkeeping related to each application. Expecting 20 applications per year and 20 active projects at any given year, each of the 40 would be expected to take one burden hour of recordkeeping annually. Assuming recordkeeping is conducted by a GS-7 with an average hourly rate of \$21.22, the recordkeeping cost would be  $40 \times 1 \times \$21.22 = \$848.80$ .

Thus, the annual cost to OPM is expected to be \$5,825.60.

**15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 and 14 of the OMB Form 83-I.**

Not applicable – this is a new information collection and therefore there are no changes to explain.

**16. For collection 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.**

Not applicable – the results of the applications will not be published.

**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.**

Not applicable – the OMB expiration date will be displayed.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in item 19.**

None.

**B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

No statistical methods will be used on applications for Research Agreements.