

SUPPORTING STATEMENT PART A
U.S. Department of Commerce
Generic Clearance for Funding Opportunity Announcements and Related Forms
OMB Control No. 0690-NEW

ABSTRACT

This is a request for a new generic clearance to cover information collection requirements (ICRs) in funding opportunity announcements (FOAs) extending beyond what is collected on currently approved standard forms. The Department of Commerce agencies manage funding programs that vary in purpose, target population, and activities. OMB approval of this umbrella generic ICR will assist Commerce in timely carrying out its responsibilities under the Paperwork Reduction Act by accurately accounting for the public burden and reporting associated with FOA applications and related forms.

The following Agency Bureaus and offices will be authorized to use this Generic Clearance:

Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS); U.S. Census Bureau (Census); Economic Development Administration (EDA); Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA); International Trade Administration (ITA); Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA); National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST); National Technical Information Service (NTIS); National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA); Office of the Under Secretary of Economic Affairs (OUSEA), and the Office of the Secretary (OS).

Justification

1. **Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Describe the practical utility of the collection, including proposed and actual use.**

The Department of Commerce is required by 2 CFR 200.204 to announce discretionary grants and cooperative agreements and other financial assistance programs through public announcement. This includes announcements for pilot programs and one-time funding programs. A variety of public-facing documents are used to meet this requirement such as Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs), Request for Applications (RFAs), Other Transaction Agreements (OTAs), Notice of Funding Announcements (NOFAs), Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSAs), *Grants.gov* announcements, Notice of Awards, or other funding announcement types. The specific statutes for these programs cannot be identified in advance but will be included as part of each submission request to OMB.

Under OMB Circular A-102, Section C, heads of Executive departments are instructed to obtain Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act (codified at 44 U.S.C. § 3501, et seq., with regulations at 5 C.F.R. Part 1320) before collecting information associated with grants and financial assistance that is “different or additional” to the information collected on approved standard

forms (e.g., SF-424, etc.). Further, OMB Circular A-110, Subpart B instructs Federal agencies to comply with the requirements of 5 C.F.R. Part 1320, "Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public," with regard to all forms used by the Federal awarding agency in place of or as a supplement to the SF-424 series.

To ensure financial assistance is awarded to the applicant(s) best suited to perform the functions of fulfilling the mission of the Commerce program, applicants are generally required to submit an application. The first part of the process consists of submitting the application form(s), which for grants includes the Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance and may include additional standard grant application forms. The second part of a grant application usually requires a technical proposal demonstrating the applicant's capabilities in accordance with a statement of work or selection criteria and other related information as specified in the funding announcement. In some cases, applicants may be asked for additional information as part of the application or following the award of a grant or OTA that is not captured on a preexisting, approved information collection. For example:

- a) Applicants may be asked to describe the applicant organization, including skills, experience, biographies, history, knowledge, qualifications, capabilities, office locations, and/or organization chart.
- b) Applicants may be asked to describe other entities participating or collaborating with the applicant organization that may include businesses, workforce investment boards, local and state government and non-government offices, universities, letters of support, copies of agreements, and/or contracts.
- c) Applicants may be asked to describe a plan for implementing or achieving the program goals. Requested elements may include strategy, process, method, schedule, timeline, innovations, communications, program design, management, focus, and/or statement of work.
- d) Applicants may be asked to describe the measures of success for the plan and to provide progress reports. Requested elements may include outcomes, goals, number served, number hired, increase in wages, educational degrees, cost effectiveness, results oriented model, feedback mechanism, performance accountability, evaluation and improvement, and/or the proposed system to monitor the implementation of program activities and achievement of stated project objectives.
- e) Applicants may be asked to describe the recipients or target audience of the plan. Requested elements may include description and/or demographics of service region, occupations served, diversity, and civil rights information.
- f) Applicants may be asked to include a budget plan and to describe alternative funding sources. This element may include sources, supplemental sources, material support, in kind support, matching funds, and/or other support.
- g) Applicants may be asked to describe how this program can or will outlast the federal funding.

Such information will only be asked where necessary to evaluate the application or to run the program, and duplicative information (included any information provided in the SF-424 forms) will not be requested on any forms approved under this collection of information, except for the minimal information necessary to allow for identification of separate forms in an application package (i.e., applicant and/or project name).

Awards made in connection with this supporting statement are subject to the general recordkeeping requirements at 2 CFR 200.334 – 200.338. This includes storing application information and any other documents necessary to support the application, selection of an application, negotiation, and any allowable pre-award costs. To ensure application and award documents are effectively tracked and recorded, Commerce will comply with its records management policies. Any specific or additional program-specific recordkeeping requirements will be included as part of each submission request to OMB.

While Commerce has authority to collect application information for many of its existing grant and financial assistance programs, the Department is now seeking approval of a generic information collection to cover elements like those listed above or others that may not be captured on an existing, approved application or form. Without approval to collect the necessary information with the application or after the award, Commerce's ability to make timely awards and to provide appropriate oversight is compromised. Commerce will only use this collection for funding announcements of new programs or for existing programs with a new requirement. If additional funding becomes available for the new program or if the agency undertakes additional rounds of funding for a program, Commerce will prepare a distinct collection for the program, with the required 60- and 30-day Federal Register notices and remove the program from this generic collection (if included at the time).

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.

The information collected in response to solicitations for applications has been and will be used by Commerce for issuing awards to the applicants most suited for fulfilling the mission of the Commerce programs. Commerce may append the uses for a specific funding opportunity to reflect statutory and regulatory requirements or program needs and program evaluations.

Program or project evaluations provide critical information to inform decisions about current or future programming, effective strategies or interventions, policies, and organizational operations. Evaluations, especially for large funding programs, should be used for the improvement purposes to support research under the departmental Learning Agenda and in support of the work in the Annual Evaluation Plans. Additional use information will be included in specific collections.

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 burdens.

2 CFR 200.204 requires Commerce agencies to post funding opportunities using the Federal website, Grants.gov. Grants.gov allows customers to submit electronic applications to the Federal agency. Many agencies post their opportunity to Grants.gov and others may offer another application system for customers to apply such as Sam.gov; and other locations known to industry for the specific research initiatives. Additionally, Commerce may reach potential applicants via other means, including but not limited to white papers, oral presentations, panel pitches, and targeted solicitations.

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.

The information collected in Commerce funding announcements, associated forms and in the associated reporting requirements is unique to each funding award; therefore, it is not duplicated in any other source. As applicable, the Department utilizes currently approved standard forms and will not duplicate information collected on these forms.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden. Describe how the collection reduces, to the extent practicable and appropriate, the burden on all persons, including small entities, providing information.

To limit the burden imposed on respondents, the Department requires the minimum information needed to award grants and financial assistance agreements. Commerce agencies have existing structures and resources in place for evaluating applications, awarding funds, and managing awards.

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 the burden.

Commerce activities regarding funding awards would be significantly hindered if it were not able to collect the information required to evaluate potential award recipients.

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 often than**
- **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 that 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 secret, 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 Department will ensure that all collections of information contained in its funding announcements and associated forms comply with 5 C.F.R. § 1320.5. Any exceptions to this will be included as part of each submission request to OMB.

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 C.F.R. § 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 on 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 may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

COMMERCE published a 60-day *Federal Register* notice on May 1, 2024 (89 FR 35057). No public comments were received.

In addition to soliciting comments from the public, we consulted with representatives from other government agencies that have similar collections.

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

Other than the funding awards, the Department does not provide any payment or gift to respondents in connection with this information collection request.

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

In general, Commerce makes no assurance of confidentiality to those responding to funding announcements and associated forms, unless otherwise explicitly indicated. Any special circumstances will be included as part of each submission request to OMB. However, as a practical matter, disclosures are only made in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Commerce regulations implementing that statute.

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.

Application and reporting requirements in funding announcements and associated forms do not ask questions of a sensitive nature.

As a general matter, information collections under this generic collection request will not result in any new system of records containing privacy information and will not ask questions of a sensitive nature that have not been approved for use by OMB, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

For information collections involving questions of race/ethnicity, the agency will ensure that the OMB Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity are followed (SPD 15 Revised Race and Ethnicity Data Standards).

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 hourly 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.

Instrument	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden (in hours) per Response	Total Burden Hours
Various Program Funding Opportunities and Forms	20,000	Varies	2	40,000
Total annually	20,000			40,000

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 and purchase of services component. The estimates should consider 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 are no costs other than monetization of hourly burden as captured above in Item 12.

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 17, 18, and 19 in a single table.

The estimated annualized cost to the Federal Government for the proposed data collection effort is \$157,980.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Salary	% of Effort	Fringe (if applicable)	Total Cost to Gov't
Federal Oversight					
Federal staff	multiple	Avg - \$78.99 hour	20%		\$157,980
Total					\$157,980

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reporting in Items 12 & 13
 None. This is a new collection.

16. For collections of information in which 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.

The information may be made available publicly depending on requests from OMB, Congress, or Federal agencies with appropriate authority. Also, individual Commerce programs may assess the needs to publish information. When this information is used to inform public reports or is otherwise reported publicly, Commerce will ensure adequate discussion is included regarding validity concerns and biases in how this data is collected by grantee organizations and aggregated by Commerce. This discussion may acknowledge certain limitations to this dataset including: (1) the inability for grantee organizations to report non-responses or refused response data and a lack of clarity as to how these data-points are reported to Commerce; (2) potentially varied collection methods, including both self-identification and proxy reporting (which may present validity issues); and (3) any inadvertently skew in the aggregate reporting data. Following internal consultation, Commerce may also choose to discuss additional sources of error or bias.

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.

Commerce will include the OMB control number and expiration date on most associated forms. However, there may be times in which the program office may request and explain the reason for the request not to display the OMB control number and expiration date.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in the "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission."

The Department is not seeking an exception to the certification statement.

Part B. Statistical Methods

This information collection does not employ statistical methods.