

SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

DoD National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Program – 0701-0154

Summary of Changes from Previously Approved Collection:

- DoD NDSEG is currently in source selection for the contractor that will be responsible for applications for the 2026-2028 academic years. This is not anticipated to alter the information collection substantially.
- Burden decreased due to the removal of recordkeeping costs that were erroneously included in a previous request.

1. Need for the Information Collection

The DoD NDSEG Fellowship Program, established in 1989 by direction of Congress, sponsored by the Army, Navy and Air Force, serves as a means of increasing the number of United States (U.S.) citizens receiving doctoral degrees in science and engineering (S&E) disciplines of military importance. Since program inception, over 4,700 fellowships have been awarded from over 70,000 applications received. There are up to 180 awards annually, distributed equally between the tri-services. The DoD, through the Office of the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering Basic Research Office and the military services, promotes education in science and engineering (S&E) disciplines relevant to the Defense mission. One means of promoting S&E education is through awarding fellowships to encourage promising young scientists to pursue doctoral degrees in designated disciplines. The DoD NDSEG awards are under the authority of 10 U.S.C. § 2191, 32 CFR 168a, National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowships. The request for applications is necessary to screen applicants, evaluate and select students for award fellowships. All NDSEG applications are submitted electronically via contractor, Systems Plus, Inc. website, www.ndseg.sysplus.com.

2. Use of the Information

The NDSEG program's respondents/applicants are recent baccalaureate graduates, masters, and/or current PhD candidates (within the first two years of their coursework) who will ultimately receive doctorates from US institutions which align to programs in science and engineering in disciplines of DoD relevance. The NDSEG fellowship application must be submitted via the Systems Plus, Inc. website, www.ndseg.sysplus.com. The application period is open from August/September to November/December annually for current and incoming graduate students. Applicants electronically submit the following: application, resume or cv, research proposals, university transcripts, recommendation letters, essays, etc. Each applicant is assigned a unique applicant-ID number to be used through the entirety of application and in some cases award. The Contractor portal is utilized by panel evaluation members with a unique username and

password to access information for the review, rank, and selection of NDSEG fellows. Once application is received, it's vetted through a selection panel consisting of volunteer evaluators (academia, government, and industry scientists and engineers) where the top 20% are selected as possible NDSEG fellowship recipients using the contractor website via a secured portal. Application information collected by Systems Plus, Inc. contractor website, www.ndseg.sysplus.com, was used for the NDSEG 2024 and NDSEG 2025 application process. The NDSEG awardees are notified electronically by the NDSEG portal and those who are selected are given further instructions and assigned additional portal information to complete all required paperwork for NDSEG fellowship.

Systems Plus, Inc. is responsible for the daily management of the NDSEG 2023-2024 fellowship classes and award management processes and the NDSEG 2025 application process. The information is also used by DoD tri-service scientists and engineers to make the final selection of NDSEG fellowship awards. All application and panel evaluations/selections are executed electronically via website, www.ndseg.sysplus.com. The NDSEG 2025 application instructions and forms may be downloaded at www.ndseg.sysplus.com (screen shots are attached).

In the application process NO PII is collected. All applications and awardee information are maintained with the Contractor for a ten-year period.

NDSEG awardees are required to provide Systems Plus, Inc. with personally identifiable information (PII) such as Bank Account transfer codes, etc., to receive direct-deposit payments of their stipends and required reporting to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

The information (voluntary) collected on gender, race, ethnicity, or handicap is used in meeting DoD needs for data to permit response to Congressional and other inquiries for diversity and inclusion, and equity issues. Ad-Hoc information may be collected as well on research specific discipline areas. Aggregated data will be used. Data specific to individuals will not be accessed.

The Contractor provides electronic administrative reports to OSD Basic Research Office Director, DoD NDSEG Program Manager (AFRL/AFOSR/RTC and RBK), and Army Research Office and Office of Naval Research NDSEG program managers. These reports are not released to the public. These reports include but are not limited to:

- *Academic Report* (due: within 15 days of the quarter/semester end) – monitoring each student's progress certified by research advisor as evidence of transcripts and general summations on satisfactory progress, written "alert" notifications to NDSEG contractor of unsatisfactory progress.
- *Current Fellows Status Report* (due: NLT 31 Oct) - (1) list of fellows who intend to complete their doctoral degrees, how they plan to pursue their degrees, these topics, and any publication or patent information; (2) list of fellows who have completed NDSEG Fellowship Program tenure and do not plan to pursue their doctoral degrees and why; (3) list of annual dropouts, reasons why they left the program, and plans

for subsequent study or employment; (4) final program report and (5) list fellows who have completed internships, their locations and brief work description.

- *Former Fellows Report* (due: NLT 31 Oct) - (1) academic pursuits and plans if former Fellow is in school; (2) employment information if the former fellow is employed; and (3) any publication or patent information. The contractor will survey former NDSEG fellows to collect the data required for this report for a period of ten years.
- *Applicant Analysis Report* (due: NLT 30 Jun) - (1) undergraduate school; (2) grade point average (GPA); (3) discipline; (4) gender; (5) ethnic group; and (6) matriculating institution state distribution.
- *Selectee Analysis Report* (due: NLT 30 Jun) - (1) undergraduate school; (2) grade point average (GPA); (3) discipline; (4) gender; (5) ethnic group; and (6) matriculating institution state distribution
- *Panel Review Report*: (due: 30 days post NDSEG review panel) - financial (if applicable for honorarium recipients) and administrative information on the NDSEG review panel to panelists invited to the panel (including reviewer names, contact information, and employment), panelists who actually attended, and itemized cost of panel including costs per panelist.

3. Use of Information Technology

100% of NDSEG fellowship applications are submitted by electronic submission to www.ndseg.sysplus.com. Recommendation letters, personal statements, and official university transcripts will be submitted electronically, too.

4. Non-duplication

The information obtained through this collection is unique and is not already available for use or adaptation from another cleared source.

5. Burden on Small Businesses

This information collection does not impose a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses or entities.

6. Less Frequent Collection

NDSEG fellowship awards are granted annually. The pool of potential applicants is continually changing as new students become eligible to apply. Non-receipt of information to evaluate and award fellowships would mean up to 180 scholars would not receive fellowships. Funding appropriated by Congress would not be awarded.

7. Paperwork Reduction Act and Other Guidelines

This collection of information does not require collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines delineated in 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

Applicant's race/ethnicity is collected voluntarily in a separate section of the electronic submission to the contractor. DoD uses this data in the aggregate for reporting on diversity and inclusion, and equity issues. The race/ethnicity question in the submitted collection instrument screenshots is not currently compliant with the 2024 update to Statistical Policy Directive No. 15. The NDSEG program office will work with our contractor to update this question prior to the next round of applications for 2026.

8. Consultation and Public Comments

Part A: PUBLIC NOTICE

A 60-Day Federal Register Notice (FRN) for the collection published on Friday, September 20, 2024. The 60-Day FRN citation is 89 FR 77111.

No comments were received during the 60-Day Comment Period.

A 30-Day Federal Register Notice (FRN) for the collection published on Friday, November 22, 2024. The 30-Day FRN citation is 89 FR 92622.

Part B: CONSULTATION

The NDSEG contractors Systems Plus, Inc. was consulted in completing this document. They are 100% responsible for the daily management and execution of NDSEG program.

9. Gifts or Payment

No payments or gifts are being offered to respondents as an incentive to participate in the collection.

10. Confidentiality

The announcement and the electronic application process for the NDSEG program contain a Privacy Act Statement (included in attached Application Instructions) which specifies the use of the information in evaluating and selecting the awardees. It further advises that voluntary demographic information may be used in the aggregate for evaluating equity issues. No PII is released to the public.

A System of Record Notice (SORN) is not required for this collection because records are not retrievable by PII, an applicant-ID number is assigned to applicants for panel review, rank, and selection.

A copy of the approved PIA, National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate (NDSEG) Fellowship Program, has been provided with this package for OMB's review.

The information is collected electronically and stored for ten years by the NDSEG Contractor, Systems Plus, Inc.

11. Sensitive Questions

Application information collected on gender, citizenship, race, ethnicity, or disability is collected voluntarily and in a separate section of the electronic submission to the contractor. Only aggregated data is used for required reports and equity issues. Students selected for awards will be required to provide their Social Security Number and bank routing codes in order for the government to provide their stipends. The Social Security Justification Memo is attached in the collection package. This information will remain with the NDSEG contractor for ten years. The records disposition/retention schedule is NARA GRS 1.2 Items 020 and 021 conditioned on dispositions in N1-AFU-89-25, -90-03

12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

1) Collection Instrument(s)

[DoD NDSEG Program = Systems Plus, Inc.]

- a) Number of Respondents: 3,971
- b) Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
- c) Number of Total Annual Responses: 3,971
- d) Response Time: 12 hours
- e) Respondent Burden Hours: 47,652 hours

2) Total Submission Burden (Summation or average based on collection)

- a) Total Number of Respondents: 3,971
- b) Total Number of Annual Responses: 3,971
- c) Total Respondent Burden Hours: 12 hours

Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

[DoD NDSEG Program = Systems Plus, Inc.]

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 3,971
- b) Response Time: 12 hours
- c) Respondent Hourly Wage: \$7.25
- d) Labor Burden per Response: \$87.00
- e) Total Labor Burden: \$345,477

2) Overall Labor Burden

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 3,971
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$345,477

13. Respondent Costs Other Than Burden Hour Costs

There is no cost to the applicant above the expense of preparing and submitting the application.

14. Cost to the Federal Government

Part A: LABOR COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Collection Instrument(s)
[DoD NDSEG Program = Systems Plus, Inc.]
 - a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 3,971
 - b) Processing Time per Response: 8.43 hours
 - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$22.61
 - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$191
 - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$758,461

- 2) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government
 - a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 3,971
 - b) Total Labor Burden: \$758,461

Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

- 1) Cost Categories
 - a) Equipment: \$0
 - b) Printing: \$0
 - c) Postage: \$0
 - d) Software Purchases: \$0
 - e) Licensing Costs: \$0
 - f) Other: \$48,336

- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: \$48,336

Systems Plus reported other costs entail provides systems design, maintenance, and support of proprietary secure web application; infrastructure and security support services.

Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: \$758,461

- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: \$48,336

- 3) Total Cost to the Federal Government: \$806,797

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

There has been no change in burden since the last approval.

16. Publication of Results

The contractor will publish the NDSEG awardees (names and institutions) on website in June along with a press release. The press release is distributed internally to DoD entities.

17. Non-Display of OMB Expiration Date

We are not seeking approval to omit the display of the expiration date of the OMB approval on the collection instrument.

18. Exceptions to “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Submissions”

We are not requesting any exemptions to the provisions stated in 5 CFR 1320.9.