

U.S. Small Business Administration
Women's Digitalization (Entrepreneur Learning) Initiative Registration

A: JUSTIFICATION

1. **Circumstances necessitating the collection of information**

Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

Congress created the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to aid, counsel, assist, and protect the interests of small business concerns in order to preserve free competitive enterprise, a cornerstone of the nation's economic system. 15 U.S.C. 631. The statute also authorized SBA to provide management and technical assistance training programs to encourage small enterprises in all areas, including, as stated in section 29(g) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656), women's business enterprises. (See ATTACHMENT 1)

In the 21st century between 2002 and 2012, the number of women-owned firms increased 2.5 times the national average (52% vs. 20%)¹, and employment in women-owned firms grew 4.5 times that of all firms (18% vs. 4%)². However, in terms of revenue, women-owned businesses are smaller. Despite accounting for more than one-third of businesses in the U.S., women-owned businesses generate only 11.7% of sales³, and fewer than one in 50 women-owned firms generate revenue over \$1 million⁴. Women-owned businesses also fall behind when it comes to job growth: Only 2% of women-owned firms have more than 10 employees, and 89.5% of women-owned firms have no employees at all.⁵

As part of its mission to provide management and technical assistance training programs to encourage small enterprises in all areas, including women entrepreneurs, the SBA has developed an e-learning platform to help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses and compete on a more level playing field. This effort addresses the market gap for growth-oriented women-owned small businesses by using a learning path approach to deliver a modern, complete learning platform for women entrepreneurs. The e-learning approach will reach more women, particularly the underserved including those in rural and underdeveloped areas, without adding more brick and mortar locations.

2. **How, by whom, and for what purpose information will be used**

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 collection will facilitate registration for the e-learning platform for women entrepreneurs interested in accessing resources to support starting and growing existing businesses. This information collection will enable the Agency to track customer use of the platform and its resources. By collecting basic demographic information and data on the

¹ <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/NSBW-Fact-sheet-Women-Entreps.pdf>

² <https://www.nwbc.gov/2017/12/31/2017-annual-report-accelerating-the-future-of-women-entrepreneurs-the-power-of-the-ecosystem/>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

registrant's entrepreneurial goals, the SBA will better understand who is using the platform and their business goals, and continue to evolve the platform in enabling the user to tailor delivery of content to meet their specific needs. The data collection will facilitate future user connectivity to relevant resources (peer-to-peer learning, networking, mentoring, etc.). Information collected is being used to determine the scope of user participation on the platform, as well as user satisfaction with platform content.

3. Technological collection techniques

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 the burden.

The registration is built into the platform as an online, web-based collection, permitting electronic responses, ultimately lessening the burden on respondents.

4. Avoidance of Duplication

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.

As the SBA gains visibility on who is registering for the learning platform, every effort will be made to match platform users with those people who use other SBA services. To date, the platform has limited data collection making it difficult for the agency to match with other SBA services such as loans and mentoring etc.

5. Impact on small businesses or other small entities

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.

Most platform participants are women small business entrepreneurs who are interested in growing their existing business but have not yet done so and are seeking information and helpful resources. The SBA does not expect that this collection will have a significant economic impact on these women business owners. Providing the requested data is voluntary but necessary for access to courses and resources. In order to lessen the burden on participants, registration for the web-accessible learning platform is online and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This allows the SBA to accommodate the varying and hectic schedules of entrepreneurs.

6. Consequences if collection of information is not conducted

Describe the consequence to the 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.

Failure to collect certain information about the small business platform user will impact SBA's ability to develop meaningful content to meet the user's entrepreneurial goals that ultimately can be tailored to obtain a more effective and rewarding experience. Without the specific data, SBA will not be able to determine equity reach and the level of participation. Having this information would help SBA to assess the value of the content and prioritize future content offerings.

7. Existence of special circumstances

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 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 that can be generalized to the universe of study;*
- *requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been 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;*
- *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.*

There are no special circumstances.

8. Solicitation of Public Comment

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 comments received. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views...

To obtain views of persons outside the agency, a 60-day Federal Register Notice was published on March 14, 2022 at 87 FR 2022-05329. The comment period ended on May 13, 2022. No comments were received.

9. Payment of gifts

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

None.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

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

Registrants are informed at the beginning of the platform how the SBA will use the information, and that the user's Personally identifiable information (PII) is maintained in a Privacy Act system of record - SBA SOR 5- Business and Entrepreneurial Initiatives for Small Businesses. PII safeguards are documented in our Cybersecurity and Privacy Policy which PII is encrypted during transmission and data at rest; users are authenticated; access controls implemented for only those with a need to know; etc., these are just a few protections. Information collections are protected to the extent permitted by law including the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Freedom of Information Act.

The statute that supports the collections are: Small Business Act 15 U.S.C. 631, Small Business Reinvestment Act of 1958, PL 85-699; The Small Business Act of 1953, as amended, PL 85-536, PL 83-163, and PL 107-347. The Privacy Impact Assessment that supports this system is The Entrepreneur Learning Initiative (ELI). See below:

Privacy Act Statement
<p>The Small Business Act, Public Law (PL) 85-536 authorizes the Small Business Administration (SBA) to collect the information on this electronic format. It is mandatory to register with this learning platform and we will be collecting Name, Zip Code and Email information. By registering you consent to the collection process and storage of your information. In addition, you agree to all SBA.gov policies and disclaimers, including those specifically related to the Ascent platform, located here.</p>
<p>PURPOSE: The Small Business Administration (SBA) developed a new e-learning and networking platform for women entrepreneurs interested in accessing resources to support growing an existing business. Anyone can access to the content on the system after registration. It is mandatory that users create an account by completing all the items marked with an asterisk (*) on the Registration Form. The information collection will enable SBA to better determine who is using the platform and the scope of their participation in the a, and to develop a platform that would enable the user to tailor delivery of content to meet their needs. The information will also facilitate user connectivity to relevant resources (e.g., peer-to-peer learning, networking, mentoring)</p>
<p>The information provided will be protected to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. Personally identifiable information that is used to retrieve information or any individual responding to this or other request for information related to SBA training resources is maintained in SBA's Privacy Act System of Records, SBA - 5 Business and Community Initiatives.</p>
<p>OMB Control Number: 3245-0399 Expiration Date xx/xx/xxxx</p>
<p>NOTE: The Paperwork Reduction Act mandates that all federal government agencies receive approval from OMB. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act, you are not required to respond to the questions asked on this registration form unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. The estimated time to complete this registration is 8 minutes, including time for reading the instructions. Send comments regarding this estimated time, or any other aspect of this survey to the Chief, Records Management Division, Small Business Administration, 409 Third Street, SW. Washington, DC 20416; or SBA Desk Officer, Office of Management and Budget, New Executive Office Building, Rm. 10202, Washington, DC 20006.</p>

11. **Questions of a sensitive nature**

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

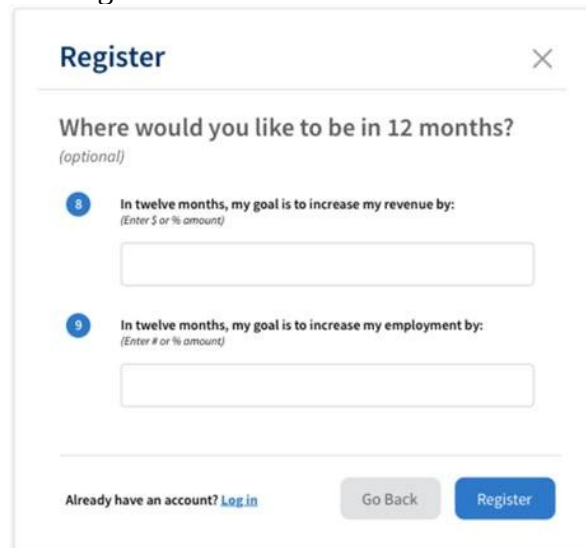
specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

We are collecting this data in support of SBA’s published Equity Action Plan. In this data collection, individuals are asked for the following information which may be considered sensitive: gender, race, ethnicity, and information about their business situation, including percent of business ownership and number of employees.–Collection of this data in aggregate will be used to determine audience reach and demographics.

Zip code and business data are requested to segment participant use of the platform and to facilitate connectivity to relevant resources (peer-to-peer learning, networking, mentoring, etc.) that support their current business need(s). For example, some SBA products, services, and certifications require businesses to meet certain criteria, such as being majority-owned, HUBZone, Small Disadvantage Business Owned, Certified Women Owned Small Business etc. If a business is not 51% owned, the user may not qualify for certain SBA programs and services. As a result, the user will not receive notice of resources, products, or services for which they are not qualified to consider.

The information collected is essential to the mission of the agency and to monitor business and platform performance. SBA only reports the data in aggregate.

Under OMB Control Number 3245-0399, Questions #8 and #9 (below) would be used similarly to how brick and mortar offices collect data for the purposes of providing electronic performance support. For example, when a user creates a profile, they can enter their revenue goal. SBA, in a year through email notification, may follow-up with the user to see whether the platform was helpful in reaching the business goal.



The image shows a 'Register' form with a close button (X) in the top right corner. The main heading is 'Where would you like to be in 12 months?' followed by '(optional)'. There are two numbered questions: Question 8 asks 'In twelve months, my goal is to increase my revenue by: (Enter \$ or % amount)' with an input field below it. Question 9 asks 'In twelve months, my goal is to increase my employment by: (Enter # or % amount)' with an input field below it. At the bottom, there is a link 'Already have an account? [Log in](#)', a 'Go Back' button, and a 'Register' button.

12. Estimate the hourly burden of the collection of information

Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated...

The annual hour burden is determined to be approximately 6,667 hours $((50,000 \times .08) / .60 = 6,667)$. The estimate is based upon a consultation with a potential respondent who sampled the draft registration form, averaging eight minutes for completion.

Although the goal for the ELI was to reach about 500,000 women in the first year of operation, the hourly burden estimate is based on 50,000 responses. This estimate is derived from information collection from actual experience of a 10% response rate. $(500,000 \times .10 = 50,000)$. The average total annual cost burden to respondents is \$160,000. This estimate is calculated using the average annual salary of \$50,347 for an entrepreneur (based on SBA Office of Advocacy 2018 Small Business Profile) and the eight minutes to complete the registration. The individual cost burden is approximately \$3.20.

13. Estimate the total annual cost burden for submission

Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information...

There are no additional costs anticipated from this information collection.

14. Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

Provide estimates of annualized costs 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.

In FY2022, \$3.1 million was obligated for Development, Modernization and Enhancement (DME) and Operations and Maintenance (O&M) of the program. There is no cost to the federal government that would not have been incurred without this collection.

15. Explanation of program changes in Items 13 or 14 on OMB Form 83-I

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

This is a current information collection request.

16. Collection of information whose results will be published.

For collection of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address complex analytical techniques... Provide time schedules for the entire project...

Any reporting of the collected information will be at the aggregate level and will not contain individual PII.

17. Expiration date for collection of information

If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why the display would be inappropriate.

Not Applicable, SBA plans to display the OMB expiration date.

18. Exceptions to certification in block 19 on OMB Form 83-I

Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission," of OMB Form 83-I

There are no exceptions.

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent select

None

ATTACHMENT 1

SMALL BUSINESS ACT 15 U.S.C. 631 , et seq.

Section § 2(a) – 15 U.S.C. 631

*** It is the declared policy of the Congress that the Government should aid, counsel, assist, and protect, insofar as is possible, the interests of small-business concerns in order to preserve free competitive enterprise, to insure that a fair proportion of the total purchases and contracts or subcontracts for property and services for the Government (including but not limited to contracts or subcontracts for maintenance, repair, and construction) be placed with small business enterprises, to insure that a fair proportion of the total sales of Government property be made to such enterprises, and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of the Nation.

Section 29 (g)(2)(B) -- 15 U.S.C. 656(g)(2)(B)

The responsibilities of the Assistant Administrator shall be to administer the programs and services of the Office of Women's Business Ownership established to assist women entrepreneurs in the areas of—

- (I) starting and operating a small business;
- (II) development of management and technical skills;
- (III) seeking Federal procurement opportunities; and
- (IV) increasing the opportunity for access to capital