

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION SUBMISSION
NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION SURVEYS TO MEASURE CUSTOMER
SERVICE SATISFACTION (OMB Approval Number 3145-0157)

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. CIRCUMSTANCES MAKING COLLECTION OF INFORMATION NECESSARY

On September 11, 1993, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12862, “Setting Customer Service Standards,” which clearly defined his vision that the Federal agencies will put the public first. To accomplish this, President Clinton called for a “revolution within the Federal government to change the way it does business.” He expected this process to require continual reform of government practices and operations to the end that, “when dealing with the Federal agencies, all people receive service that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector.”

Section 1(b) of this E.O. requires agencies to “survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services” and Section 1(a) requires agencies to “survey front-line employees on barriers to, and ideas for, matching the best in business.” These Presidential requirements established an ongoing need for the National Science Foundation (NSF) to engage in an interactive process of collecting information and using it to improve program services and processes.

The information that has been collected and that will be collected in these surveys represents the minimum necessary to evaluate customer satisfaction with NSF programs. It is expected that survey instruments will continue to be designed to take less than thirty minutes of any

one respondent's time. The service of customer surveys will continue to be coordinated to ensure that most individual respondents will not be asked to respond to more than one survey instrument. The "frequency" for individual respondents is essentially once. The total number of surveys and the schedule for those surveys continues to be monitored and approved by the Office of the Director.

2. HOW, BY WHOM, AND PURPOSE FOR WHICH INFORMATION IS TO BE USED

The purpose of this generic clearance was and continues to be to measure customer service satisfaction. The series of customer satisfaction surveys that NSF has conducted and plans to continue to conduct is intended to assess customer needs and to help develop proposals to try to meet those needs at a level that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector.

Over the course of the past approvals of this collection, NSF has obtained valuable survey data from sponsored research offices at academic institutions, applicants and reviewers for NSF research and education grants, and users of NSF-published information.

Results from these and future surveys and focus groups will be used to establish customer-defined goals and standards for measuring NSF progress toward those goals. Later surveys and focus groups will clarify those standards and evaluate NSF performance. This will be a continuous process of measuring customer satisfaction and then using that information to refine or redefine NSF programs and processes. Without this institutionalized process, NSF managers have no basis for planning and implementing program improvements and other customer satisfaction initiatives. This process also will enhance NSF's strategic planning,

performance planning, and performance reporting efforts as required by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.

3. USE OF AUTOMATION

There are no legal or technical obstacles to the use of technology in these information collection activities. The determination to use technology, and which technology to use, will be based on the type of information collected and the utility and the availability of specific technology to each respondent in a proposed customer satisfaction survey.

4. EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY DUPLICATION

The information to be supplied on these surveys will not be duplicated on any other information collection. An internal panel of program representatives will review the proposed NSF surveys to verify that the information sought is not already available and that the survey is part of a coordinated agency-wide customer satisfaction program.

5. SMALL BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF LESS FREQUENT COLLECTION

Without a regular program of customer satisfaction surveys, NSF cannot attain the E.O.'s commitment to "best in the business" practices because there is no way to get reliable feedback on NSF practices.

7. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR COLLECTION

These surveys will be consistent with all the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6, especially those provisions in subsection (g) which require that a statistical survey be designed to produce results that can be generalized to the universe of study.

8. FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE.

The agency's notice, as required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), was published in the *Federal Register* on January 22, 2008, at 73 FR 3756 and one comment was received from B. Sachau of Florham Park, New Jersey (included). Ms. Sachau's comment did not address any of the areas for which we seek comment, therefore, NSF is proceeding with seeking approval from OMB.

OUTSIDE CONSULTATION

Consultations will be conducted on a case-by-case basis with outside experts and representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained.

9. GIFTS OR REMUNERATION

Not applicable.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY PROVIDED TO RESPONDENTS

The individual survey instructions will provide all necessary assurances of confidentiality to the respondents. Although there is no requirement for such an assurance in the statute, the quality of this type of information requires respondent candor and anonymity.

11. QUESTIONS OF A SENSITIVE NATURE

NSF does not expect to include any questions of a sensitive nature in these customer satisfaction surveys. If any are used, NSF will submit a specific justification for each question used as part of the completed package submitted to OMB.

12. ESTIMATE OF BURDEN

The average amount of time for each survey will vary, most with estimates of ten to thirty minutes (based on past collections). Each respondent will submit only one response per survey, which will take an average of twenty minutes. An adjustment in burden is reflected

as NSF estimates the number of annual responses to be 31,500 for an annual burden of 10,500 hours, up from previous requests of 5,000 hours.

ANNUALIZED COST TO RESPONDENTS

The cost to respondents will vary by survey. As each survey is submitted for review and approval, a cost analysis will be included.

13. CAPITAL/STARTUP COSTS

There are no capital or startup costs associated with these collections.

14. ANNUALIZED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Again, the costs to the federal government will vary by survey. Most will be written as a routine part of a program, and their cost will be outlined in each survey submission. The prior justification statements show NSF's commitment and costs associated with individual surveys.

15. CHANGES IN BURDEN

The change in burden is a reflection of the demonstration of the need for additional time for some surveys. Twenty minutes appears to be a more manageable goal than does ten minutes.

16. PUBLICATION OF COLLECTION

Not applicable.

17. SEEKING APPROVAL TO NOT DISPLAY OMB EXPIRATION DATE

Not applicable.

18. EXCEPTION(S) TO THE CERTIFICATION STATEMENT (19) ON OMB 83-I

None.