

OMB 1205-0426: Supporting Statements for PRA Data Collection, Request for Extension Without Changes

B. EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS TO COLLECT INFORMATION

B1. Description of the Population and Sampling to Be Used

Goals of the Data Collection

No statistical methods leading to inferences of larger populations are used. In all reports and other publications and statements resulting from this work, no attempt is made to draw inferences to any population other than the set of participants responding to the data collection effort.

There are three primary goals of the data collected through the instruments and methods described in this request:

- to fulfill performance measurement and reporting requirements for the Job Corps program as specified in the WIA regarding reporting on graduates and former enrollees employment and education outcomes to determine the performance of each center and the larger program;
- to independently verify, as specified by the Office of the Inspector General, the placement and wage reports made for individual participants reportedly placed by contractors in order to ensure the integrity and quality of placement services provided by Job Corps centers and Career Transition Service (CTS) agencies; and
- to enhance the quality of the Job Corps program through collection of information on customer satisfaction of former participants.

Populations to be Surveyed

Two Job Corps populations are contacted in this data collection effort: graduates and former enrollees. Former enrollees are defined in Section 142 (4) of the WIA as “individual(s) who ... voluntarily applied for, (have) been selected for, and enrolled in the Job Corps program, but left the program before completing the requirements of a career technical training program, or receiving a secondary school diploma or recognized school equivalent, as a result of participating in the Job Corps program.”

The Office of Job Corps has redefined former enrollees as those students who were on center 60 days or more. Youths who were on center fewer than 60 days are categorized as “uncommitted students,” and will not be contacted as part of this data collection effort. Graduates are defined in Section 142 (5) of the WIA as “individual(s) who (have) voluntarily applied for, been selected for and enrolled in the Job Corps program and (have) completed the requirements of a career technical training program, or received a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent, as a result of participation in the Job Corps program.”

The WIA requires that Job Corps report “information on the performance of each Job Corps center

and the Job Corps program regarding” several employment and educational outcomes. To meet this requirement, a census of placed graduates is conducted by using the ICFE and the 6-month and 12-month surveys. Similarly, a census of placed former enrollees will be conducted by using the FES to reverify their initial job and school placements. With this census information, the Job Corps can satisfy the WIA requirement that the program provide information on “each Job Corps center.”

During Program year 2011 (7/1/2011 through 6/30/2012), a total of 88,320 former Job Corps participants were included in the census, including graduates and former enrollees.

Uses of the Collected Data

The first two goals for this data collection suggest very strongly that survey results need to be precise at the level of the individual Job Corps center and Career Transition Service (CTS) agency (the contractors responsible for participant placement). Job Corps’ performance-based contracting methodology uses these survey-reported outcomes to determine incentive and award fees for the private contractors that operate the individual centers and the CTS (placement) agencies. Further, Job Corps’ ranking of center and CTS contractor performance uses data collected from the surveys. The relative ranking of centers and CTS agencies provides one of the major criteria used by Job Corps to determine whether a contract option is renewed and in evaluating contractor past performance for new contracts, and the ranking reports are very sensitive to small changes in measured performance. These monitoring and management reasons led to the decision to conduct a census, instead of a sample, of all placed graduates and placed former enrollees leaving each center.

B2. Statistical Methodology for Stratification and Sample Selection

As indicated above, all groups are a census of the population; no sample selection or stratification is applicable.

B3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Address Non response

The following strategies are used to maximize response rates:

- The data collection instrument consists primarily of well-tested items; and
- The contractors work closely with Job Corps staff to obtain adequate tracking and locating information about all Job Corps graduates and former enrollees.

Regular contact between students and career transition specialists following termination, and the enhancements to the CIS will significantly improve the quality of available student locating information.

- IMPAQ and Battelle employ sample-locating and refusal-avoidance techniques that maximize locating and enlisting the cooperation of youth populations; and
- Graduates receive monetary incentives from Job Corps during the 12-month service eligibility period that will likely enhance cooperation with the data collection effort.

Students the contractors are unable to contact within the first 2 weeks are sent a postcard reminding them of the interview, and asking them to call an 800 number to complete the interview. Research suggests that reminders can be the single most important technique for producing high response rates.

To track graduates and former enrollees who have moved since their separation from Job Corps or for whom the contact information is inadequate, IMPAQ and Battelle employ telephone and in-house searching techniques that maximize locating respondents and eliciting their cooperation, including:

- contacting parents, relatives, and neighbors;
- sending address-correction letters;
- searching online nationwide databases (for example, Accurint, White Pages, Directory Assistance, Lexis/Nexis, reverse lookups, among others);
- requesting, where possible, information from public agencies (for example, motor vehicle departments and corrections departments); and
- providing a toll-free line for respondents to call.

The job placement data collected from these instruments are primarily used to provide annual information to Congress, the Secretary of Labor, and the Job Corps system about the employment and education outcomes of Job Corps graduates and former enrollees according to the WIA reporting requirements. The data are also used to assess graduates' and former enrollees' satisfaction with their Job Corps experience in order to identify aspects of the program that were useful to participants as well as factors that contributed to decisions to withdraw from the program before graduation. At this time, response bias analyses are not required.

IMPAQ and Battelle use telephone procedures that maximize response rates after respondents have been located, and they carefully train interviewers to follow these procedures. The contractors carefully monitor and retrain interviewers to correct any weaknesses in their contact and interviewing techniques. Two to three weeks after the first contact with a respondent who initially refused to participate, a senior interviewer will contact the respondent and address the respondent's concerns about completing the interview. The data collection contractors will maintain databases to track survey data, will generate regular reports to identify non responders, and will support follow-up efforts. IMPAQ and Battelle have used these procedures successfully in other data collection efforts to achieve response rates consistent with those projected for these follow-up surveys.