

**Supporting Statement for
Generic Clearance for the National Cemetery Administration
Customer Satisfaction Surveys
(2900-0571)**

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

Overview:

All surveys will use statistical methods and will follow OMB guidelines. The organization will also follow the guidance in the OMB Manual, "Resource Manual for Customer Surveys." Technical survey expertise and statistical service will be sought from VA statisticians or from other Federal statistical agencies.

In general, all surveys will be based upon a detailed sampling plan that determines the sample size needed to yield valid data at the 95 percent confidence level, assuming a 60 percent response rate. All samples will be randomly generated.

To ensure NCA and VA are in compliance with Executive Order No. 12862, NCA has conducted the voluntary Survey of Satisfaction with National Cemeteries since 2000. The survey's purpose and design were developed to determine the kind and quality of services customers of NCA wanted and their level of satisfaction with existing services. Since 2000, NCA followed the OMB generic clearance guidance established in the OMB guidance titled, "Resource Manual for Customer Surveys Part 1," dated October 1, 1993. As a result, NCA continually identifies its customer's needs, expectations and level of satisfaction with service in an effort to meet and exceed customer expectations, to improve service, and to be in compliance with Executive Order No. 12862. The annual survey is administered to NCA's two major customer groups: next of kin and funeral directors.

To ensure that the questions in the surveys addressed the needs of NCA's customers and provided valuable customer based information to improve customer satisfaction; NCA conducted focus groups to identify salient issues. As a result, a draft survey was developed and cognitive lab sessions were held to identify survey improvements. A national pre-test was performed and the surveys were revised based on the findings.

The Surveys of Satisfaction with National Cemeteries and Memorial Products are paper based surveys. The State and Tribal Cemeteries Survey of Satisfaction is also paper based. The focus groups, the cognitive labs and the pre-test demonstrated that next of kin respondents, having recently lost a loved one and still in a stage of grieving, found phone surveys intrusive during this sensitive time. As a result, the paper surveys are used out of respect for the mourning process. Additionally, surveys are never sent to a grieving next of kin until a minimum of 90 days have passed. Again, this process was implemented out of respect for the grieving process.

National Cemetery Administration Surveys of Satisfaction: Next of Kin, Funeral Directors, At-Large and State/Tribal Cemeteries

To administer the Customer Satisfaction in the least burdensome manner, a detailed sampling plan was developed that determined the sample size needed for each national cemetery to yield valid data at the 95 percent confidence level, assuming a 60 percent response rate. Two different approaches will be used that are dependent on the number of interments per year at each national cemetery.

For cemeteries with 400 or more interments per year, a representative random sample of next of kin will be drawn based on the required sample size needed to yield a valid respondent sample. The sample will be drawn from next of kin who visited the national cemetery over a 6-month period that fell three to nine months prior to the survey administration. This ensures that NCA does not survey next of kin until at least 90 days have passed since burial of their loved one. Based on this approach, surveys will be sent to approximately 20,000 next of kin across cemeteries with 400 or more interments.

For cemeteries with fewer than 400 interments, the number of surveys returned needed to yield a valid sample at the 95 percent confidence level exceeds the population size, given a 60 percent response rate. Surveys therefore will be sent to the census of next of kin at these cemeteries. Based on this approach, surveys will be sent to approximately 5,200 next of kin across cemeteries with fewer than 400 interments in the year.

Across all cemeteries, surveys will be sent to approximately 7,500 funeral directors. For cemeteries with fewer than 260 unique funeral directors, surveys will be sent to a census of funeral directors. For cemeteries with more than 260 unique funeral directors, a representative random sample will be drawn based on the required sample needed to yield a valid respondent sample. The number of funeral directors needed was much lower than the number of next of kin needed because many funeral directors conducted multiple services at a national cemetery over the survey timeframe.

To maximize the response rate, a five-step mailing protocol will be used. It will consist of a pre-notification letter; a copy of the survey with a return envelope along with a cover letter; a reminder/thank you postcard; a second questionnaire for non-respondents; then, a final reminder/thank you postcard. Last year, the five step process generated an overall response rate of 59.4%.

National Cemetery Administration Survey of Satisfaction with Memorial Products

The Survey of Satisfaction with Memorial Products and Services is for customers who buried their loved one in a private cemetery and received either a government furnished headstone, marker and Presidential Memorial Certificate. NCA will also administer the surveys in the least burdensome manner. NCA developed a detailed random sampling plan to determine the sample size needed to yield valid data at the 95 percent

confidence level, assuming a 60 percent response rate. A random representative sample will be drawn from the two population groups: next of kin of a deceased Veteran who ordered a headstone or marker for installation at a private cemetery and; the funeral directors that assisted in the process.

To ensure NCA receives data from respondents, it will use a three-step mailing protocol that will consist of a pre-notification letter; copy of the survey with a return envelope along with a cover letter; and a reminder/thank you postcard. Used in prior surveys, this strategy garnered timely, accurate customer satisfaction information for NCA and also provided the appropriate response rate.

Focus Group Information Collections:

All focus group participants will be selected using a random selection process that identifies next of kin or funeral directors who used NCA services at a specific National Cemetery location. Questions will be linked to customer service requirements to ensure that data received provides a clear connection to the service provided to NCA customers.

National Cemetery Visitor Comment Cards:

Comment cards will be used in instances where additional Veteran feedback is needed to better understand customer requirements. Comment Cards in general will not provide statistically valid data as they are qualitative in nature. They will however provide additional insight into customer needs and service requirements.