

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR THE
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-SENSITIVE POSITIONS (SF 85)
OMB #3206-0261**

Justification:

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

The information collected on this form is used to determine acceptability for Federal employment and employment by a Government contractor. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), or another authorized investigative agency using this information collection, is authorized to request this information under Executive Orders 10577, 13467, and 13488, as amended, 13741, and 13764; sections 3301, 3302, and 9101 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.); and parts 2, 5, 731, and 736 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and Federal information processing standards. Section 1104 of title 5 allows OPM to delegate personnel management functions to other Federal agencies, with the proviso that it must also establish standards applicable to the exercise of the function and exercise oversight of compliance with applicable law.

2. 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 Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions, SF 85 is an information collection completed by applicants for, or incumbents of, Federal Government civilian positions, or positions in private entities performing work for the Federal Government under contract. The collection is used as the basis of information for background investigations to establish that such persons are:

Suitable for employment or retention in Federal employment in a low risk, non-sensitive position, or fit for employment or retention in Federal employment in the excepted service when the duties to be performed are equivalent to a low risk, non-sensitive position;

Fit to perform work on behalf of the Federal Government pursuant to the Government contract, when the duties to be performed are equivalent to a low risk, non-sensitive position;

Eligible for physical and logical access to federally controlled facilities or information systems, when the duties to be performed by the individual are equivalent to the duties performed by an employee in a low risk, non-sensitive position.

For applicants, the SF 85 is to be used only after a conditional offer of employment has been made.

- 3. 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 burden.**

eApplication (eApp) is a web-based system application that houses the SF 85. This electronic data collection tool provides data validation to support the accuracy of the respondent's personal information.

eApp automates the data collection process from the respondent, applies all required data editing rules to the respondent-supplied information, enforces data integrity, and provides sponsoring agencies an automated capability to review and approve each respondent's submission before releasing the data to an investigative service provider (ISP). eApp transmits the information to other government systems, including ISPs and sponsoring agency personnel or security systems.

A respondent's complete and certified investigative data set(s) will remain secured in the eApp system until the next time the respondent is sponsored by an agency to complete a new investigative form. Upon initiation, the respondent's previously entered data (except 'yes/no' questions) will populate a new investigative request and the respondent will be allowed to update their information and certify the data. In this instance, time to complete the form is reduced significantly.

The electronic application includes branching questions and instructions which provide for a tailored collection from the respondent based on varying factors in the respondent's personal history. The burden on the respondent is reduced when the respondent's personal history is not relevant to a particular question, since the question branches, or expands for additional details, only for those persons who have pertinent information to provide regarding that line of questioning. Accordingly, the burden on the respondent will vary depending upon how the information collected relates to the respondent's personal history.

- 4. 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.**

Information collected on the SF 85 is specific to the individual and thus not readily available from other sources, thus minimizing duplication.

- 5. 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.**

Not applicable. This collection of information does not affect small businesses or other small entities.

6. Describe the consequence to 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.

The SF 85 is used to initiate background investigations required by E.O. 10577, 13467, and 13488, as amended, 13741, and 13764; sections 3301, 3302, and 9101 of title 5, U.S.C.; parts 2, 5, 731, and 736 of title 5, CFR, and Federal information processing standards. The collection is used as the basis of information for background investigations to establish that applicants for, or incumbents of, Federal Government civilian positions, or positions in private entities performing work for the Federal Government under contract, are suitable for employment or retention in Federal employment in a low risk, non-sensitive position, or fit for employment or retention in Federal employment in the excepted service when the duties to be performed are equivalent to a low risk, non-sensitive position; fit to perform work on behalf of the Federal Government pursuant to the Government contract, when the duties to be performed are equivalent to a low risk, non-sensitive position; or eligible for physical and logical access to federally controlled facilities or information systems, when the duties to be performed by the individual are equivalent to the duties performed by an employee in a low risk, non-sensitive position.

All such positions are subject to this level of investigation. If this information is not collected, agencies cannot comply with E.O. 10577, 13467, 13488, 13741, and 13764. This collection of information cannot be made less frequently as it is the basis for initial background investigations and continuous vetting, when applicable, as established by federal investigative standards.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6.

Not applicable. This information collection is in compliance with 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. 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 public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years - even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

The 60 day Federal Register Notice was published on September 11, 2024 (89 FR 73730). No comments were received. The Office of Personnel Management's, Suitability Executive

Agent Programs holds regular quarterly meetings with stakeholders to discuss current events and upcoming activities in personnel vetting. These meetings provide a forum for stakeholders to provide input and to have questions or concerns addressed. Additionally, they manage an email box and phone line, listed on their public website, for the general public and other stakeholders to contact with questions.

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

Not applicable. No payments or gifts are provided.

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

The information collection includes a Privacy Act Information statement which explains how information may be disclosed. The statement indicates collection, maintenance, and disclosure of background investigative information are governed by 5 U.S.C. 552a (the Privacy Act of 1974). Further, the form notes how information may be disclosed.

Respondents are granted partial confidentiality under 5 U.S.C. 552a and 5 CFR 736. The forms contain an *Authorization for Release of Information and Fair Credit Reporting Disclosure and Authorization*, signed by the person completing the form. The authorization forms request that record custodians and sources of information contacted during the investigation provide requested data concerning the person being investigated. Individuals completing the forms are informed that information obtained from record custodians and other sources is for “official use by the Federal Government” and can be disclosed only as authorized by law. Data reported on these forms is not released to the public under the Freedom of Information Act.

The collection is covered by the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA), the primary background provider for the federal government and responsible for maintaining information obtained through this collection. The collection is covered by the DCSA System of Records Notice, DUSDI-02:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/10/17/2018-22508/privacy-act-of-1974-system-of-records>

For additional information regarding eApp and NBIS Privacy Impact Assessments, DCSA has provided information about its privacy impact assessments at <https://www.dcsa.mil/contact/foia/foip/>.

There are other agencies with investigative authority that conduct background investigations, most of which obtain the information through DCSA’s system. Agencies that maintain the information from this collection will provide respondents with a copy of their routine uses.

11. 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.

The SF 85 is an investigative tool. The collection is used as the basis of information for background investigations to establish that applicants for, or incumbents of, Federal Government civilian positions, or positions in private entities performing work for the Federal Government under contract, are suitable for employment or retention in Federal employment in a low risk, non-sensitive position, or fit for employment or retention in Federal employment in the excepted service when the duties to be performed are equivalent to a low risk, non-sensitive position; fit to perform work on behalf of the Federal Government pursuant to the Government contract, when the duties to be performed are equivalent to a low risk, non-sensitive position; or eligible for physical and logical access to federally controlled facilities or information systems, when the duties to be performed by the individual are equivalent to the duties performed by an employee in a low risk, non-sensitive position.

The form obtains data from individuals with which to initiate an investigation to meet the adjudicative requirements established in 5 CFR part 731. The questions represent an effort to obtain as much relevant and required information as possible directly from the person to be investigated, in accordance with provisions of the Privacy Act.

Questions on the SF 85 that may be considered sensitive in nature are listed and explained below:

- Section 16 - Police Record: Inquiry into criminal history, including details regarding criminal conduct, arrests, and convictions is appropriate so that an adjudicative decision regarding suitability or fitness for the position may be made. This information is also necessary to make accurate and complete checks of investigative files.
- Section 17 - Illegal Use of Drugs or Drug Activity: Inquiry into illegal drug use is appropriate so that an adjudicative decision regarding suitability or fitness for the position may be made.
- Section 19 - Financial Record: Inquiry into personal finances provides information used to determine trustworthiness, reliability, and honesty, and is especially relevant for positions entailing fiduciary responsibilities.
- Section 20 - Association Record: Inquiry into detailed information pertinent to a respondent's involvement in terrorist organizations, association with persons involved in activities to further terrorism and/or to overthrow the U.S. Government by force or violence is appropriate so that an adjudicative decision regarding suitability or fitness for the position may be made.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

It is estimated that the total number of respondents for the SF 85 in FY 24 was 239,200 annually. The electronic application includes branching questions and instructions which

provide for a tailored collection from the respondent based on varying factors in the respondent’s personal history. The burden on the respondent will vary depending on whether the information collection relates to the respondent’s personal history. The average of participant time spent completing the form is 120 minutes. Accordingly, the estimated annual burden is 478,400 hours.

Form Name	Form No.	No. of Respondents	No. of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden per Response (in hours)	Total Annual Burden (in hours)	Ave. Hourly Wage Rate	Total Annual Respondent Cost
SF 85	3206-0261	239,200	1	2	478,400	\$18.75	\$8,970,000

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

There is no cost to individual respondents.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost 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 expenses that would not have been incurred without the paperwork burden.

The SF 85 is the information collection that serves as the basis for the investigation of all individuals working for or on behalf of the Government in non-sensitive positions or who require eligibility for physical and logical access to federally controlled facilities or information systems, when the duties to be performed by the individual are equivalent to the duties performed by an employee in a low risk, non-sensitive position. The estimated annual cost to the Federal Government to perform investigations commensurate with this collection is \$35,401,600. This estimate was derived from the current cost to conduct SF 85-based investigations according to the number of all SF 85-based investigations conducted in FY 24.

Form Name	Form No.	Investigative Tier	No. of Submissions (Federal and Non-Federal)	Cost per Investigation According to Tier	Total Annual Cost
SF 85	3206-0261	Tier 1	239,200	\$148	\$35,401,600

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

In section 13 and 14, the number of respondents was updated to reflect FY 24 numbers instead of the average of FY 18, 19 and 20. (55,000 to 239,200) This changed the calculation for estimated annual burden from 110,080 to 478,400 and the total annual respondent cost from \$2,064,000 to \$8,970,000.

In section 14, the cost of a Tier 1 investigation is \$148, down from \$180, decreasing the Total Annual Cost from \$40,119,660 to \$35,401,600.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

OPM, in consultation with the Security, Suitability, and Credentialing Performance Accountability Council may publish aggregated information regarding respondents to this information collection including the overall timing for respondents to complete the investigative process.

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

Not applicable – expiration date will be displayed.

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

Not applicable.