

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**National Institute of Food and Agriculture****Notice of Request for an Information Collection; Generic Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative Feedback on Agency Service Delivery**

AGENCY: National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public to take this opportunity to comment on the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative Feedback on Agency Service Delivery” for approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). This collection was developed to create a vehicle for obtaining stakeholder feedback. This notice announces our intent to submit this collection to Office of Management and Budget for approval and solicits comments on specific aspects for the proposed information collection.

DATES: Consideration will be given to all comments received by December 5, 2016. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be submitted by any of the following methods: Email: rmartin@nifa.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0857; Mail: Office of Information Technology (OIT), NIFA, USDA, STOP 2216, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-2216.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Martin, Records Officer; email: rmartin@nifa.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Generic Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative Feedback on Agency Service Delivery.

Abstract: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), U.S. Department of Agriculture, oversees roughly \$1.5 billion to fund research, education, and extension efforts in a wide range of scientific fields related to agricultural and behavioral sciences. NIFA achieves its mission through partnerships with Land-Grant Universities (LGU), non-profit organizations, private sector firms, and other government agencies. These partners, through research, education, and extension activities, help NIFA and USDA address highly complex and multidimensional challenges in food

and agriculture. To ensure that our programs address the Nation's food and agricultural priorities and our processes minimize burden without jeopardizing accountability, NIFA seeks OMB approval of a generic clearance to collect qualitative feedback on our service delivery. By qualitative feedback, we mean information that provides insights on perceptions and opinions, but are not statistical surveys or quantitative results that can be generalized to the population of study.

This collection of information is necessary to enable NIFA, herein “the Agency,” to garner feedback from customers, stakeholders, and partners (herein “stakeholders”) in an efficient and timely manner, and in accordance with our commitment to providing the highest quality service delivery. The information collected from our stakeholders will help NIFA identify emerging and significant priorities in food and agriculture; refine NIFA's business processes; and promote inclusiveness and diversity to ensure that NIFA drives outcomes that meets the needs of all Americans.

Improving agency programs requires ongoing assessment of NIFA's programs and processes, by which we mean systematic review of the operation of a program compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards. NIFA will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered through this generic clearance to identify strengths and weaknesses of current services and make improvements based on stakeholder feedback. If this information is not collected, NIFA's ability to respond to stakeholders' needs and continuously improve programs and services will be greatly diminished.

The solicitation of feedback will target areas in: Strategic, portfolio, and programmatic planning; competitive and non-competitive awards processes; post-award management; information technology systems and Web sites; and, grants management training. Responses will inform efforts to improve or maintain the quality of service offered to the public.

The Agency will only submit a collection for approval under this generic clearance if it meets the following conditions:

- The collections are voluntary;
- The collections are low-burden for respondents (based on considerations of total burden hours, total number of respondents, or burden-hours per respondent) and are low-cost for both the respondents and the Federal Government;

- The collections are non-controversial and do not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies;

- Any collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the near future;

- Information gathered will be used only internally for general service improvement and program management purposes and is not intended for release outside of the agency;

- Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions; and

- Information gathered will yield qualitative information; the collections will not be designed or expected to yield statistically reliable results or used as though the results are generalizable to the population of study.

Feedback collected under this generic clearance provides useful information, but it does not yield data that can be generalized to the overall population. This type of generic clearance for qualitative information will not be used for quantitative information collections that are designed to yield reliably actionable results, such as monitoring trends over time or documenting program performance. Such data uses require more rigorous designs that address: the target population to which generalizations will be made, the sampling frame, the sample design (including stratification and clustering), the precision requirements or power calculations that justify the proposed sample size, the expected response rate, methods for assessing potential non-response bias, the protocols for data collection, and any testing procedures that were or will be undertaken prior to fielding the study. Depending on the degree of influence the results are likely to have, such collections may still be eligible for submission for other generic mechanisms that are designed to yield quantitative results.

As a general matter, information collections will not result in any new system of records containing privacy information and will not ask questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

Current Actions: Request for approval for a new collection of information.

Type of Review: New.

Affected Public: Individuals and Households, Businesses and Organizations, State, Local or Tribal Government.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 11,250.

Below we provide projected average estimates for the next three years:

Average Expected Annual Number of activities: 15.

Average number of Respondents per Activity: 750.

Annual responses: 11,250.

Frequency of Response: Once per request.

Average minutes per response: 30.

Burden hours: 5,625.

Request for Comments: Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (e) estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information. Burden means the total time, effort, or financial resources expended by persons to generate, maintain, retain, disclose or provide information to or for a Federal agency. This includes the time needed to review instructions; develop, acquire, install and utilize technology and systems for the purpose of collecting, validating and verifying information, processing and maintaining information, and disclosing and providing information; train personnel and to be able to respond to a collection of information, to search data sources, to complete and review the collection of information; and to transmit or otherwise disclose the information.

All written comments will be available for public inspection on Regulations.gov.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget control number.

Done at Washington, DC, this 23rd day of September, 2016.

Catherine E. Woteki,

Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics.

[FR Doc. 2016-23956 Filed 10-3-16; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comments requested.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Rural Business-Cooperative Service's intention to request an extension for a currently approved information collection in support of the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by December 5, 2016, to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Director, Specialty Programs Division, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 3226, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-3226, Telephone (202) 720-1400.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program.

OMB Number: 0570-0035.

Expiration Date of Approval: February 28, 2017.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: Under this program, loans and grants are provided to electric and telecommunications utilities that have borrowed funds from the Agency. The purpose of the program is to encourage these electric and telecommunications utilities to promote rural economic development and job creation projects such as business start-up costs, business expansion, community development, and business incubator projects. The utilities must use program loan funds to make a pass-through loan to an ultimate recipient such as a business. The utility is responsible for fully repaying its loan to the Government, even if the ultimate recipient does not repay its loan. The intermediary must use program grant funds, along with its required contribution, to create a revolving loan fund that the utility will operate and administer. Loans to the ultimate recipient are made from the revolving loan fund for a variety of community development projects. The information requested is necessary and vital in order for the Agency to be able to make prudent and financial analysis decisions.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2 hours per response.

Respondents: Rural Utilities Service Electric and Telecommunications Borrowers.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 120.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 17.

Estimated Number of Responses: 2,075.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 4,728.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Jeanne Jacobs, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, Support Services Division at (202) 692-0040.

Comments: Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of USDA, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of USDA's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to Jeanne Jacobs, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, Support Services Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, STOP 0742, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-0742. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: September 28, 2016.

Justin Hatmaker,

Acting Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

[FR Doc. 2016-23914 Filed 10-3-16; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-XY-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Department of Agriculture.