**PRIVACY STATEMENT**

*Version posted October 4, 2018*

**Who is Blackstone?**

The Blackstone Group Inc. is a highly respected, full-service research and consulting firm. Founded in 1987, the firm has earned a reputation for providing market intelligence and strategic guidance to its clients, which include Fortune 500 corporations, utilities and energy services providers, financial services and insurance firms, and corporations in other industries, as well as healthcare providers, government agencies, associations, and other nonprofit organizations.

 The Blackstone Group Inc., together with its affiliates (collectively, “Blackstone”), conducts projects that typically call for Blackstone to provide clients with custom research and/or consulting services. These projects usually require conducting qualitative, quantitative, and/or other types of research and testing with consumers, professionals, executives, community leaders, and other parties.

 Blackstone has an ethical duty to preserve the confidentiality of the information it obtains from those represented in the research it conducts, hereafter termed “participants.” This privacy statement applies to participants’ personal information that we collect or use in the course of conducting our business, as well as to participants’ data housed at any Blackstone facility or stored on the Blackstone network.

 This privacy statement also expresses Blackstone’s commitment to respect the confidentiality of the information it receives from individuals who submit employment applications via Blackstone’s website, hereafter termed “online applicants.”

**How does Blackstone obtain participants’ information?**

So we can invite potential participants to take part in our research, we may use contact lists, obtained from clients, commercial list providers, public databases, or other sources, that contain personal information, such as names, email addresses, phone numbers, and mailing addresses. We may also use samples from third-party online panel providers, which generally do not give access to any personally identifiable information.

 As part of providing services to our clients, we may ask participants for personal information, such as names, email addresses, phone numbers, mailing addresses, and/or other information. When conducting video- or audio-recorded research, we ask for permission to record participants’ facial images and/or voices.

 The individuals we invite to take part in our research projects choose whether or not to participate. These individuals always have the opportunity to decline involvement or to "opt out" of the research after agreeing to participate.

**In what other ways may Blackstone obtain participants’ information?**

*Online survey application.*  Blackstone uses online survey software that may passively collect certain personal information:

* Cookies
* The online survey application uses cookies, which are small text files that are placed on a participant’s device when he or she accesses a survey. Cookies are widely used to make websites work, to make them function more efficiently, and/or to provide information to the owners of the sites. The survey application uses cookies to optimize the survey experience and to prevent fraudulent completion of surveys.
* The survey application uses session cookies to allow surveys to function properly when participants connect to them. These cookies are erased when you close your browser.
* The survey application uses respondent identification cookies to allow participants to resume interrupted surveys. These cookies have an expiration date.
* A participant can decline cookies by adjusting the privacy setting in his or her browser. Declining cookies may mean that a survey will not function as intended.
* Geolocation data
* The online survey application has the capability to collect geolocation data from participants’ electronic devices.
* Blackstone does not typically use this capability.
* A participant can refuse to have geolocation data collected by adjusting the privacy settings on his or her devices.
* IP addresses
* The online survey application has the capability to collect IP addresses from participants’ electronic devices. IP addresses are commonly collected in survey research for various purposes, such as targeting or blocking particular IP addresses.
* Blackstone does not typically use this capability.
* Logs
* As part of the normal course of operations, the online survey application creates log files that record certain Blackstone activities and participants’ access to surveys. These logs enable the survey application’s administrators to insure that the system is working properly and to perform diagnostic and troubleshooting activities.
* Logs may contain details about survey access requests, including IP addresses, browser information, and request dates and times.
* The logs are part of the survey application’s back-end functioning and are accessible only to selected system administrators. The survey application’s maintenance process automatically purges all log entries after a maximum of 30 days.

*Internet search tools*. Blackstone may use publicly available search engines or subscription search services to collect information from the Internet, including from social media websites. This information may include certain personal information:

* Information that an individual has chosen to make publicly available, such as name, username, handle, or other identifier; the content of the information published via that name, username, handle, or other identifier, including comments, expressions, opinions, posts, etc.; geographical location; gender; job title or profession; interests; age range; profile picture or other images or videos that the individual posts or interacts with; and any other information that the individual has made public on his or her social media account or has published on an Internet website.
* Information inferred from an individual’s publicly available information. Examples may include using an individual’s name to infer gender or using the contents of a post to infer an individual’s interests.

**Does Blackstone conduct research with children?**

Occasionally Blackstone conducts research projects with children. When undertaking such projects, Blackstone will identify and comply with any applicable laws, including the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), which requires verifiable consent from a parent or legal guardian to interview children under 13.

 Blackstone will maintain procedures to assure that information obtained from children is collected only with proper consent and protections. If we become aware that we have inadvertently obtained information from children under 13, we will make reasonable efforts to delete the information.

**How does Blackstone handle participants’ personal information?**

Blackstone collects participants’ personal information for research purposes only. Our use of this information is limited to that purpose. We do not sell, rent, trade, or give individual participants’ personal information to our clients or to any other party for the purpose of directly marketing any products or services.

In most cases, the information Blackstone collects is combined and presented to our clients in an aggregate form that does not identify individual participants. To protect the confidentiality of comments made in research interviews or focus groups, we attempt to remove or change information that may associate comments with an individual participant.

In the case of a project that calls for Blackstone to provide personally identifiable information to a client, Blackstone will provide such information only if a participant consents to have his or her personally identifiable information released to the client.

**How does Blackstone obtain online applicants’ information?**

Forms and applications used by individuals who apply for employment via Blackstone’s website collect personal information, which may include name, address, email address, professional contact details, past employment information, and other personal information.

 An individual who provides personal information via Blackstone’s website as part of an application for employment consents to the collection of that information.

**How does Blackstone’s website handle online tracking?**

Blackstone does not “follow” those who visit its website by tracking their subsequent online behavior. Nor has Blackstone granted permission to other parties to track its website’s visitors by collecting their personally identifiable information.

 Blackstone’s website does not respond to browsers’ Do Not Track (DNT) signals or other similar mechanisms.

**How does Blackstone maintain personal information?**

Blackstone maintains the confidentiality of the personal information we obtain by using commercially reasonable technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect against unauthorized access to or unauthorized alteration, disclosure, or destruction of personal information.

 Blackstone stores participants’ personal information for as long as the information is needed to fulfill its legitimate business purposes or as otherwise permitted or required. We reserve the right to retain personal information for any period required by law or to comply with our legal obligations, resolve disputes, and enforce our agreements.

**In what circumstances may Blackstone transfer or share personal information?**

Blackstone may transfer personal information to third parties located within or outside the U.S. that provide services on our behalf, such as recruiting organizations, transcription services, data processing companies, etc., so long as those parties agree to keep this information confidential and to use the information only as necessary to provide services to us.

 Blackstone may share personally identifiable information in the following ways: (a) with our clients if we have obtained participants’ consent to do so; (b) as necessary to provide services to the individuals to whom the information pertains if those individuals have consented to the services; (c) to detect, prevent, or otherwise address fraud, security, or technical issues, to enforce this privacy statement, and to protect the rights, property, or safety of Blackstone, our clients, and/or the public; (d) as reasonably necessary to comply with law or a legal process (including a court or government order or subpoena); (e) if we sell, transfer, or otherwise share some or all of our business or assets, including personally identifiable information, in connection with a corporate transaction such as a merger, consolidation, acquisition, reorganization, or sale of assets or in the event of bankruptcy, in which case we will make reasonable efforts to require the recipient to honor this privacy statement; or (f) in other circumstances where we have obtained individuals’ consent to do so.

**What should individuals know about accessing third-party sites through Blackstone?**

Blackstone’s website and emails may contain links to external websites, online applications, or content managed by third parties. Blackstone does not have control over and is not responsible for the privacy and security practices and policies of such third parties. Any personal information provided on a third party’s website, online application, or page is provided directly to that third party and is subject to its privacy policy. Individuals should review the privacy and security practices and policies of external websites and third parties before providing them with personal information.

**Can Blackstone change this privacy statement?**

Blackstone reserves the right, at our discretion, to update, modify, or otherwise alter this privacy statement at any time. For that reason, we encourage individuals to review Blackstone’s privacy statement periodically.

 This privacy statement is current as of the “version posted” date that appears at the top of this page. We will treat personal information in a manner consistent with the version of the Blackstone privacy statement under which it was collected unless we have the individual’s consent via email, telephone, or other appropriate means to treat it differently.

 By using our website or participating in a research project following any change in the privacy statement, an individual freely and specifically gives us consent to collect, use, transfer, and disclose his or her personal information in the manner specified in the then-current privacy statement.

**What are some additional conditions applicable to this privacy statement?**

This privacy statement and all disputes, lawsuits, and claims relating to this privacy statement shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Illinois, excluding its conflicts of law rules. All actions and proceedings arising out of or relating to this privacy statement shall be heard and determined in any Illinois state or federal court sitting in the City of Chicago, Illinois, and each party hereby irrevocably accepts and consents to the exclusive personal jurisdiction of those courts for such purpose. In addition, each party hereby irrevocably waives, to the fullest extent permitted by law, any objection which it may now or hereafter have to the laying of venue of any action or proceeding arising out of or relating to this privacy statement or any judgment entered by any court in respect thereof brought in any state or federal court sitting in the City of Chicago, Illinois, and further irrevocably waives any claim that any action or proceeding brought in any such court has been brought in an inconvenient forum.

 Each party further hereby irrevocably waives, to the fullest extent permitted by law, the right to a jury trial in connection with any claim arising out of or relating to this privacy statement.

 Any arbitration or court trial related to any claim under this privacy statement will take place on an individual basis, without resort to any form of class or representative action (“Class Action Waiver”). This Class Action Waiver precludes any party from participating in or being represented in any class or representative action regarding a claim under this privacy statement. Notwithstanding anything else herein, the validity and effect of the Class Action Waiver may be determined only by a court and not by an arbitrator.

**How can I contact Blackstone regarding my personal information or this privacy statement?**

An individual may request access to personal information Blackstone holds about him or her to correct, amend, or delete information except where the burden or expense of providing access would be disproportionate to the risks to the individual’s privacy or where the rights of persons other than the individual would be violated.

 You may request access to your personal information by contacting us as indicated below. We will attempt to respond to your request to the extent feasible within 45 days or as otherwise required by law. For security purposes, we will require adequate identification and validation.

 If you have questions, concerns, or comments about this privacy statement, please contact us:

The Blackstone Group Inc.

Suite 710

332 South Michigan Avenue

Chicago, Illinois 60604

privacyadmin@bgglobal.com

800.468.0419