

Justification for 0607-0725
Pretesting of Respondent Letters for the
Survey of Industrial Research and Development

The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We plan to conduct in-depth interviews with business respondents to support the development of a redesigned Survey of Industrial Research & Development (SIRD), an annual survey co-sponsored by the Census Bureau and the National Science Foundation. The main goal of our testing is to get respondent feedback on drafts of letters used for pre-survey notification, initial mail out and nonresponse follow-up.

As described in a letter to OMB dated June 8, 2007, the SIRD is undergoing a major redesign of its data collection instruments. In addition, the data collection strategy is being revisited. Among the strategies we are considering are alternative types and timing of mail contact with respondents. The purpose of the research requested is to pretest the content and language used in draft letters proposed for pre-survey notification, initial mail out and nonresponse follow-up. In addition, we plan to investigate who in the business should be the recipient of particular mail reminders, and how best to identify or refer to them in mailing addresses.

We expect to conduct interviews with a total of 35-40 business respondents for the purpose of pretesting the draft letters. These companies will be selected based on a mix of characteristics of interest to the redesign team, taking logistics and geography into account. We expect to include major R&D-performing companies, along with smaller and medium-sized companies having varying degrees of R&D expenditures.

The purposes of this in-depth cognitive research regarding the letters include:

- Ensuring appropriate content;
- Developing effective and meaningful language;
- Investigating alternative ways for communicating specific messages;
- Identifying salient messages that respondents look for;
- Identifying content that may have detrimental effects on response;
- Investigating language that effectively conveys elements required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Privacy Act, and the Census Bureau's Privacy Policy.

Drafts are enclosed of pre-survey notice and initial mail-out letters, along with letters proposed

for nonresponse follow-up both before and after the due date.

Beginning in October 2007 through March 2008, on-site interviews will be conducted with respondents at their business locations by members of the Establishment Survey Methods Staff in the Economic Programs Directorate of the Census Bureau. Subject area specialists will accompany the cognitive interviewers on most, if not all, of the on-site interviews.

Participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be seen only by employees involved in the research project. Interviews will be audio recorded, with the participants' permission, to facilitate accurate summarization of the results. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study.

We estimate that these interviews will require at most 1 hour each. Thus the total expected burden for this activity is 40 hours.

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and statistical aspects of the design of this research is:

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