

October 1, 2007

NOTE TO THE
REVIEWER OF:

OMB CLEARANCE #1220-0141
“Cognitive and Psychological Research”

FROM:

Jean Fox
Research Psychologist
Office of Survey Methods Research

SUBJECT:

Submission of Materials for the
Employment Projections and Occupational
Outlook Handbook Focus Groups

Please accept the enclosed materials for approval under the OMB clearance package #1220-0141 “Cognitive and Psychological Research.”

In accordance with our agreement with OMB, I am submitting a brief description of the study. The total estimated respondent burden hours for the study are 26 hours.

If there are any questions regarding this project, please contact Jean Fox at (202) 691-7370 or Fox.Jean@bls.gov.

1. Introduction and Purpose

The BLS Employment Projections program produces a variety of outputs, ranging from technical materials to career information for kids. Its most widely used product is the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which accounts for about one-third of the BLS.gov web site's traffic. Organizationally, the Employment Projections program includes two divisions, the Division of Industry Employment Projections and the Division of Occupational Outlook.

The program staff are at the very beginning stages of strategic planning. In preparation for a strategic planning session, tentatively scheduled for January 2008, the program staff feel it is important to gather input from their major customers. We plan to conduct focus groups as part of this information gathering.

This submission is for focus groups to be held on November 6, 2007, with Fairfax County high school career counselors. We plan additional data collection activities for this project, but we will submit those requests separately, when they are available.

2. Participants

We have been invited to conduct focus groups at a November 6 meeting of Fairfax County, Virginia, high school career counselors. The 26 counselors attending this meeting will all participate. Depending on facilities, we will divide the group into 2 or 3 smaller focus groups, to be run simultaneously at the site of the meeting. We will have one hour to complete the focus group. Participants will not be reimbursed for their participation.

3. Research Design

The purpose of this focus group is to collect information about how career counselors use the Occupational Outlook Handbook web site, as well as associated printed materials. The focus group will follow the protocol outlined in Attachment A.

4. Burden Hours

We anticipate that 26 participants will each participate in a one-hour focus group, for a total of 26 burden hours. We will conduct the focus groups at the site of the

participants' November 6 meeting. OMB clearance has been requested through November 2007.

5. Data Confidentiality

Participants will be informed as to the voluntary nature of the study. Participants will also be informed that the study will be used for internal purposes for strategic planning of the Employment Projections and Occupational Outlook Handbook. Information related to this study will not be released to the public in any way that would allow identification of individuals except as prescribed under the conditions of the Privacy Act Notice.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL: Career Center Counselors

STUDY PURPOSE: To explore opinions of career center counselors (potential users of the OOH) and to understand their needs for improving the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH).

AGENDA FOR PLANNED DISCUSSIONS:

Category of Information to be Covered	Approx. Time Duration
Introduction/Ground Rules/Welcome/Consent Form	10 minutes
Issue A: Baseline Q’s about usage of OOH and other related resources	20 minutes
Issue B: Specific Q’s about content and format of OOH	15 minutes
Closure	10 minutes
Total Time Allotted	55 minutes (plus 5 min for logistics)

INTRODUCTIONS

My name is _____ and I’m a researcher at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. My colleagues and I have been invited to join you today to discuss a career guide that we produce called the Occupational Outlook Handbook. We want to hear from you about how you use this Handbook and what your needs are. We’ll be using this input in an effort to improve the Occupational Outlook Handbook, so that it better meets the needs of students, educators, job seekers and other users.

To allow conversation to flow more smoothly, I have the following ground rules so we will all be moving in the same direction and to ensure that the session will end on time.

- Please talk one at a time.
- Please allow someone to finish their point before talking.
- Please talk as loudly as possible so all can hear.
- Avoid side conversations with your neighbor.
- I need to hear from everyone; however, you don’t have to answer every question.
- Work for equal air time so no one talks too much or too little.
- Allow for different points of view; there are no right or wrong answers.
- Say what you believe, whether or not anyone agrees with you.
- With your permission, I will be tape recording this conversation for my own note-taking purposes.

Are there any questions about what I have just covered? If there are no other questions, then let's begin.

Please introduce yourself and tell us your first name, how long you've been a career counselor, which school you work in, and a favorite subject you studied in school.

ISSUE A: BASELINE QUESTIONS ABOUT USAGE OF THE OOH AND OTHER CAREER GUIDE RESOURCES

Before we begin our discussion about the specifics of the handbook, I want to ask some general questions about your familiarity with and impressions of the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

1. Thinking about what you've seen of the Occupational Handbook so far (and it's okay if you have not used it a lot), how would you grade it. That is, since you all work in schools, give it a grade, A, B, C, D or F . Since there are two versions of the handbook, a printed version and a Web version, please tell me which version you are grading. Or, if you want, you can give a grade to both versions.
 - a. Let's talk about the printed version first. Who gave it an A or B? Tell me some of your reasons for that grade?
 - b. Who gave it a D or F? Tell me some of your reasons for that grade?
 - c. How about the Web version. Who gave it an A or B? Tell me some of your reasons for that grade?
 - d. Who gave it a D or F? Tell me some of your reasons for that grade?
2. Think back to last week. Which career guide references, tools, or websites, if any, did you use? [List on flipchart, if available]
 - a. What resource can't you live without?
 - b. [If OOH was mentioned] How does the OOH compare to some of these other resources you've mentioned?
 - c. [If OOH was not mentioned] What are some reasons you have not used the OOH?
 - d. [IF CGI not mentioned] We also have a sister publication called the Career Guide to Industries. Have you ever used or seen this? What are your general feelings about it?
3. Tell me about how you use the OOH? For example, do you refer your students to it? Do you read it yourself for background information? Some other way?
 - a. Do you usually refer to the printed OOH or the OOH website or both?

ISSUE B: SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT CONTENT AND FORMAT

Let's turn our attention to the information that the OOH provides.

4. In your opinion, do you think that the OOH meets your needs as a career guide?
Probe: Tell me more about how it does/does not meet your needs.
5. What information about jobs do you think your students need to know?
 - a. Do you think the OOH provides enough information? Too much detail? Not enough detail?
6. What sections do you find particularly useful/helpful?

7. What sections do you find lacking?
Probe: Tell me what you find lacking about it?
8. Thinking about the students that you work with, do you think that the handbook is written at an appropriate reading level for them?
Probe: What are some reasons you think it is appropriate/inappropriate?
9. In general, how easy or difficult is it to use the OOH? That is, are you able to easily find the information you're looking for?
Probe: What do you find easy/difficult?
Currently, the Handbook is organized by Title/Occupation (Title Browse). Does this format work well for you?

WRAP-UP

This session is almost over and before we end, I'd like to get your final thoughts.

10. If you could wave a magic wand and fix one thing about the OOH, what would it be?
11. Is there any topic that we've missed that you think is important to our discussion about improving the OOH?

Thank you very much for participating today; your thoughts and feedback will be very useful. If you have any other thoughts, comments or questions following this session, please feel free to contact me at [give email address].

Consent Form

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is conducting research to improve the quality of its printed and web-based materials. This specific study is intended to identify improvements to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, and associated career information (for example, the Career Guide to Industries).

The BLS, its employees, agents, and partner statistical agencies, will use the information you provide for statistical purposes only and will hold the information in confidence to the full extent permitted by law. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent. The Privacy Act notice on the back of this form describes the conditions under which information related to this study will be used by BLS employees and agents.

During this research you will be audiotaped, and you may also be observed. Audiotaping is done only to assist with the accuracy of our note taking, and your comments will not be associated with your name in any written reports. If you do not wish to be taped, please inform the researcher.

We estimate it will take you an average of 60 minutes to participate in this research.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and you have the right to stop at any time. If you agree to participate, please sign below.

Persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB control number is 1220-0141, and expires February 28, 2009.

I have read and understand the statements above. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature

Date

Participant's printed name

Researcher's signature

OMB Control Number: 1220-0141
Expiration Date: 2/28/09

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552a), you are hereby notified that this study is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), under authority of 29 U.S.C. 2. Your voluntary participation is important to the success of this study and will enable the BLS to better understand the behavioral and psychological processes of individuals, as they reflect on the accuracy of BLS information collections. The BLS, its employees, agents, and partner statistical agencies, will use the information you provide for statistical purposes only and will hold the information in confidence to the full extent permitted by law. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent. The BLS may release individually identifiable information to individuals designated as agents of the BLS in accordance with Public Law 107-347 to perform exclusively statistical activities. Individuals designated as agents of the BLS may be imprisoned for not more than 5 years or fined not more than \$250,000 or both for any knowing and willful disclosure of respondent information to unauthorized persons. Such designated agents may include individuals from other sponsoring agencies; to contractors, grantees, and their employees or volunteers who are working on this study for the BLS and who need access to the information; or to the National Archives and Records Administration or the General Services Administration for records management purposes. Under written agreements to protect the confidentiality and security of individually identifiable information, the BLS may provide individually identifiable information to other researchers designated as agents of the BLS to conduct statistical research projects that further the mission and functions of the BLS.