

June 16, 2009

NOTE TO THE
REVIEWER OF:

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

FROM:

Jennifer Edgar
Research Psychologist
Office of Survey Methods Research

SUBJECT:

Submission of Materials for the *CE*
Quarterly Telephone Information Booklet
Feasibility Test

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 46.7 hours.

If there are any questions regarding this project, please contact Jennifer Edgar at 202-691-7528.

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Consumer Expenditure Quarterly Interview Survey (CEQ) is designed to collect information about the spending habits of American consumers. The survey is designed to be conducted face-to-face, with five interviews occurring over the course of 15 months. Although designed as a personal visit survey, about a third (32 percent in 2008) of the CEQ interviews are being conducted over the telephone. The reason for this mode change is unknown, but anecdotal evidence from field staff suggest it is a result of rising field costs and increasing difficulty gaining respondent cooperation.

The standard CEQ interview incorporates a respondent aid called the Information Booklet, which provides lists of examples and definitions for respondents to use as they are answering the survey questions. Interviewers receive one copy which they bring to personal visit interviews, showing respondents the relevant pages as they move through the interview. Currently, there is no way for respondents answering the CEQ questions over the telephone to access the Information Booklet. Since research (Edgar, 2006) has shown that both respondents and CE data quality benefit from consulting the Information Booklet, it is important to explore ways of providing telephone respondents access to this aid.

The purpose of this test is to evaluate the feasibility of providing a version of the Information Booklet to respondents that will be interviewed by telephone. While this version of the Information Booklet is identical in content to the current version, it will be printed on lighter paper and use different binding.

2. Research Design

To test the feasibility of providing an Information Booklet to telephone respondents, we will use CEQ interviewers from two Census Bureau regional offices (Charlotte and Chicago) and the production sample. The test is scheduled to run for three months, and is tentatively scheduled to begin in August 2009 (dependent upon interviewer training schedule).

CEQ interviewers will be asked to follow standard production procedures, and conduct interviews as they currently do. The only change to CEQ field procedures will be that

respondents will be sent a lightweight Information Booklet as soon as a telephone interview is arranged. The Information Booklets will be sent, via Federal Express, from the nearest regional office, or under certain circumstances by the interviewer (if the interview is less than two days away or if a Monday appointment is made after the Regional Office is closed on Friday). Included in the mailing will be a brief letter (Appendix A) explaining the Information Booklet to the respondent. The regional office (or interviewer) sending the letter and Information Booklet will provide the missing information.

In addition to the letter, there are other minor changes to standard CEQ interviewing procedures associated with the test. These changes are five questions that will be asked of the respondent to determine if the Information Booklet was received, if it was available during the interview, (if not available) why it was not available, if the receipt of the Information Booklet affected the respondent's decision to participate, and if so in what way. These questions are required to determine the feasibility of getting Information Booklets to CEQ telephone respondents. Interviewers will not be given scripted questions; instead, they will be instructed to collect the following information, using a conversational style of interviewing:

1. Did the respondent receive the Information Booklet before participating in any portion of the telephone data collection?
2. Did the respondent have the Information Booklet available during any telephone data collection?
3. If not available, why wasn't the Information Booklet available?
4. Did receiving the Information Booklet affect the respondent's decision to participate in the survey?
5. If yes, in what way did it affect the respondent?

Interviewers will be recording information about each telephone case, such as the date of the interview, number of sessions required to collect data, in a log. The answers respondents provide to these questions will also be collected in the log.

Additionally, as part of the current CEQ interview, interviewers are asked if the respondent used the Information Booklet during the interview. This question will play a key role in

evaluating the success of this test. Typically, this question is not asked of the respondent as interviewers can answer it based on their observation during the personal visit interview. In this test however, interviewers may have to ask respondents this question. During the interview they will be instructed to listen for any comments respondents make about the Information Booklet that would indicate they are using it. If no such indication is made the interviewer will ask respondents at the end of the interview if they looked at the Information Booklet.

The analysis of this test is designed to determine whether it is feasible to provide the respondent an Information Booklet before an interview is conducted without asking the FR to change any other procedures. The primary criteria for assessing the success of the test are Information Booklet receipt and usage by telephone respondents. The small sample size will preclude statistical analysis of expenditure data or response rates.

3. Participants

We estimate that no more than 560 production CEQ respondents will be involved in the test. This estimate is based on an average 72 CEQ telephone cases in Charlotte and 114 in Chicago per month, and the fact the test will be run for three months. It is likely that the number of CEQ respondents who receive an Information Booklet before their interview will be significantly lower than 560, since there may not be enough time for the Information Booklet to arrive prior to the interview. However, this figure will be used for burden hour estimates.

4. Burden Hours

The burden hours associated with this test is expected to be 46.7 hours. Since respondents will be completing the standard CEQ interview, which includes the use of the Information Booklet (and has a current OMB approval through March 31, 2010), the only additional burden associated with this test is answering the additional questions associated with the test, which is expected to take less than five minutes.

5. Data Confidentiality

Respondent confidentiality is protected under the CEQ's OMB clearance. No additional confidentiality measures will be taken for this test.

6. References

Edgar, Jennifer. 2006. *Impact of the CE Information Book on Question Comprehension and Recall*. Internal Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Appendix A: Information Booklet Letter

FROM

U.S. Census Bureau

Chicago Regional Office

Dear _____ (*Respondent Name*);

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Consumer Expenditure Survey on _____ (*date*) at _____ (*time*). The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting this survey for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Enclosed you will find the Consumer Expenditure Survey Information Booklet. This booklet contains examples and definitions that you will find useful as you answer the survey questions. Please have this booklet available when the interviewer calls you to complete the interview.

If you have any questions about this Information Booklet, please call Interviewer or RO Name at (Interviewer or Regional Office phone number).

Sincerely,

Regional Director

Chicago Regional Office

Address 1

Address 2

City, State, Zip

Website