

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will be conducting post-collection respondent debriefings for the 2008 Business Research and Development and Innovation Survey (BRDIS) form BRDI-1, sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The 2008 BRDIS is being conducted as a full-scale pilot, and will be subject to intensive evaluation in order to provide results to OMB prior to the second year of data collection, per the “Terms of Clearance” for OMB number 0607-0912, dated 10/21/08.

The purpose of the respondent debriefings is to help assess the quality of the reported data and better understand the respondents’ interpretations of the survey questions and instructions. The results will be used to identify potential areas of measurement error and to redesign and clarify questions and instructions for future BRDIS implementation. The goals of the respondent debriefing are:

- To evaluate the quality of reported data, as indicated by the composition of data items, respondents’ interpretations of survey questions, the availability of requested data, and estimation strategies when employed;
- To understand how the multiple sections of the form, each asking for a different type of information, are completed, e.g., the effectiveness of survey coordinators in obtaining assistance from personnel in various parts of their companies, and the types of personnel involved relative to the data requested in each section;
- To inform recommendations for modifying the questionnaire for future collections;
- To assess the level of burden imposed by the survey.

From April to August, 2009, staff from the Establishment Survey Methods Staff (ESMS) in the Economic Directorate of the Census Bureau plan to conduct in-depth, unstructured interviews with respondents at approximately 50 companies from which we have received responses to the 2008 BRDIS. Respondents will be recruited from a list provided by the Census Bureau’s Manufacturing and Construction Division. We will attempt to obtain interviews with companies throughout the U.S. that vary in size, complexity, and type of company. We will conduct some interviews in person and some by telephone. The mix will be determined by respondent availability and preferences, as well as by travel logistics. Subject area specialists and/or NSF staff members will accompany the ESMS staff on most, if not all, of the interviews. They will observe and provide additional clarification of the subject matter if required.

Because the survey has multiple sections, we expect most companies to have two to four different respondents, depending on size and type of R&D activity. We will attempt to interview up to four respondents at each company, although we anticipate only being able to interview one to three respondents at most companies. A copy of the 2008 BRDIS questionnaire is attached.

A draft of the respondent debriefing interview protocol is also attached. We plan to pretest the protocol with the first 3-5 companies (by phone and in person, if possible) and revise as necessary before full collection.

After they are recruited, participants will receive a follow-up reminder of their appointments by fax, telephone, or e-mail via Census Bureau’s Secure Messaging Center. All interviews will be audio-recorded with the participants’ permission, to facilitate accurate summarization of the

results. 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. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study.

We estimate the length of the interviews will average 1.25 hours. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is approximately 250 hours (50 companies X 4 respondents per company X 1.25 hours per interview).

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

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