The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725).  We will be conducting usability testing of the Internet reporting applications for the Annual Capital Expenditures Survey (ACES) and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT)  Survey.  The electronic versions of these surveys will be available to respondents in March 2009.  The ACES and ICT surveys are companion surveys that are typically mailed together.  We plan on conducting usability testing on both surveys at the same time.

Usability testing was conducted in 2006 on the ACES and ICT surveys.  Every five years the ACES survey asks additional detail about equipment and structure purchases by industry category.  This expansion will affect the formatting of one current question into a more detailed breakout.  Since totals from several different items must match, a summary screen has been created to aid respondents in this reconciliation.  Although the ICT survey will remain unchanged, we will still be referencing it during the usability testing because of its connection to the ACES survey.

Usability testing of the Internet application will focus on issues such as the layout of questions and screens, the navigation within and between screens, edits, and submission.  Special attention will be paid to the electronic layout of the complex grids proposed on the ACES survey as well as to the revised and added screens.  Another area of focus is the navigation between the new summary screen and previous items.  Enclosed are copies of example screens from these electronic surveys.  Minor changes to the electronic survey screens are anticipated prior to the beginning of usability testing.  One example is changing all references to 2007 on the ICT survey to 2008.  This is the only anticipated content or design change for this survey prior to testing.

From mid-October through November, 2008, we will conduct one round of usability interviews with respondents from 15-20 businesses in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.  We will attempt to obtain interviews with businesses that vary in size and complexity.  Most of the interviews will be conducted with previous electronic reporters.  We will attempt to recruit a sub-set of test respondents from non-electronic reporters.  Findings will be used to revise the ACES Internet application.

Interviews will be conducted at the business site by staff from the Establishment Survey Methods Staff within the Census Bureau's Office of Statistical Methods and Research for Economic Programs.  Subject area specialists from the Census Bureau will accompany the usability tester on most, if not all, of the interviews.  They will assist with respondent debriefing, especially in cases where additional clarification of the subject matter is required.  Interviews will be audio recorded with the participants' permission to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations.

After businesses are recruited, participants will receive follow-up reminders about their appointments.  Participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be seen only by Census Bureau or special sworn employees involved in the research project.   We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study.
We estimate that it will be necessary to interview only one respondent at each company.  We

estimate the length of the interviews will average 1 hour. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 20 hours.

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

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