

This letter is to inform you of the U.S. Census Bureau's plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research OMB No. 0607-0725. We will conduct usability testing of the Internet reporting application for the Business Research and Development and Innovation Survey (BRDIS), an annual survey co-sponsored by the Census Bureau and the National Science Foundation. The main goal of our testing is to obtain respondent feedback on issues related to use of our online Centurion system.

This will be the first time that the BRDIS will be designed and delivered using the Census Bureau's new Centurion electronic reporting system. This system replaces the former Census Taker system. Results from the usability testing of this survey will not only impact the design and functionality of BRDIS but also future Centurion surveys administered by the Census Bureau.

Usability testing of the Internet application will focus on issues such as reporting consistency between the paper and electronic form, the necessary design changes when moving a form from paper to the Web, the layout of questions and screens, the navigation within and between screens, edits, the main menu, review/submission screens, and the Internet site's toolbar. Additional attention will be put on the explicit division of the survey into different sections to facilitate respondents' gathering of the data from multiple people with specific knowledge. Therefore, testing how respondents react to this feature, how easily they can navigate between sections, and how they will gather and input the information is of importance in improving usability of this survey.

The BRDIS electronic survey is currently under development and will not be completely available until just before the proposed usability testing dates. Copies of the current screen shots, as well as the first draft of the testing protocol, are enclosed. When available, final screen shots of the instrument to be tested will be forwarded to the OMB.

The usability testing of the instrument will focus specifically on the following areas:

- Navigation: Ensuring respondents can move easily among data fields and among screens.
- Submission of data/form completion: Making sure respondents know how to submit their data online.
- Multiple sections: Understanding how companies will interact with the multiple sections and how they will distribute and collect them across the company.
- Data edits: Ensuring the edits are clear and not burdensome.

From October through December 2009, we plan to conduct two rounds of usability testing using concurrent think-aloud methods, for a total of approximately 30 usability interviews. We will attempt to obtain interviews with businesses that vary in size, complexity, and industry type. Interviews will be conducted at the business site by staff from the Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS), formerly called the Establishment Survey Methods Staff, in the Economic Directorate of the Census Bureau. Subject area specialists 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.

Participants will be asked to complete the form using the Centurion program to test the usability and functionality of the overall instrument. Additionally, participants will be given tasks to complete to test several specific features, such as edits, skip patterns, printing, etc. Findings from the testing will be used to revise the Centurion BRDIS instrument before it is fielded in January 2010.

Participants will be recruited by the RIRS members using a list of R&D companies provided by the Census Bureau's Manufacturing and Construction Division. After they are recruited, participants will receive a follow-up reminder of their appointments by fax. All interviews will be audio taped 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 that it will be necessary to interview only one respondent at each company. We estimate the interviews will take approximately 1.5 hours. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 45 hours (2 rounds X 1.5 hours X 15 respondents per round).

The contact person for questions regarding data collection or statistical aspects for this project is:

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