

The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will conduct usability testing of the Internet reporting application for the 2010 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey – Insurance Component (MEPS-IC). The survey is also referred to as the Health Insurance Cost Study. The MEPS-IC is sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to collect data on the number and types of health insurance plans offered, the benefits associated with these plans, premiums, contributions by employers and employees, eligibility requirements, and employer characteristics from public- and private-sector entities. The results are tabulated at the national and state level. The resulting data provide estimates for policy makers and researchers on the use and costs of health care services. The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) uses the data in its calculation of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product, to monitor trends in the healthcare sector, and to support estimates for the National Health Accounts.

The MEPS-IC survey for single unit and large multi-unit companies was first developed and distributed electronically in 2009. The MEPS-IC will be expanded in 2010 to allow medium-sized multi-unit companies the opportunity to report electronically. In addition, the MEPS-IC form that collects the same types of health insurance information from state and local government agencies will be offered electronically in 2010. We plan to conduct usability testing on the electronic version of the forms distributed to medium multi-unit companies and government agencies. A version of both these forms will be available for usability testing in April 2010.

Usability testing of the Internet application will focus on issues such as the layout of questions and screens, the navigation within and between screens, and edits. Special attention will be paid to the design of the main menu and review / submission screen. Copies of the current screens, as well as the first draft of the testing protocol, are enclosed. Screen shots for the government agency form are not available at this time, but the screen layout is identical to the other MEPS-IC forms. The content of the business and government forms is similar with the exception of references to “the government unit” rather than “your organization.” When available, final screen shots of the instrument to be tested will be forwarded to OMB.

From mid-April through May, 2010, we will conduct one round of usability interviews with respondents from up to 16 businesses or government agencies in one major city to be determined, and the Washington, D.C. area. Findings will be used to revise the MEPS-IC Internet application.

Interviews will be conducted at the business or government site by staff from the Response Improvement Research Staff within the Economic Directorate of the Census Bureau. Subject area specialists from the MEPS-IC staff 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 or governments are recruited, participants will receive follow-up reminders about their appointments by fax, telephone, or e-mail via the Census Bureau’s Secure Messaging

Center (SMC). 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 16 hours.

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

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