

October 5, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian A. Harris-Kojetin, Ph.D.
 Statistical and Science Policy
 Office of Management and Budget

FROM: Patrick J. Benton
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SUBJECT: Questions about the Re-engineered Survey of Income and Program
 Participation (SIPP) Dress Rehearsal

This memorandum responds to your questions regarding the Re-engineered Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) Dress Rehearsal Office of Management and Budget clearance package.

Question1. Please provide a copy of the final report from the paper test of the EHC in 2008.

Answer: Please see Attachment A for a copy of a near final draft report from the paper test.

Question 2. In A.2, the second to the last sentence of the second paragraph reads “The primary focus will be to demonstrate to data users that the new instrument yields data for low-income programs that are of sufficient quality.” This should be something more like: “The primary focus will be to evaluate whether the new instrument yields data for low-income programs that are of sufficient quality.”

Answer: We agree to the new language and will make the appropriate change in the supporting statement.

Question 3. Please provide more detailed information on the specific research questions and analysis plans for the dress rehearsal.

Answer: The Re-Engineered SIPP Research Group has identified nine major research goals for the 2010 test. Those goals and an overview of assessment approaches are presented in Attachment B “Summary of 2010 Research Questions and Analysis Plans.”

Question 4. It was not clear why there is such a long lead time between the sending of the advance letters in early to mid-December and the interviews starting in January and running until March. Isn't it likely that people will lose and forget these letters over the holidays?

Answer: After discussions with Field Division we have determined that the advance letters will be mailed out between December 25, 2009 and January 1, 2010. The purpose for this change is to avoid delays in delivery of the advance letter due to holiday mail. Additionally, the six participating Census Regional Offices will use discretion in determining when the household receives the advance letter. The result should be respondents receiving the advance letters within a few weeks of their interviews. The Field Representatives (FRs) also carry copies of the advance letters for those households where the letter was not received. We will be monitoring the respondents' recall of the advance letter through questions in the interview itself as well.

Question 5. Please provide more information on how interviewers will be selected and trained on the EHC for the dress rehearsal.

Answer: Approximately one half of the FRs working on the EHC will be new to the Census Bureau and will be hired using standard FR recruiting procedures. The remaining half of the interviewing staff will be experienced SIPP FRs or experienced FRs. The training for the EHC dress rehearsal will consist of about four and one-half days of classroom training. The classroom training includes a detailed review of the questionnaire and several paired-practice interviews. Also, the FRs are required to complete a pre-classroom training course and a post-classroom training course before interviewing begins.

Question 6. The recently released CNSTAT report on the Reengineered SIPP suggested that this dress rehearsal be conducted for two waves rather than just one to provide additional information about the EHC compared to the traditional SIPP, as well as information on attrition. Will Census considering be able to do this?

Answer: We are in the very early stages of planning a wave 2 test which will likely be in two stages, with field activities in both 2011 and 2012. The test will address both attrition issues and issues related to the wave 2+ instrument design, dependent interviewing, and processing. We are currently very involved in launching the 2010 Dress Rehearsal, but hope to start a discussion of wave 2 testing plans with any and all interested parties soon, likely in the next few months.

Question 7. Has Census prepared responses to the recommendations from the CNSTAT panel? If so, please provide a copy. If not, when will responses be available?

Answer: We are finalizing our response to the recommendations from the CNSTAT panel. The final response will be presented at the ASA/SRM meeting to be held on November 19, 2009.

Attachments

cc:

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