

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) to support the Large Company Reporting Practices Program (LCRPP). We will be conducting unstructured interviews to better understand the reporting practices of large companies across multiple surveys conducted by the Census Bureau's Economic Programs Directorate. The goal of this research is to develop a better and more comprehensive understanding of large company survey respondents' reporting practices, both with regard to our surveys and their own reporting requirements, both internal and external. We plan to identify and make use of routine flows of information and internal and external company data products to inform changes to existing surveys, improve the quality of survey data and reduce respondent burden. We also plan to gather respondents' suggestions and requirements for tools and services that we might offer to reduce the burden of survey response, including enhancements to our existing Web-based Business Help Site. We may also present prototypes of electronic tools for respondents' feedback and/or usability testing, if they become available during the course of the project.

From June 2010 through December 2011, we plan to conduct approximately 160 interviews. We will recruit 30 companies as panelists and visit each of them at most once per quarter, for six quarters. We anticipate that not all companies will be available to meet each quarter, so the total number of interviews will likely be somewhat lower. In addition, we will recruit approximately 30 companies for single meetings over the course of the last three quarters of the project (i.e., one-time interviews with 10 companies in each of the last three quarters) to make up for unavailability and attrition among panel members as well as to obtain fresh perspectives on instruments and tools developed based on panel findings. We estimate that, on average, we will be able to complete 25 panel company visits per quarter and 10 one-time visits overall, for a total of 160 interviews. In-person interviews will be conducted at the companies' locations by members of the Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS), in the Office of Economic Planning and Innovation. In addition, Economic Directorate survey staff and Business Help Site staff will also participate.

During the first round of company visits, we plan to conduct exploratory interviews to gather data about respondents' experiences with completing Census Bureau surveys, including their use of information systems and existing data products, the congruency of survey requests with regard to company information sources, the involvement of other company personnel in the process of fulfilling survey requests, and their use of tools and services offered by the Census Bureau's survey programs. We will then give an overview of the Economic Directorate's findings from previous research on company reporting practices, as well as the tools and services we have made available in recent years, and ask respondents to describe their use, if any, of these tools and services and provide recommendations on improving them. We will then solicit their recommendations for new tools and services that they might find useful. A copy of the protocol for this first round of company visits is enclosed.

In subsequent meetings with panel companies, we will further explore specific topics that emerged in previous meetings with regard to company reporting practices. We will also discuss what sources of information are available to respondents with regard to organizational changes to companies (e.g., spinoffs, acquisitions, etc.) and how the Economic Directorate can obtain up-to-date information about such changes. As noted above, we will present prototypes of potential

electronic tools for feedback and/or usability testing, as appropriate for the level of development at the time. Feedback and/or usability testing results will be used to inform changes to data collection instruments, procedures, and electronic tools, which may then be re-tested in a subsequent round of this project, time permitting. The protocols for future rounds will be provided to OMB on a flow basis.

Participants will be recruited by RIRS members using a list of companies from across the U.S. provided by the various survey programs in the Economic Directorate. The companies will all be “large” companies (>5,000 employees), as this group generally accounts for the larger portions of survey estimates and also experiences high burden as a result of their organizational complexity and the greater number of surveys they receive. They will represent a diversity of industries, organizational structures, public and private ownership, and varying degrees of cooperation and reporting quality. After they are recruited, participants will receive a follow-up reminder of their appointments by fax, telephone or USPS mail.

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 accessible only to Census Bureau employees involved in the research project. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study.

The interviews are expected to average 2.5 hours. Thus, the total estimated burden for this research is 400 hours.

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

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