

1The U.S. Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) No. 0607-0725. We will be conducting unstructured interviews for the 2012 Census of Governments Finance Component (CoG-F) and the 2012 Census of Governments Retirement Component (CoG-R). The CoG-F is conducted quinquennially, collecting revenue and expenditure data for state and local governments. The CoG-R is also conducted quinquennially, providing revenue, expenditure, financial asset, and membership information for public employee retirement systems. These unstructured interviews may also inform the 2013 Annual Finance Survey (AFS) and the 2013 Annual Survey of Public-Employee Retirement Systems (ARET).

Both censuses are in the process of being redesigned in order to bring them into closer alignment with the needs of data users while keeping in mind the impact these modifications will have on respondents. As a result, this exploratory research will focus on learning how local governments' records are kept to inform the redesign of the questionnaires. Specifically, testing is being conducted to determine: a) how local governments keep their records; b) how the data requests on the CoG-F and CoG-R match what is in local governments' records; and c) how respondents are translating their records into the data requests. Topics to be discussed with local governments include records related to sales taxes, licensing and permit taxes; retirement revenues, expenditures and member information; pension systems; and employment payrolls.

The unstructured interviews will be conducted with approximately 50 local governments in the United States. The unstructured interviews will focus on the respondents' record formation, ability to provide the requested data, and their understanding of the wording and terminology used on the forms. Copies of the current questionnaires and draft interview protocols are enclosed. The results of the unstructured interviews will be used to inform the redesign of the current questionnaires and to understand the feasibility of future data requests related to topics currently not on the forms.

Interviews will be conducted from July through December, 2010. Local governments will be recruited in the Washington, D.C. area as well as other areas nationwide that are yet to be determined. Sample cases will include a mix of large and small local governments with different organizational structures. Unstructured interviews will take place at the respondents' sites and will be conducted by members of the Response Improvement Research Staff within the Census Bureau's Office of Economic Planning and Innovation. Subject area specialists from the Census Bureau will accompany the researcher on most, if not all, of the unstructured interviews. They will assist with respondent debriefings, especially in cases where additional clarification of the subject matter is required.

1After respondents are recruited, they will receive follow-up reminders about their appointments. Respondents 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. Interviews will be audio-recorded, with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in the study.

1We estimate that it will be necessary to interview only one respondent at each government agency. We estimate the length of the interview will at most be 2 hours. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 100 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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