

**2012 Census of Governments – Retirement Components**  
**Exploratory Research - Protocol Draft**  
**June 17, 2010**

*(This protocol is a guide – the questions presented here won't necessarily be asked exactly as worded in the protocol or in this order. It is important to note that not all questions will be asked in every interview.)*

**Part A – Background Information**

**1. Respondent Background**

- a. Can you tell me a little about the services [government name] provides?
- b. Can you tell me a little about your role at this [government name]?
  - What are you responsible for?
- c. Have you completed forms from the Census Bureau for [government name]?
  - If so, which ones?
  - Have you completed any other government forms?

**2. Typical response process for completing forms**

- a. Do the forms come directly to you?
- b. Do you have access to all of the information requested on the forms?
  - [If no] What don't you have access to?
- c. Who else must provide you information?
  - How do you communicate with them?
  - What do you provide them with to complete their information (copy of the form, copy of the instruction sheet, an e-mail request for the data, a telephone request for the data, etc.)?
- d. What tasks must be completed before you can complete the forms (completion of the CAFR, audits, other)?
- e. Do the forms need to be reviewed by a supervisor or other staff member before being sent to the Census Bureau?
- f. Have you ever had to call the Census Bureau for clarification about certain items in form(s) (F-11, F-12, F-12s, F-13)?
  - [If yes] Which ones?
- g. How easy/difficult is it to meet the questionnaire deadline?
  - [If difficult] Why is it difficult to meet the questionnaire deadline?
- h. How easy/difficult would you say the survey process was for you?
  - [If difficult] Why is the survey process difficult for you?

**3. Issues with past forms**

- a. In the past, what have been some of the most troublesome items to gather?
- b. And what have been some of the most time consuming items to report?
- c. Are there any specific data requests you've received in the past that have been confusing?
  - [If yes] Do you remember what these items were?

- d. In the past, what have been some of the easiest items to gather? Why?

## **Part B – Testing of Retirement Questions**

Now I'd like to discuss a handful of specific data items.

**4. Mutual Funds** – a professionally managed type of collective investment scheme that pools money from many investors and invests typically in investment securities (stocks, bonds, short-term money market instruments, other mutual funds, other securities, and/or commodities such as precious metals)

- a. Does [government agency] have holdings and investments in mutual funds for your defined benefit plans?
- b. [If yes] Are you able to report holdings and investments in mutual funds for your defined benefit plans?
  - [If yes] How are mutual funds categorized in your books?
  - [If no] Why aren't you able to report holdings and investments in mutual funds for your defined benefit plans?
- a. [If yes] Do you use the term 'mutual funds'? If not, what term do you use?
- b. [If yes] Do you have different categories of mutual funds? If so, please describe what each one is.
- c. Do you have a consolidated line on your books for holdings and investments in mutual funds for your defined benefit plans or would you have to calculate multiple lines in order to get to a consolidated figure? If the latter, how much time would that take?
- d. Now that we've discussed mutual funds, I would like to show you the question that we will ask on our forms. How would you go about calculating the figure for this question?
- e. Where do you need to go in your records to get this figure?
  - [If not going to records] Where do you get this information from?
- f. Do you have suggestions on how to improve this question or is it fine as is?

**5. Hedge Funds** – is an investment fund open to a limited range of investors that undertakes a wider range of investment and trading activities in addition to traditional long-only investment funds.

- a. Does [government agency] have holdings and investments in hedge funds for your defined benefit plans?
- b. [If yes] Are you able to report holdings and investments in hedge funds for your defined benefit plans?
  - [If yes] How are hedge funds categorized in your books?
  - [If no] Why aren't you able to report holdings and investments in hedge funds for your defined benefit plans?
- g. [If yes] Do you use the term 'hedge funds'? If not, what term do you use?
- h. [If yes] Do you have different categories of hedge funds? If so, please describe what each one is.

- i. Do you have a consolidated line on your books for holdings and investments in hedge funds for your defined benefit plans or would you have to calculate multiple lines in order to get to a consolidated figure? If the latter, how much time would that take?
  - j. Now that we've discussed hedge funds, I would like to show you the question that we will ask on our forms. How would you go about calculating the figure for this question?
  - k. Where do you need to go in your records to get this figure?
    - [If not going to records] Where do you get this information from?
  - l. Do you have suggestions on how to improve this question or is it fine as is?
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- 6. **Topic TBD**
  - 7. **Topic TBD**
  - 8. **Topic TBD**

### **Part C – Wrap Up**

- 9. Overall, how could the Census make the survey process easier for you?
- 10. How would you prefer submitting your survey answers?
  - a. Paper questionnaire? Web Survey? Excel Spreadsheet? Raw data?
- 11. (If chronic non responder) What would motivate you to return the questionnaire to us?
- 12. (If government has responded in the past) What motivates you to return the questionnaire to us?
- 13. How long would it take you to collect this information that we just discussed?
- 14. Any other comments/questions?

**Thank you for your help!**