

The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will be conducting cognitive interviewing for the 2012 Economic Census – Guam (IA-98163) and the 2012 Economic Census – Northern Mariana Islands (IA-98183). These surveys are conducted quinquennially in these U.S. territories as part of the economic census program. Among other topics, the forms collect information about employment and payroll, sales, e-commerce kind of business, and inventories.

The main purpose of the cognitive interviews is to evaluate and improve the content and wording of the questions that are asked on both the Guam and Northern Mariana Islands economic census forms. Proposed content changes to the forms include references to the IRS form 944-SS, an expansion of the class of customer categories, and the introduction of new questions regarding fringe benefits, capital expenditures, and depreciation.

In order to evaluate these forms, we plan to conduct one round of unstructured interviews with approximately 45 companies in various industries in both Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The majority of the scheduled interviews will take place in Guam.

The cognitive interviewing will focus on the respondents' ability to provide the requested data as well as their understanding of the wording and terminology used on the form and the overall layout. Specific attention will be paid to items that are being revised or added to the forms.

Interviews will be conducted in late March, 2011. Interviews will take place at the business site and will primarily be led by staff from the Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS) within the Census Bureau's Office of Economic Planning and Innovation. A portion of the interviews will be conducted by a staff member from the Economic Census Bureau within the agency's Company Statistics Division (this branch oversees the economic census data collection activities for the island areas). This subject area staff member will receive interviewing training and guidance from RIRS.

Subject area specialists from the Census Bureau will accompany the interviewers 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 interviewers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations.

After businesses are recruited, participants will receive follow-up reminders about their appointments. 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 special sworn employees involved in the research project. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study.

Enclosed are draft copies of the proposed changes to the form and a draft of the protocol to be used for testing.

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 45 hours.

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

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