

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 cognitive interviews for the forms that are part of the 2012 Census of Governments Finance Component (CoG-F). The CoG-F is conducted quinquennially, collecting revenue and expenditure data for local governments. The CoG-F forms include the F-28 Survey of County, Municipal, and Township Government Finances, the F-29 Survey of Local Government Finances: Multi-Function Special Agencies, and the F-32 Survey of Local Government Finances: Special Agencies.

Several items on these forms have been revised in response to recommendation from the 2007 review by the Committee for National Statistics. Changes have been made to bring the data into closer alignment with the needs of data users while keeping in mind the impact these modifications will have on respondents. Items that will be of particular interest during cognitive interviews include tax revenue, water and sewerage revenue and expenditures, natural resources, long and short term debt, and interest on debt.

From late May through September, 2011, staff from the Response Improvement Research Staff within the Census Bureau's Office of Economic Planning and Innovation will conduct cognitive interviews with approximately 35 local governments in the United States. The cognitive interviews will focus on the respondents' ability to provide the requested data, their understanding of the wording and terminology used on the forms, and the visual layout of the paper forms. Copies of the draft questionnaires and draft interview protocols for testing are enclosed. Results will be used update the forms in preparation for the 2012 Census of Governments Finance Component.

Local governments will be recruited in several areas nationwide that are yet to be determined. Sample cases will include a mix of large and small local governments with different organizational structures. Cognitive interviews will take place at the respondents' sites and subject area specialists from the Census Bureau will accompany the researcher on most, if not all, of the 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 by e-mail 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 70 hours.

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

Amy Anderson
Response Improvement Research Staff
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233
(301) 763-7544
Amy.E.Anderson@census.gov