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). The Census Bureau plans to conduct a usability test of the American Community Survey (ACS) Web site. The purpose of the Web site is to provide information about the ACS as well as supplemental resources for ACS data (e.g., data collection, data utilization, survey procedures, etc.). Additionally, the site serves as a portal to the American Fact Finder (AFF) for data access. The ACS site is available to the public, and diverse users search the site seeking a vast range of information.

The study aims to evaluate the redesign of the site in response to previous baseline studies conducted in 2009 and to identify new issues that are potentially problematic and frustrating to users.

In May and June 2011, staff from the Census Bureau's Human Factors and Usability Group will interview 18 participants from two separate user groups: 9 expert users and 9 novice users of the ACS from the Washington DC metropolitan region. Interviews will be conducted at the Usability Lab at the Census Bureau. All participants must have a minimum of one year of Internet experience and use the Internet at least two times a week to search for information. Novice participants will be recruited from the Usability Lab database, which is composed of people from the metropolitan DC area who volunteered to participate in studies after responding to a Craigslist.com posting or an ad in a local newspaper. Expert users will consist of internal Census Bureau employees and external persons who have experience and knowledge about the ACS. These individuals will be recruited from a Broadcast announcement on Census Intranet site and from referrals by the ACS team.

The testing materials used in this study will be the same as those used in the previous baseline studies so that comparisons can be made. Participants will be given an initial questionnaire about their Computer and Internet experience and some demographic characteristics. Then each participant will be given a set of tasks to do on the Web site, located at http://www.census.gov/acs/www/. Tasks will be randomized such that no participant will receive the tasks in the same order. Tasks will be different for novice and expert users to account for the different levels of familiarity and expertise with the ACS.

Participants will be asked to think-aloud while they are working on the tasks, and they will also provide feedback about the Web site during a debriefing at the conclusion of the session. Participants will be prompted to think-aloud when they fall silent with special probes. Finally, participants will be asked to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire designed to measure their satisfaction with the site. Subjective satisfaction ratings will be collected for such design elements as the layout of page, ease of finding information, and use of Census jargon. A copy of the initial questionnaire, the satisfaction questionnaire, and the task sets are all enclosed.

Respondents will be told that their participation is voluntary and all the information they provide is confidential. After they are recruited, respondents will receive follow-up reminders by telephone and/or email. Respondents who are not Federal employees will receive a $40.00 honorarium for their assistance.

We estimate that users will spend one hour on average completing the study, including time spent working on the demographic and satisfaction questions, the tasks and the debriefing. Thus, the total estimated respondent burden for this test is 18 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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