

The U.S. Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB No. 0607-0725). We will be conducting cognitive interviews for the forms that are part of the 2012 Census of Governments – Retirement Component (CoG-R). The CoG-R is conducted quinquennially, providing revenue, expenditure, financial asset, and membership information for public employee retirement systems. The CoG-R forms include the F-11 Locally Administered Public-Employee Retirement Systems and the F-12 State Administered Public-Employee Retirement Systems.

Several items on these forms have been revised in response to recommendations from the 2007 review, State and Local Government Statistics at a Crossroads, by the Committee on 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 net gains/losses on investments, money market mutual funds, federally sponsored bonds, corporate bonds and stocks, foreign and international securities, as well as hedge funds and other investment items.

Cognitive interviews will be conducted with approximately 20 government retirement systems 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. Results will be used to update the forms in preparation for the 2012 Census of Governments – Retirement Component. Copies of the draft F-11 questionnaire and draft interview protocol for testing are enclosed.

Interviews will be conducted in August and September, 2011. Pension plan administrators from both state- and locally-administered public-employee retirement systems will be recruited in several areas nationwide that are yet to be determined. Sample cases will include a mix of large and small retirement systems. Cognitive 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 matter experts 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.

After 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.

We estimate that it will be necessary to interview only one respondent at each of the 20 government retirement systems. We estimate the length of the interview will at most be 2 hours. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 40 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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