

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 interviews for the Annual Survey of Public Employment & Payroll (ASPEP). The ASPEP survey collects information about the dollar amount of payroll and the frequency of pay for employees across a variety of government entities including schools, universities, and special districts, in addition to towns and municipalities.

For the 2012 data collection year, the processing of the paper survey form will be migrating into the Census Bureau's integrated Computer-Assisted Data Entry (iCADE) data capture system. Because iCADE employs both optical mark and optical character recognition, paper forms must undergo layout and appearance changes in order for the system to process them successfully.

For this testing, we will be evaluating the three forms for cities/municipalities/counties (Form E-4), special districts (Form E-3), and school districts (including post-secondary institutions, Form E-6). As part of this testing, we will include different potential layouts within each of the forms. For example, the different sections of Form-4 will have different layouts. We will be evaluating which layout works best for respondents. Enclosed is a mock-up of the different layouts we will be testing within Form E-3 and Form E-4. The alternative layouts for the sections of Form E-6 are not yet available. We also enclose a tentative research protocol for evaluating the form changes. We will refine the protocol, if necessary, once we have the actual forms.

From March through July, 2012 staff from the Response Improvement Research Staff will conduct cognitive interviews with approximately 48 respondents from the three different types of government entities across three rounds of testing. During the week of March 26, we will conduct interviews in the Jackson, Mississippi metropolitan area. In June and July, we will conduct interviews in the northern United States in areas that may include New England and the Pacific Northwest. The exact location of the June and July trips will be determined closer to their scheduled start. Specialists from the Census Bureau's public outreach area and the ASPEP staff may accompany us on some of the interviews.

Once we have successfully recruited respondents, we will send them an email confirming our meeting. During interviews, we will inform participants that their response is voluntary, that the information they provide is confidential, and that only employees involved in the research project will see or hear any of the information in the interview. We also will audio-record the interviews with the respondents' permission, to ensure that we are able to report our findings and recommendations accurately. 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 government entity. We estimate the length of the interview will average 1 hour. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 48 hours.

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

Jennifer Beck
Response Improvement Research Staff
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233
(301) 763-1736
jennifer.l.beck@census.gov