

2012 Survey of Business Owners – Cognitive Interview Protocol

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Research Questions to Address:

- Do the modified wording and formatting of the ownership screener questions clarify the appropriate response for nonemployers and sole proprietors, and are the revised questions clear for other types of respondents?
- Are the new veteran and franchise questions interpreted as intended?
- Does the new strategy for use of bold print improve the visibility of key text and comprehension of questions?
- Is the translation of the questions for the Spanish-language version of the questionnaire accurate, including with regard to the predominant Spanish dialects spoken in the US?
- Does the new sequence of questions on the short form resulting from the elimination of questions affect comprehension of the remaining questions?
- Do respondents have issues with comprehending the terminology used on the questionnaire?
- Is the requested information available in respondent's memory and/or records?
- Are respondents able to complete questions on behalf of other owners (proxy reporting)?

Expected Length of Interview: 60 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Copies of SBO form(s)
 - Round 1 – Two alternate versions of Q2, one with instruction within Q2, other with instruction above Q2 in lighter-shaded box
 - Round 2-3 – Long form and short form
 - Round 2-3 – Spanish versions of long and short forms
- Consent form
- Digital recorder

Introduction:

- People around the table: How long at company, position/title and responsibilities.
- Explain purpose of meeting: To understand the processes used to answer questions, not to test the respondent. No right or wrong answers. Questions may seem obvious, but don't want to assume we know what you are thinking.
- Structure of meeting: General and specific questions about the form itself, as well as the business.
- Permission to record discussion? Have R sign consent form.

Procedures:

- Have respondent complete one page at a time and ask probes upon completion of each page.

Before the Questionnaire:

- What kind of business do you have? What types of products or services do you provide to your customers or clients?
- Do you recall receiving this form in 2007? If so, what do you remember about it?

Now let's take a look at the form.

- *(If R received and completed the form in advance)* I'd like to go through and ask you about your answers.
- *(If R is seeing it for the first time)* I'd like you to approach the form as if you had received it in the mail, and go ahead and fill it out. I'll ask you questions as you go through the form.

Long Form SBO-1

Generic probes – For every item

- What is this item asking for, in your opinion?
- How did you go about completing this item?
- How did you decide which answer to choose?
- Did/would you have access to all the information you needed, or did you have to get help from others?
 - *(If needed help)* Whom did/would you contact? What is that person's [role in the company/relationship to you]?
- What records did/would you use to answer this question, if any?

Specific probes for items of interest

Front page

- What did you notice about the front page when you first set eyes upon it?
- Was any information on the front page relevant to you? If so, what?
- Do you recall seeing any instructions for returning the survey or how to get help?
- Do you recall seeing the text under "Start Here"? What does this text mean to you? What does the [first/second?/third] bullet mean to you?

ID/PW for online reporting

- Do you recall seeing anything about online reporting?
- How likely do you think you would be to complete the survey online?

Page 2, Ownership questions

Instructions at top of page

- Do you recall seeing the text at the top of the page, above question 2? What does that mean to you?
 - What do you think about this message?

Item 2

- What do you consider an owner of this business?
- Do you recall seeing the text below the question? What does the [first, second, third] bullet mean to you?
- What does the “none” option mean to you?
- *(Note whether R correctly followed skip instruction, if appropriate)*

Item 3

- What does “government or tribal entity” mean to you?

Item 4

- How did you determine if one person owns 10% or more of this business?
- *(Note whether R correctly followed skip instruction, if appropriate)*

Item 5

- *(Note whether R correctly followed skip instruction, if appropriate)*
- How did you know the amount owned each owner?
- Do you recall seeing the text below the question? What does the [first, second, third] bullet mean to you?

Item 6

- What does line [A, B, C] mean to you?
- In line A, what does “the majority of this business” mean to you?
 - Do you recall reading the text in parentheses? How well does this match the way you think about family?
- In line C, what does “primarily operated by” mean to you?
- *(Note whether R correctly followed skip instruction, if appropriate)*

Page 3, Owner 1

Instruction at top of page, under “Section 1”

- Do you recall seeing the instruction at the beginning of this section? What does it mean to you?
- Whom do the questions on this page apply to?

Item 19

- *(Note whether R correctly followed skip instructions, if appropriate)*
- In line A, what does “active duty” mean to you? How well does our description match your understanding?
- In line B, do you recall seeing the instruction to select all that apply?
 - What does [each answer] mean to you?

Item 20

- *(Note whether R correctly followed skip instruction, if appropriate)*

Page 4, Owner 2

Let R complete just the first item, then probe to ensure s/he understood the instruction to complete this section for another owner.

- What is this page asking you for?
- *(If correctly understood “owner 2”)* Whom did you answer these questions for?
- Would you be able to answer these questions yourself?
 - *(If no)* Which questions would you need help with? How would you go about answering them?

Pages 5-6, Owners 3 and 4

- Would you complete pages 3 and 4 for anyone? Who are they?
- How would you go about answering these questions for them?

Page 7, Business

Item 62

- *(If “don’t know”)* Do you have any idea when this business was established?

Item 63

- What does “business model” mean to you?
- What does “franchisor” mean to you?

Item 64

- What does “licensed by a franchisor” mean to you?
- *(Note what parts of the question R attends to.)*

Item 65A

- What does “capital” mean to you?
- What does [each] answer option mean to you?

Item 66

- What does “expansion” mean to you?
- What does “capital improvements” mean to you?
- *(Note what parts of the question R attends to.)*

Item 67

- *(If “don’t know”)* Would you be able to make an educated guess about what percentage of this business’ total sales are exports?

Page 8, Business (continued)

Item 72

- *(If applicable)* What types of employees does your business employ? How well do our categories match the way you think about your employees?

Item 76

- What does [each option] mean to you?
- Are there any other types of intellectual property you think should be included on this list?

Wrap-up

- How likely are you to respond to this request?
- How would you most likely return the survey – by mail, by the website?
- Considering the kinds of questions on the form, do you have any concerns about providing this information to the Census Bureau? If so, which questions do you consider sensitive?
- Do you have any other thoughts about the form that we haven’t discussed?

Overall impression of the form

- What is your impression of the form?
- What do/did you like about it, if anything?
- What do/did you not like, if anything?

Thank you for your help!