

1The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will conduct usability testing of the Internet reporting application for the Advance Monthly and Monthly Retail Trade Surveys (MARTS and MRTS). The purpose of the MARTS is to provide an early indication of sales of retail and food service companies. The purpose of the MRTS is to provide current estimates of sales at retail and food service stores and inventories held by retail stores. These data are collected via multiple modes, including mail and fax. The electronic Centurion form is scheduled to be released by September, 2012.

Respondents who are in both the MARTS and MRTS samples typically receive two separate mail requests for their information. The electronic version tested in this submission combines both surveys. These respondents are expected to report their advanced retail sales numbers early, as on the MARTS schedule. If inventory values are available at this time, respondents can report that information. Otherwise, respondents will need to return to the survey later in the month to update this information.

Usability testing of the Internet application in Centurion will focus on how respondents in the MARTS and MRTS samples will handle the reporting of their information to ensure that respondents understand what information to provide and on what schedule. Other issues such as the layout of questions and screens, the navigation within and between screens, and edits, will also be investigated. Copies of the draft screens, the first draft of the testing protocol, and copies of the paper version of the MARTS and MRTS are enclosed.

From mid-June through July, 2012, we will conduct one round of usability interviews with respondents from up to 20 companies in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Retail locations visited will include department stores, non-department stores, and food service companies of various sizes. Findings will be used to revise the MARTS/MRTS Internet application.

Interviews will be conducted at the company by staff from the Response Improvement Research Staff within the Economic Directorate of the Census Bureau. Subject area specialists from the MARTS/MRTS staff will accompany the usability tester on most, if not all, of the interviews. They will assist with respondent debriefing, especially in cases where additional clarification of the subject matter is required. Interviews will be audio recorded, with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations.

After respondents are recruited, participants will receive follow-up reminders about their appointments by fax or telephone. Participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be seen only by Census Bureau or special sworn employees involved in the research project. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study.

We estimate that it will be necessary to interview only one respondent at each company. We estimate the length of the interviews will average 45 minutes. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 15 hours.

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

Amy Anderson
Response Improvement Research Staff
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233
(301) 763-1836
Amy.E.Anderson@census.gov