

1The Census Bureau plans to conduct research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will be conducting cognitive testing for a new survey form for the Quarterly Survey of Local Government Taxes.

Currently the data are collected on two separate forms. The Quarterly Survey of Property Tax Collections has one data item (property taxes). The Quarterly Survey of Non-Property Taxes asks for eleven data items, including sales taxes, license and permit fees, and income taxes. The move to a single questionnaire and the collection of fewer taxes will reduce respondent burden and costs of collection. If it is possible to combine these collections, a single sample would significantly decrease the sample size. A smaller sample size would allow analysts more time to focus on the sample units, thus leading to better quality data that can be released earlier.

During July through September 2012, staff from the Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS) within the Census Bureau's Office of Economic Planning and Innovation will conduct two to three rounds of cognitive interviews with up to 30 respondents from government entities in the New England region (Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts), another metropolitan area yet to be determined, and the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Governments Division will provide us with a list of local governments from which we will recruit. We will attempt to obtain interviews with governments that vary in size and complexity. Findings will be used to create the new Quarterly Survey of Local Government Taxes.

The interviews will take place at the government site by RIRS staff and will focus on respondents' reactions to combining the two surveys into one. The new survey form is going to those who have previously completed the Non-Property Tax form, so we will be looking for their reaction to the addition of the Property Tax question and the reduced length. Subject area specialists from GOVS will accompany the researcher 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.

We will record the interviews with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations. After government entities are recruited, participants will receive follow-up reminders about their appointments by phone or email. 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 one respondent at each government entity. We estimate the length of the interviews will average 1 hour. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 30 hours.

Draft copies of the questionnaire and protocol are enclosed.

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

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