

20 February 2014

NOTE TO THE  
REVIEWER OF:

OMB CLEARANCE 1220-0141  
“Cognitive and Psychological Research”

FROM:

Jennifer Edgar and Jim Esposito  
Office of Survey Methods Research

SUBJECT:

Submission of Materials for the Proposed  
OES Feasibility Survey

Please accept the enclosed materials for approval under the OMB clearance package 1220-0141 “Cognitive and Psychological Research.” In accordance with our agreement with OMB, we are submitting a brief description of the study.

The total *estimated* respondent burden for this study is 60 hours.

If there are any questions regarding this project, please contact Jim Esposito at 202-691-6368 or Jennifer Edgar at 202-691-7528.

## Introduction

The purpose of this memorandum is to describe a feasibility study aimed at identifying opportunities and risks associated with gathering additional data elements on the Occupational Employment Statistics (**OES**) survey form. Currently, a relatively small percentage of OES respondents provide standard payroll reports (“data dumps”) that include data elements beyond what is specifically requested in the OES survey (i.e., occupation and wage data). Some of the additional data elements provided for employees include the following:

- Job title
- Job descriptions
- Part-time or full-time status
- Number of hours (worked or paid)
- Gender
- Union status
- EEOC code
- Hire date
- FLSA status

Obtaining a subset of these data elements from business respondents would be of great interest to economists. To explore the feasibility of collecting these data from OES respondents, this research has been designed to determine which additional data elements employers capture for their employees and which they would be *willing* to report, what business software they are using to store these data, what organizational unit would be best positioned to provide these data, and what the preferred method of submitting their data reports might be.

OES recognizes that requesting additional information from respondents has the potential to increase burden and thus involves inherent risks. So another important goal of the study will be to gather information as to how much time it would take respondents to generate a report containing their available data elements. Incorporating additional elements into the OES survey will only be considered to the extent that there are *no significant adverse effects* on current OES data-collection efforts (e.g., reduced response rates).

## I. Methodology

In collaboration with the State of Maine, this study has two principal phases: a Feasibility Survey and a subsequent Field Test. This submission will focus primarily on the first phase.

### 1. Feasibility Survey

The initial phase of this multiple-phase research will involve a *mail-out questionnaire form* designed to gather information from a sample of businesses (N=200) as to which data elements (in addition to occupation and wage data) they have available for their employees, which elements they would be willing to provide data for, and what their preferred report-submission method might be.

The first step in the process will be to send an initial letter (Attachment I), the questionnaire form (Attachment II), an illustrative OES fact sheet (Attachment III), and a postage-free return envelope to the sample of businesses describing the purpose of the study. A reminder letter (Attachment IV) will be sent out about a week after the original mailing. Our principal research collaborator from the state of Maine will conduct nonresponse follow-up contacts by telephone, using the questionnaire form as his protocol, for those establishments that have not responded within 10-to-14 days of the initial mailing.

### 2. Field Test

Approximately 3-to-4 weeks after data from the Feasibility Survey has been collected and analyzed, the Field Test will be initiated. As presently conceived, this test will involve a sample of about 300 businesses and will be conducted via a mail-out survey designed to follow OES production procedures. Business respondents will be asked to provide both standard OES data (i.e., occupation and wage data) as well as a limited number of additional data elements (i.e., those identified as optimal on the basis of findings from the Feasibility Survey). The principal goal of the Field Test will be to determine to what extent businesses are actually willing to provide and transmit useable data electronically for a limited number of additional data elements. An additional request will be sent to OMB providing further details on this portion of the study.

## **II. Participants**

The sample selected for the Feasibility Survey will consist of 200 businesses of varying class sizes and 2-digit NAICS drawn from May 2013 OES “completes”. Given reporting issues uncovered in prior RAS work, the program office may consider oversampling mid-size businesses.

## **III. Burden Hours**

Given the design of the mail-out questionnaire form (i.e., almost all questions have precoded response options), it is expected that businesses, regardless of size, will require no more than 15-to-30 minutes to complete the form, with an average (for use in estimating burden hours) of 20 minutes. Nonresponse follow-up contacts/interviews (by telephone), using the questionnaire form as the protocol, are expected to take about the same amount of time. Assuming, a 90% response rate (i.e., 180 responses from a sample of 200), an estimate of respondent burden is **60 hours**.

## **IV. Data Confidentiality**

Respondents will be given the standard CIPSEA pledge given to OES respondents which will be provided in the initial letter (Attachment I) and at the bottom of the Feasibility Survey questionnaire form (Attachment II).

## **V. Attachments**

1. Attachment I: Feasibility Survey Initial Letter
2. Attachment II: Feasibility Survey Questionnaire Form
3. Attachment III: Generic OES Fact Sheet
4. Attachment IV: Reminder Letter

## **Attachment I: Feasibility Survey Initial Letter**

February XX, 2014

«AddressBlock»

«GreetingLine»

I am writing to request your assistance. As the nation's premier source of occupational information, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is studying ways to both enhance the data we collect and publish and to modernize our data collection procedures. We would like your help in this effort. Data users are asking for additional occupation-related data (such as full-time or part-time status or gender of jobholder), and those providing the data want reporting methods that are more efficient than a paper form.

The Office of Occupational Employment Statistics at BLS has partnered with the state of Maine to contact a limited number of businesses across the US to gather information on the following topics:

- What job-related information besides titles and wages do businesses typically have available?
- What information are businesses willing to report?
- Who within the business is best to contact to gather such data?
- What is the business's preferred mode of reporting?

Your voluntary participation in this important research effort will help BLS to stay abreast of demographic changes in the labor force and to better project our future occupational needs. Your assistance will help us in meeting the needs of decision makers, data users, and other customers. **Any information you provide in support of this study is strictly confidential.** In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent.

Please fill out and return the enclosed survey to us by **March XX** to avoid follow-up calls and save taxpayer dollars.

Should you have any questions regarding this research effort, please feel free to contact Carrie Jones at (202) 691-6599 or email [oes.helpdesk@bls.gov](mailto:oes.helpdesk@bls.gov).

In closing, we wish to **thank you** for your consideration of this request and for your participation.

Sincerely,

Laurie Salmon  
Division Chief  
Division of Occupational Employment Statistics  
Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics

Enclosures

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey?**

The OES Survey collects data from a sample of establishments and calculates employment estimates by occupation, industry, and geographic area. The survey covers all non-farm industries. Data are collected by the state workforce agencies in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor. The OES program estimates employment and wages for nearly 800 occupations for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and Guam, as well as the nation as a whole. It also produces employment and wage estimates for Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), and for specific industries.

### **What type of job-related information is OES looking for?**

In addition to the occupations and wages already collected by OES, we are also interested in employees' full-time or part-time status, hourly or salaried status, hire date, age, gender, and hours worked, among others.

### **How are the data provided by OES respondents protected?**

All information and identity provided to OES are kept in strict confidence in accordance with Bureau of Labor Statistics Data Integrity Guidelines<sup>1</sup> and with the Confidentiality Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA) of 2002. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent.

### **Does OES collect worker-identifiable information such as social security number or names?**

No. OES will **never** request employee names or their social security numbers in association with employment and wage data.

### **How will the data gathered from research participants be used to enhance the OES program?**

The data collected from research participants will help OES determine if it is possible to collect information beyond occupations and wages, and expand the types of data available to OES data users.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/bls/data\\_integrity.htm](http://www.bls.gov/bls/data_integrity.htm)

## **Attachment II: Feasibility Survey Questionnaire Form**

**[Note: See attachment.]**



## **Attachment III: Generic OES Fact Sheet**

**[Note: See attachment.]**

## **Attachment IV: Reminder Letter**

March XX, 2014

«AddressBlock»

«GreetingLine»

About a week ago, I sent you a letter requesting your help with a survey about workforce information. If you have already responded to the survey, please accept my thanks. If you have not yet returned your survey, please do so as soon as possible. I realize you are busy, and I want to make your participation as easy as possible – if you would prefer to respond by telephone, you can call Merrill S. Huhtala, OES Program Manager, at 207-621-5196.

As the nation's premier source of occupational information, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is studying ways to both enhance the data we collect and publish and to modernize our data collection procedures. Data users are asking for additional occupation-related data (such as full-time or part-time status or gender of jobholder), and those providing the data want more efficient reporting methods.

The Office of Occupational Employment Statistics at BLS and the state of Maine have contacted a limited number of businesses, including yours, to gather information on the following topics:

- What job-related information besides titles and wages do businesses typically have available?
- What information are businesses willing to report?
- Who within the business is best to contact to gather such data?
- What is the business's preferred mode of reporting?

Your voluntary participation in this important research effort will help BLS to stay abreast of demographic changes in the labor force and to better project our future occupational needs. Your assistance will help us in meeting the needs of decision makers, data users, and other customers. **Any information you provide in support of this study is strictly confidential.** In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent.

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Sincerely,

Laurie Salmon

Division Chief

Division of Occupational Employment Statistics

Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics



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