

October 6, 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR: Reviewer of 1220-0050

FROM: JAY RYAN, Chief
Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys
Bureau of Labor Statistics

SUBJECT: Non-substantive Change Request for the Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE) – Research Section Questions

CE is involved in an ongoing effort to improve data quality, maintain or increase response rates, and reduce data collection costs. As part of informing this effort, a “Research Section” was added to the questionnaire as indicated in the 2011 Clearance Package (cleared on 4/1/11). As described in the 2011 package, new questions will replace those currently asked each survey year.

The current set of questions in this section, with the exception of the financial software use questions, will now be removed and two new sets of questions will be added. (See Attachment A – “2012 Instrument Requirements” for a full list of questions that will be asked and deleted.) The question regarding financial software and its two follow up questions will continue to be asked in order to look at trends over time regarding the use of financial software. These questions will be asked from the second quarter of 2012 until the first quarter of 2013.

The objective of the first set of questions, to be added to the instrument in the second and third quarter of 2012, is to collect data that will enable BRPD to identify if “landmark” events could be a meaningful way to cue respondent recall for expenditure reporting. Questions will be asked at the end of the survey during the fifth interview and will include whether any landmark events occurred and whether there were any related expenses.

The second set of questions will be asked for the fourth quarter of 2012 and the first quarter of 2013, replacing the “landmark” event questions. The objective of this second set of questions is to collect data that will enable CE to develop an effective burden index. A burden index has many purposes including being used to help evaluate different design options, to include in a Quality Profile, to use as input into a responsive design, and to examine the relationship between burden and quality/measurement error. These questions will be asked at the end of the survey during the fifth interview.

Expert review by staff members of both the CE program office and the BLS Office of Survey Methods and Research has been performed on these questions.

As the initial set of questions will be removed prior to the new sets of questions being added, the total burden hour estimate will be unchanged.

Current OMB approval of the CE surveys is scheduled to expire April 30, 2014.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Jay Ryan at 202-691-5139 or e-mail at Ryan.Jay@bls.gov or Peggy Murphy at 202-691-6186 or e-mail at Murphy.Peggy@bls.gov.