

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the Census Bureau's plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We plan to conduct usability testing of the electronic version of the 2012 Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons (SBO). The SBO provides the only comprehensive, regularly collected source of information on selected economic and demographic characteristics for businesses and their individual owners by gender, ethnicity, race, and veteran status.

During interviews we will be testing two versions of the SBO form in English. Interviews will focus on both the full version of the survey form and a "short form" in which most of the owner-specific demographic questions and nearly all the business-oriented questions have been removed, and which will be mailed to half the sample, selected randomly. Drafts of the paper versions of these two forms are enclosed.

Starting in 2013, survey respondents will no longer receive a paper copy of the form during mail out, only a cover letter instructing respondents to report via the electronic instrument. Due to this change, the usability interviews will not only focus on respondents' reactions to the layout and navigation through the SBO forms in the web instrument, but will also observe reactions to a proposed cover letter. Drafts of the current screen shots, cover letter, and interview protocol are enclosed.

During August 2013, the Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS) will conduct one round of usability interviews with up to 20 business respondents. Ten interviews will be conducted with the full version of the survey form and 10 will be conducted with the "short" form. SBO staff will provide us with a list of businesses in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area, from which we will recruit. Sample cases will include a mix of companies with different organizational structures. The interviews will take place at the business location. Findings will be used to revise the SBO electronic instrument before it is released in September 2013.

After businesses are recruited, participants will receive follow-up reminders about their appointments by fax. 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.

Subject area specialists from the SBO staff 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 audio-record the interviews with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations.

We estimate that it will be necessary to interview only one respondent at each business. We estimate the length of the interviews will average one hour. Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 20 hours.

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

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