

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 research (OMB number 0607-0725). We plan to conduct debriefing interviews to test the impact of a letter-only mail strategy being implemented for three surveys: 2013 Annual Capital Expenditures Survey (ACES), 2013 Annual Retail Trade Survey (ARTS), and 2013 Annual Wholesale Trade Survey (AWTS).

ACES provides detailed industry-level data on purchases of new and used structures and equipment by businesses, non-profits, and other organizations. ARTS provides sales, expenses, inventories, and other financial data for retail sector businesses. AWTS provides detailed industry measures of sales inventories, operational expenses and purchases for businesses involved in wholesale trade. These three surveys are implementing a "web push" strategy for the first time in which respondents will be contacted via a letter requesting them to complete the survey using the Census Bureau's data collection website, instead of a paper form. Post-due-date follow-up mailings will also contain only web-push letters and not paper forms, unless electronic responses do not meet historic response rates at those points in time, in which case forms will be included in the follow-up mailings. An example of a survey request letter is enclosed.

From April through September 2014, the Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS) will conduct telephone debriefing interviews with up to 120 business respondents across the United States that were sent a request to complete one of the three surveys. Interview cases will be selected based on response mode (i.e., paper vs. web), apparent usability issues (e.g., breakoffs) as identified in paradata, and nonresponse. Interviews will focus on respondents' and nonrespondents' reactions to the mailout materials, the usability of the internet instrument, respondents' preferences for paper versus electronic modes, reasons for nonresponse, and the impact of the appearance and content of the web-push letters. A draft protocol has been included with this letter.

Survey program staff will provide lists of businesses from which researchers will attempt to recruit interviews. Survey program staff and other staff involved in mail processing and collection operations from the Economic Planning and Coordination Division may participate as observers of the phone interviews as they are able.

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 do not plan to audio-record the interviews.

We estimate that it will be necessary to interview one respondent at each business. We estimate the length of the interviews at a maximum of twenty minutes (120 cases X 20 minutes per case = 40 hours). Additionally, to recruit respondents we expect to make up to 5 phone contacts per completed case. The recruiting calls are expected to last on average two minutes per call (5 phone calls attempted per completed case X 120

completed cases X 2 minutes = 20 hours). Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 60 hours (20 hours for recruiting + 40 hours for interviews).

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

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Enclosures

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