The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will conduct usability testing for the electronic version of the FY 2014 and FY 2015 Survey of State Government Research and Development (SGRD) survey, which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of the National Science Foundation (NSF). The SGRD collects data on research and development expenditures from state government departments, agencies, commissions, public authorities, and dependent entities with research and development activities. The biennial SGRD collects data for the past two fiscal years.

Two previous rounds of cognitive testing evaluated respondents reactions to and understanding of existing survey content as well as the reportability of alternative survey content. The first round of cognitive testing revealed that, for the most part, new survey content was not difficult to report although respondents did not always understand the language we were using to describe the entities performing research and development (e.g., intramural and extramural). After making revisions based on findings from the first round of testing, the second round of testing confirmed that, for the most part, questions would not be difficult to answer. Additionally, we learned that respondents employ different strategies for gathering survey data from other employees and we plan to follow up on that in these interviews.

Data collection for the SGRD is being moved from Harvester into Centurion for the 2015 data collection cycle. Due to the extensive changes in this system, these interviews will focus on respondents' reactions to the layout of questions and screens, navigation within and between screens, edits, and the graphic that will be included with the mailout materials. Draft copies of the available screen shots, graphic, and protocol for the usability interviews are enclosed.

From July through August 2015, the Data Collection Methods and Research Branch (DCMRB) will conduct up to two rounds of usability interviews with up to 20 respondents from government entities in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area as well as the metropolitan areas surrounding Boston, MA; Montpelier, VT; Albany, NY; Augusta, ME; and Concord, NH. Staff from NSF and the Economic Reimbursable Surveys Division (ERSD) will help identify locations for testing and assemble recruiting lists of state governments. We will attempt to obtain interviews with agency representatives that vary in size and complexity with the goal of interviewing participants who will most likely complete the FY 2014 and FY 2015 SGRD. Interviews will take place at the government site. Findings from these usability interviews will be combined with findings from the previous two rounds of cognitive interviews and will be used to revise the SGRD application before it is released in November 2015.

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

Subject area specialists from ERSD and NSF 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 one respondent at each government entity. We estimate the length of the interviews will average one and half hours (20 cases X 1.5 hour per case = 30 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 attempted phone calls per completed case X 20 cases X 2 minutes = 3.33 hours). Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 33.33 hours (30 hours for interviews + 3.33 hours for recruiting).

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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