

The U.S. Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) No. 0607-0725. We will be conducting three rounds of cognitive interviews with respondents who responded to the 2012 Economic Census within the Wholesale Trade, Manufacturing, Services, and Management of Companies and Enterprises subject areas. Our focus will be identifying and measuring Factoryless Goods Producers (FGPs) within the United States. FGPs are establishments that control the design, production, and sale of products but contract with unaffiliated establishments to perform transformation activities. This research intends to add to existing research regarding FGPs in the United States. More specifically, it builds on findings from debriefing interviews that were conducted in May and June 2014 and early stage scoping (ESS) interviews that occurred from August 2015 – January 2016. The debriefing interviews found that only about half of the respondents reported as expected to the FGP inquiries. These interviews focused on responses to the 2012 Economic Census Special Inquiries and, because of their focus, had difficulty determining if respondents are able to answer more in-depth questions regarding FGP at the establishment level, including the types of records that would be available, and the potential burden. The ESS interviews focused on the availability and reportability of FGP information, with the hope of collecting data at the establishment level. This ESS research focused on learning how enterprise and establishment records are kept. Based on these findings, and in collaboration with the Office of Statistical Methods Research at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, we have developed a draft set of FGP questions to be included in certain industry forms in the 2017 Economic Census.

The current research will add to previous research by exploring the understanding of instructions and questions related to FGP activity, examining the availability of information regarding the FGP concept in respondent records by investigating current business practices, terminology, and the availability of records associated with contracting out the production of goods at the establishment level. The goal is to determine whether respondents interpret questions and instructions in a manner that meets the questionnaire's intent, to identify likely respondents and data retrieval strategies, and to identify other related reporting issues or concerns. Results will be used to refine the questions and aid the development of contact strategies for the 2017 Economic Census.

From May through November 2016, staff from the Data Collection Methodology and Research Branch (DCMRB) will conduct 3 rounds of cognitive interviews with up to 75 2012 Economic Census respondents throughout the United States. Copies of the draft questions and draft interview protocols (for single unit and multi units) are enclosed.

Staff from the Economy Wide Division (EWD) will provide DCMRB with a list of establishments from which to recruit. It should be noted that FGP content is not applicable to all respondents who answered the 2012 Economic Census, therefore, in order to gather sufficient information about these items, we will be specifically targeting the following NAICS industry groups: semiconductors, apparel, computers, commercial printing, pharmaceuticals, machine shops, plastics, metals, miscellaneous food, design firms and wholesale trade. Sample cases will include a mix of large and small establishments/companies with different organizational structures. Unstructured interviews will take place at the business location and will be conducted by members of the DCMRB. Phone calls may be used to supplement the in-person interviews when necessary.

After establishments 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 EWD will accompany the researchers 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 most of the interviews with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations.

We estimate that it will be necessary to interview up to two respondents at each business. We estimate the length of the interview will at most be 2 hours. Thus, the maximum estimated burden for this research is 300 hours (i.e., 2 hours per interview x 2 respondents x 75 interviews). Additionally, to recruit respondents who are willing to participate we expect to make up to 5 phone contacts per completed case. The recruiting calls are expected to last on average five minutes per call (5 attempted phone calls per completed case X 75 cases X 5 minutes = 6.25 hours). Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 306.25 hours (300 hours for interviewing + 6.25 hours for recruiting interviews).

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

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