

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will be conducting cognitive interviews to test proposed new content for the 2017 Economic Census. The Economic Census, fielded every five years, provides a snapshot of US businesses and serves as a benchmark for other economic surveys at the Census Bureau.

For the 2017 Economic Census, key stakeholders and data users have requested new questions ~~were proposed~~ to collect additional information about businesses in certain industries in order to better meet their data needs. These questions cover self-service check-outs and pre-ordering/delivery services, capital expenditures, water use, bundled telecommunications services, retail clinics, property types, cloud computing, and multiple investors. The current research is intended to evaluate these proposed questions for their inclusion on the 2017 Economic Census. The goals of this research are:

- to see if respondents can understand and answer these questions correctly
- what, if any, changes are necessary to the proposed wording.

From August through October 2016, we plan to conduct up to 80 cognitive interviews with respondents from companies that participated in the 2012 Economic Census. Because the questions are industry-specific and will not be asked of all respondents during the Census, each interview will only involve 1-2 questions. The attached list of proposed questions indicates the industries for which these questions will be asked and tested. Because these interviews will cover a small number of questions, we anticipate conducting the majority of the interviews over the phone. We may supplement the telephone interviews with in-person interviews with respondents from companies in the Washington, D.C. area.

Researchers from the Data Collection and Methodology Research Branch will conduct these interviews over the phone. Staff from other areas in the Economic Directorate will help identify companies to contact, assemble recruiting lists, and may participate in the interviews as they are able. We will recruit large companies from the specific industries of which the proposed questions will be asked. We want to meet with participants who filled out the 2012 Economic Census and will be most likely to fill out the 2017 Economic Census. After we recruit them, we will give participants a follow-up reminder (phone, email, or fax) of their appointments.

Interviews may be audio-recorded, with the participants' permission, to facilitate accurate summarization of the results. We also will inform participants that their response is voluntary, the information they provide is confidential, and that only employees involved in the research project will see that information. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study.

The length of the interviews is expected to average 30 minutes. We expect to make up to five recruiting calls for every interview scheduled, and each recruiting call will last an average of five minutes. Thus, the total estimated burden for this set of interviews is approximately 74 hours ((80 companies X 30 minutes) + (400 companies X 5 minutes)).

Enclosed are a copy of the proposed questions and a draft of the cognitive interview protocol for the questions.

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

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Enclosures

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