

Supporting Statement – Part A
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
Survey of Construction Questionnaire for the Building Permit Official (SOC-QBPO)
Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control No. 0607-0125

A. Justification

1. Necessity of the Information Collection

The information collected on the SOC-QBPO is necessary to carry out the sampling for the Survey of Housing Starts, Sales and Completions (OMB number 0607-0110), also known as the Survey of Construction (SOC). Government agencies and private companies use statistics from SOC to monitor and evaluate the large and dynamic housing construction industry. The SOC and this collection are authorized under Title 13, United States Code, Section 182.

The U.S. Census Bureau is requesting an extension of the currently approved collection, scheduled to expire on May 31, 2014. The SOC-QBPO is an electronic questionnaire. Census Bureau field representatives (FRs) use Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) to collect the data. We will continue to use the current CAPI questionnaire without any revisions and are requesting approval of continued use of the existing questionnaire in the field. The overall length of the interview and the sample size also will not change.

2. Needs and Uses

The Census Bureau FRs use the SOC-QBPO to obtain information on the operating procedures of a permit office. This enables them to locate, classify, list, and sample building permits for residential construction. These permits are used as the basis for the sample selected for SOC. The Manufacturing and Construction Division (MCD), within the Census Bureau, also uses the information to verify and update the geographic coverage of permit offices.

Failure to collect this information would make it difficult, if not impossible, to classify accurately and sample building permits for the SOC. The SOC produces data for two principal economic indicators: New Residential Construction (housing starts and housing completions) and New Residential Sales. Information from the SOC is also used in the estimation of the value of new residential construction put in place for the Census Bureau's data on construction spending.

Information quality is an integral part of the pre-dissemination review of information disseminated by the Census Bureau (fully described in the Census Bureau's Information Quality Guidelines). Information quality is also integral to

information collections conducted by the Census Bureau and is incorporated into the clearance process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act.

3. Use of Information Technology

All data are collected electronically using CAPI technology. A printed version of the questionnaire will be provided to each respondent to document the questions that are asked in the interview, if not already provided in a previous interview. See Attachment A.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

Some duplication exists between the SOC-QBPO and the Form C-411, "Survey of Residential Building or Zoning Permit Systems" (OMB number 0607-0350). The questions related to geographic coverage of the permit jurisdiction are similar to questions on the C-411 form.

The C-411 form provides limited information to maintain the universe for the Building Permits Survey (OMB number 0607-0094) and the SOC. The C-411 is used to learn about changes to existing permit-issuing jurisdictions, identify new permit-issuing jurisdictions, and to verify geographic coverage. The C-411 is typically used only once every ten years or when we have reason to believe that changes to permit systems were made. In addition to questions about geographic coverage, Form SOC-QBPO asks about the classification of permits for various types of residential buildings, the procedures for permit expiration and the issuance of extensions, the filing system for the permit office, and the availability of the records. This information is all necessary to properly carry out the sampling of permits for the SOC.

5. Minimizing Burden

Information is collected for only 900, or 4.5 percent, of the 20,000 permit-issuing places. Furthermore, interviews are conducted only when the place is initially selected for the SOC sample and, thereafter, whenever the permit official or office procedures change, usually once a year.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

Less frequent interviewing would jeopardize the SOC sampling process and accuracy of the statistics that are produced.

7. Special Circumstances

The collection of these data is consistent with the OMB guidelines.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

In November 2013, a total of five building permit officials who had recently completed a SOC-QBPO were consulted relative to the availability of data and the clarity of the questionnaire. There were no problems mentioned during the consultations. Each respondent stated the data were readily available and the questions were easy to understand.

On November 21, 2013, we published a notice in the Federal Register (Volume 78, No. 225, Pg. 69814) inviting public comments on our plans to submit this request. Only one comment was received during the 60-day comment period. The comment was from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), which stated that the BEA strongly supports this data collection because the data collected in this survey are crucial to key components of BEA's economic statistics.

9. Paying Respondents

The Census Bureau does not pay respondents or provide gifts in return for complying with the survey.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

The information collected on the SOC-QPBO is not confidential. The letter provided to each respondent and the QBPO introduction script include a statement which indicates that the survey is voluntary and that no assurance of confidentiality is offered. See Attachment B.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The SOC-QPBO contains no sensitive questions.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden

Reporting burden is calculated as follows:

Frequency	Total Respondents	Responses per Respondent	Total Annual Responses	Avg. Burden Hour per Response	Total Burden (hours)
Annual	900	1	900	.25	225

There are 900 respondents contacted once a year. Based on our experience and information from the respondents, we estimate that the average time to complete an interview is 15 minutes, resulting in a total annual response burden of 225 hours.

The cost to the respondents is estimated to be \$5,418 based on an average hourly salary of \$24.08 for local government employees. This estimate was taken from the Census Bureau's Annual Survey of Government Employment for 2011.

13. Estimate of Cost Burden

We do not expect respondents to incur any costs other than that of their time to respond. The information requested is of the type and scope normally carried in office records and no special hardware or accounting software or system is necessary to provide answers to this information collection. Therefore, respondents are not expected to incur any capital and start-up costs or system maintenance costs in responding. Further, purchasing of outside accounting or information collection services, if performed by the respondent, is part of usual and customary business practices and not specifically required for this information collection.

14. Cost to Federal Government

The total cost in FY 2014 for the Survey of Construction program of which this questionnaire is a part is projected to be \$7,048,000. Of this amount, \$3,156,600 is borne by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and \$3,891,400 is borne by the Census Bureau.

15. Reason for Change in Burden

There is no change in the response burden.

16. Project Schedule

Information collected is used to execute SOC sampling and is not tabulated or published.

17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date

We will continue to display the expiration date on the reference version of the questionnaire mailed to each respondent. See Attachment A.

18. Exceptions to the Certification

There are no exceptions.