

Key Elements for OMB Memos under the Generic Clearance
for Data User Evaluation Surveys 0607-0760

Economic Census Focus Groups

1The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional survey work under the generic clearance for Data User Evaluation Surveys (OMB number 0607-0760).

Purpose of the Study

The U.S. Census Bureau serves as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. It is the largest statistical agency in the United States. The Census Bureau's mission is built around large-scale surveys and censuses. Activities include survey questionnaire design, geographic infrastructure, data collection, data processing and dissemination. Each of these activities must be supported with highly accessible and high performing computing systems.

Planning has begun for the Census Bureau's 2017 Economic Census, which is the U.S. Government's official five-year measure of American business and the economy. The initial focus is being directed towards response promotion and data collection efforts. Building upon successful strategies developed for the 2012 Economic Census, the Census Bureau faces new challenges to creating awareness and increased participation among the business community. Most notable is the transition for the first time to 100% electronic reporting.

Survey Methodology

The research plan for 2015 seeks to provide insights from small business owners that will help facilitate a smooth segue to electronic reporting. More specifically the research will examine awareness and perceptions of the U.S. Census Bureau and the Economic Census. It will explore potential barriers to completing the Economic Census with special attention given to determining concerns or issues associated with submitting data electronically. Messaging and communications strategies will be tested to determine what approaches best convey: generating awareness of the Economic Census among small business owners, why it is important for them to respond, how to complete and submit their data, where to go for help and assistance, etc.

Respondents

Between May and July 2015, our contractor WBA (company profile attached) will conduct up to 12 focus group sessions with a range of small business owners in private sector companies around the country. These may be held as traditional "behind the glass" focus groups or as conference room roundtables. We will strive to achieve a well-rounded mix of participants. The majority of the recruiting of participants will be done by professional focus group facilities, but may be supplemented from lists provided by state and regional Census contacts. We

anticipate the recruitment effort to take 5 minutes per recruitment questionnaire. We plan on calling 3,360 potential focus group participants (estimate calling 280 for each focus group to recruit 8 - 10 qualified participants x 8 focus groups) for a total of 280 burden hours. We will hold groups in up to six cities to gain insights from different regions around the country. We anticipate two rounds of groups (6 groups in the first round and 6 groups in the second), with a break planned between rounds 1 and 2, in order to assess preliminary findings and incorporate any refinements into the communications messaging and/or materials.

Burden

The 2017 Census Business Response Promotion team has reviewed and internally tested the moderators guide for these discussions for content appropriateness. Each focus group or roundtable discussion will include 8 - 10 participants. We estimate that each focus group or roundtable session will last 2 hours each for a total respondent burden of 480 hours.

Attached are copies of the screening questionnaire to be used for recruiting the focus group participants, as well as the moderator's guide that will be used to lead the discussion to generate reactions to and impressions of the business plan builder tool.

For the focus group sessions, we plan to maximize attendance by compensating attendees for their time (\$125).

Please note that it is becoming extremely difficult to find professional focus group facilities willing to accept these projects with respondent incentives limited to \$75. WBA is currently conducting other focus group research for the Census Bureau among small business owners and have been told by focus group facilities in our target markets that they can't recruit qualified small business respondents in their areas for \$75. In Denver and San Jose/San Francisco, six facilities told us that the going rate for small business owners is \$150 - \$200 compensation. This audience is more difficult to recruit than just the average general public respondent. There is a limited pool of small business owners in the specific types of industries that the Economic Census is interested in talking to in any one market. In many instances they are the ones running their company and have time demands that makes it more difficult to commit to spending several hours in a focus group discussion.

Because there are only a small number of facilities in these markets, we have been forced to find secondary markets in areas of the country where the cost of living is lower and even in these markets we are getting refusals from facilities.

Incentives

We believe that \$125 is a fair market value for incentives and one that we believe we can get facilities to work with us. The \$75 limit has been in place since at least 2011 with no adjustment for inflation or variances in the cost of living from market to market.

What is of particular concern for the 2017 Economic Census research is that the initial analysis conducted by the Census Bureau for selecting the markets for the focus groups, has identified large metropolitan markets as the key location of our target audience. With a limit of a \$75

incentive, markets such as Los Angeles, San Jose, Chicago, New York, Boston, Denver, and Seattle will not be options and therefore not represented in the findings. We would at least like to have the flexibility of offering a higher incentive in these markets.

For further information about this study, please contact Charles Brady at 301-763-6707 or charles.f.brady@census.gov.

Attachments/Enclosures

- WBA Company Profile
- BUSINESS FOCUS GROUPS – MULTI-UNIT RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
- BUSINESS FOCUS GROUPS RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
- ECONOMIC CENSUS FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OUTLINE – BUSINESSES