

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

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 conducting research in 2017 among respondent of the Census Bureau's current economic surveys. The focus of the research is to obtain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Census economic survey respondents, gain insights on approaches to increase participation (as well as timeliness and quality of response), determine the best way to communicate to participants for multiple surveys and to finalize elements of the 2017 Economic Census program prior to communication launch.

The research plan for 2017 seeks to build on the findings from the first phase of research which was conducted among small business owners during the summer of 2015 and the second phase conducted in 2016 among not only small businesses, but medium and large size firms who were known to have been Census economic survey respondents.

In addition to the primary target audience of persons involved in the completion of government requests for business information in small, medium and large size firms who were known to have been Census economic survey respondents, the research is also interested in understanding the role of intermediary organizations, such as trade and industry organizations and local Chambers of Commerce.

The research will begin to obtain reaction to materials and messaging developed from insights coming directly from the participants of the earlier research efforts. It will explore potential barriers to completing current economic Census surveys 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 Census's economic surveys among the business community, why it is important for them to respond, how to complete and submit their data, where to go for help and assistance, etc.

Beginning in early 2017, our contractor WBA (company profile attached) will conduct up to 16 focus group sessions with a range of business persons in private sector companies around the country who are responsible for completing government requests for information. It is planned that some of the focus groups will also be held with decision makers from a variety of intermediary organizations. 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 telephone interviewers. We anticipate the recruitment effort to take 5 minutes per recruitment questionnaire. We plan on calling 1,500 potential focus group participants for each focus group to recruit 8 - 10 qualified participants for a total of 125 burden hours per group. We will hold groups in at least four markets to gain insights from different regions around the country. The markets have been selected based on analysis of response rates from the 2012 Economic Census. We plan two focus group sessions will be held in each market.

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 20 hours.

Therefore, between the respondent burden for the recruiting process (125 hours) and participation in the focus group session (20 hours) the total anticipated respondent burden will be 145 hours per group.

Attached are copies of the screening questionnaires 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 issues and materials presented.

We are aware that in past years the standard compensation for Census Bureau focus groups has been \$75 for each participant.

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