

TO: Jennifer Park, Office of Management and Budget

FROM: Timothy Wojan

DATE: 10/31/2013

SUBJECT: OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0536-0071

Non-substantive changes to survey instrument based on additional pre-testing by ERS employees, and periodic reporting requirements agreed to are stipulated.

This first part of this memo outlines wording changes in several questions of the Rural Establishment Innovation Survey (distributed under the title National Survey of Business Competitiveness) based on comments from volunteer beta-testers of the web survey and volunteers completing the mail survey. The second part of the memo describes the periodic reporting requirements during the pilot survey that will allow OMB to assess the quality of prescreening, so that the prescreening for the main study may begin immediately once the results of the prescreening for pilot study and any proposed relating changes are approved by OMB desk officer.

Wording Changes in Survey Instrument

Q1:

Original: What is your job title?

Revised: What is your job title or role?

Justification:

Owner/operators of small businesses may not identify with a particular job title but can easily define their role.

Q2 (also questions 4, 43a, 47):

Original: Approximately what year did the business at this location begin operating?

Revised: Approximately what year did this business at this location begin operating?

Justification:

Replacing the definite article with a demonstrative pronoun removes ambiguity if multiple businesses operate from the same location and maintains similar usage throughout the survey.

Q6-6b:

Original: What was the average number of employees on your payroll in 2012, including all full-time and part-time workers at this location?

of employees

a. Were there workers at this business, NOT ON YOUR PAYROLL in 2012, such as independent contractors, or temporary workers?

1 Yes

2 No Skip to question 7

b. (If yes) What was the average number of such workers in 2012?

of workers

Revised: In 2012, at this location, what was the average number of workers who were in each category? (Please include all workers in these two categories)

Worker category	Number of workers ▼
a. Full-time and part-time employees on your payroll.....	_____
b. Independent contractors or temporary workers NOT ON YOUR PAYROLL.....	_____
	<i>Total</i>

If 5 or more workers in total, continue with question 7

If less than 5 workers in total, skip to question 52 on page 16

Justification:

The original question asked about full- and part-time first and then in the next question asked about contract or temporary workers. This may cause respondents to have to go back and correct their initial answer. In the revision, the respondent is cued at the outset to report on different categories of workers and does not need to begin the next question to have the different categories defined.

Qs 7, 8, 8a, 8b, 10, 13b, 18 item f, 14b item j, 24, 34 item a:

Revisions and justification:

“Workers” replaced “employees” throughout the survey to make it consistent with Question 6.

Q10:

Original: In 2012, at this location, what percent of employees were in the following occupational categories? (Please answer in either number of employees or in percents. Percent should equal 100 %.)

Revised: In 2012, at this location, what percent of workers were in the following occupational categories? (Please include all workers in these categories. Total percent should equal 100 %.)

(You may answer in percent or numbers.)

Justification:

Instructions to include all workers in classification by occupational category. Previous question (9) was regarding non-salaried workers so instruction required to remove ambiguity.

Q12 (and questions 27, 28, 31, 33, 36, 36a, 36b, 37, 40, 44, 45)

Original: In the last 3 years, how difficult has it been to find qualified applicants for your workforce, not including managers and professionals?

Revised: In the past 3 years, how difficult has it been to find qualified applicants for your workforce, not including managers and professionals?

Justification:

“Last” changed to “past” to avoid the suggestion of finality, that the business is no longer in operation. Using “past” consistently would be more precise in the context.

Q14

Revision and Justification:

Broken into 14a and 14b to make skip pattern clearer to respondent.

Q15:

Original: What percent of the sale of products or services comes from the internet?

Revised: What percent of the sale of products or services comes over the Internet?

Justification:

“Over the Internet” more common business usage than “from the Internet.”

Q17:

Original: Which of the following factors have limited this business’s use of information and communications technology?

Revised: Have the following factors limited this business’s use of information and communications technology?

Justification:

Reword sentence to remove “Which” and use easier interrogative form.

Q36b:

Original: In the last 3 years how many patent applications were successful?

Revised: In the past 3 years, how many patents were awarded?

Justification:

“Patents awarded” simpler term synonymous with “successful patent applications.”

Q40 (also questions 45, 47):

Original: Over the last three years has this business...

Revised: In the past 3 years, has this business...

Justification:

“In” replaces “over” to simplify preposition use.

Q42a:

Original: How much civic leadership does THIS business provide in the community?

Revised: How much civic leadership does THIS business provide in your community?

Justification:

Definite article replaces with possessive pronoun for greater clarity.

Q45a

Original: Please indicate the sources you tried to borrow from below. If you did try to borrow money from a source, how much of the funding did you receive?

Revised: Please indicate the sources you tried to borrow from in the past 3 years below. If you did try to borrow money from a source, how much of the funding did you receive?

Justification:

Inserted “in the past 3 years” to reinforce time period defined in previous question.

Q46:

Original: How were the funds this business borrowed or wanted to borrow to be used?

Revised: How were the funds that this business borrowed or wanted to borrow to be used?

Justification:

Omitted “that” replaced for clarity.

Q47a item 4:

Revision and Justification:

Break out Don't Know/Not Applicable to two separate response categories to differentiate establishments with either no retained earnings or investments from establishments with measurement error.

Q52:

Revision and Justification: Removed “That is my last question” which is unnecessary given the open-ended request for any additional comments.

For mail survey after thank you statement now include instructions to return survey in envelope provided.

Reporting Requirements for Pilot Study

A sequential reporting approach will be adopted for carrying out the analysis of pilot study results and the implementation of subsequent full study. A monthly, cumulative fielding report will be produced and submitted to OMB desk officer during the pilot fielding. Full screening results will be analyzed and reported to OMB via a memo upon the completion of screening for the pilot study. Once OMB is satisfied with the results and proposed modifications (if any) and expresses approval, the REIS team may begin screening for the full study while it continues wrapping up data collection for the pilot. Another memo that captures the results of data collection will be submitted for OMB review once the fielding for the pilot study is completed.

Data collection for the full study will begin only after the pilot study results and suggested modifications fully satisfy OMB and an explicit OMB approval is communicated to the REIS team.