

April 28, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: Reviewer of 1220-0050

FROM: JAY RYAN, Chief
Division of Consumer Expenditure (CE) Surveys
Bureau of Labor Statistics

SUBJECT: Non-substantive Change Request for the
Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CEX) – Proof of
Concept test

CE is involved in an ongoing effort to improve data quality, maintain or increase response rates, and reduce data collection costs. To further this effort, as specified in the 2015 CE clearance package, CE plans to field a Proof of Concept test for a redesign of the CE surveys

The objective of the redesign is to improve the quality of the survey estimates through a verifiable reduction in measurement error while improving or maintaining response rates and with no increase in budget. A proof-of-concept test will be fielded to ensure that the basic underlying structure and components of the new design are feasible.

The proof-of-concept test will mirror the first wave of the proposed redesign. This will consist of a Visit 1 recall interview that includes the collection of household roster and recall expense questions for five sections of the current CE Interview; instructions on collection of records for the Visit 2 interview; an introduction to the Diary-keeping week and training of individuals on how to complete the web or paper diary; a Visit 2 interview consisting of a review of the individual diaries, collection of an additional 11 sections of the CEQ, relying heavily on the records that the FR instructed the respondent to gather during the Visit 1 interview; and a respondent debriefing of the Visit 1, Diary week, and Visit 2 processes. Additionally, the design will use incentives in order to motivate respondents; this is expected to result in a reduction in the number of required contact attempts. (See Attachment A – Proof of Concept Overview.)

The expected starting sample size for this study is 1,200 cases, the study should yield 450 complete cases. BLS estimates that this study will require approximately 1,313 burden hours. The field period is scheduled for three months beginning in July 2015. We base this estimate on the below assumptions.

| | Mins. | Sampl e | Total Hours |
|--|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Estimated time to complete Visit 1 interview (incl. diary) | 45 | 450 | 338 |

| | | | |
|---|-----------------|------------------|-------|
| placement and records training) | | | |
| Estimated time to complete diary (one week) per member | 40 ¹ | 900 ² | 600 |
| Estimated time to complete Visit 2 interview (incl. diary review and respondent debriefing) | 50 | 450 | 375 |
| TOTAL | | | 1,313 |

Current OMB approval of the CE surveys is scheduled to expire December 31, 2017.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Jay Ryan at 202-691-5139 or e-mail at Ryan.Jay@bls.gov or Peggy Murphy at 202-691-6186 or e-mail at Murphy.Peggy@bls.gov.

¹ Using preliminary results of the Individual Diary Feasibility test (n=402 diarists), the average amount of time spent keeping a diary for two weeks was roughly 26 minutes. Because the POC diary will consist of only 1 week of diary keeping, this time will be reduced. However, because we're offering a choice of mode and an incentive for keeping the diary, we expect respondents to be more motivated to fill out their diary and willing to take more time. Additionally, a portion of the participants will be keeping a paper diary, which will take longer. As a results, we've estimated an average of 40 minutes per person to keep the diary for a single week.

² BLS estimates that the average number of eligible diarists (household members age 15 and older) in a household is 2 based on 2012 CE interview survey member data for the identified PSUs. This estimate includes the time for an average of two CU member to complete the diary for one week.