

Quarterly Services Survey

Survey Expansion Company Visits

Introduction

The Quarterly Services Survey, first established in late 2003, is expanding coverage to nearly twice its current size in the fall of 2006. Cognitive interviews were conducted with 13 companies across the country from mid-June to late July 2006. Most of the companies will be new to the survey; the few companies we visited that carried over from the original 2003 sample had additional forms due to the expanded coverage.

Expansion Visits Protocol

We visited the companies with the following goals:

- Meet with companies to get feedback on ease of reporting
- Establish relationship with companies to ensure compliance with survey
- Clarify any data items and be sure that all definitions are understood
- Determine the company's ability to report data for the desired reference period
- Seek suggestions regarding other issues surrounding the collection of these data
- Promote the survey and online reporting capability

In each of the company visits, we had them look at a sample form of the survey and answer the following questions:

-Question 1 (survey coverage):

- Does the description provided accurately cover the business activities this business is involved in?
- Is anything missing from the description?

-Question 3 (revenue)

- How would you come up with the answer?

-Question 4 (report periods)

- Does your company keep records on a fiscal year or a calendar year basis?
- If fiscal, would it be difficult for you to report data for the months we ask for?

General Discussion:

-Time Burden

- How much time would it take for you to obtain the data items on the form? After you've obtained the data, how much time would it take you to actually fill out and send in the report?

-Data Sensitivity

- Are any of the items on the survey particularly sensitive for this company?
- Would you have concerns about releasing this data to us?
- Who has authority to clear this data for release?

-Mailing and Cooperation Issues

- Are you the appropriate person to mail our survey package? If not, who should be on the mailing label?
- What would happen to the package if this person/you were out of the office temporarily (e.g. on vacation, maternity leave)? What would happen if this person/you changed jobs?

-Online reporting/website

- Online reporting is available for this survey, is this something you would be interested in using? If not, why?
- What type of information would you want to see on our website?

Summary

Most respondents agreed that the survey coverage on their forms was accurate; a few noted such issues as specifying domestic locations and revenue on the description, instead of a note on the last page.

The respondents did not have much difficulty in answering the main question of quarterly revenue. Some had concerns of meeting the reporting deadline (14 days after quarterly closing), but most would be able to report within 30 days of the end of the quarter. Most said they could report book figures; those that needed deadlines said they could give estimates until their final numbers came in. However, one company noted that breaking down the numbers by source of revenue would be extremely difficult, as their revenue comes from several different areas and the records on the type of revenue were sparse.

The companies were divided on calendar year vs. fiscal year, but those whose companies ran by fiscal year said they would have no problem breaking down revenues by calendar months.

Overall, the respondents noted that the estimate of time burden would be anywhere from 'a few minutes' to a few hours; any delay would be due to waiting for the actual numbers to be released after the quarter's end. There were no concerns with data sensitivity. The respondents themselves would be the ones to sign off, so there would be no need for supervisory approval.

The respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of online reporting. A few noted interest in information that would allow them to see all the Census Bureau forms for which they are responsible.