

Supporting Statement
U.S. Department of Commerce
Bureau of Economic Analysis
Quarterly Survey of Transactions in Selected Services and Intellectual
Property with Foreign Persons (Form BE-125)
OMB Control Number: 0608-0067

A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) produces the International Transactions Accounts (ITAs) of the United States. These accounts provide a comprehensive and detailed view of economic transactions between the United States and other countries. In addition, they provide input into other U.S. economic measures and accounts, contributing particularly to the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPAs). The ITAs are used extensively by both government and private organizations for national and international economic policy support and for analytical purposes. The services transactions accounts are contained within the current account of the ITAs and are divided into several major components. The services and intellectual property transactions covered by this survey account for 45.5 percent of U.S. exports and 40.6 percent of U.S. imports of services in 2014.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is proposing the following additions and modifications to the current BE-125 survey to increase the quality and usefulness of BEA's published statistics on trade in services and to align them more closely with international economic accounting guidelines. Changes are proposed for the collection of information on transactions in intellectual property; merchanting services; personal, cultural, and recreational services; and maintenance services.

- 1) A new schedule, Schedule D, will require U.S. reporters that have intellectual property transactions with foreign persons to distribute those transactions by three categories: charges for the right to use, charges for the right to reproduce and/or distribute, and outright sale or purchase. A similar schedule that was included on the 2011 Benchmark Survey of Transactions in Selected Services and Intellectual Property with Foreign Persons (BE-120) collected this information on a voluntary basis. Responses to the 2011 BE-120 survey and information gained from outreach to respondents suggest that companies can report these transactions separately.
- 2) A new schedule, Schedule E, will require U.S. reporters of merchanting services to report the gross values of goods purchased and sold underlying the net merchanting transactions reported on Schedule A. A similar schedule that was included on the 2011 BE-120 survey collected this information on a voluntary basis. The majority of respondents who reported on the 2011 schedule indicated their filings were based on accounting records, so a requirement to provide data on gross flows is not likely to result in significant additional burden on respondents.

- 3) Stand-alone categories will be added for audiovisual services, artistic-related services, health services, heritage and recreational services, and other personal services. These services are currently captured under categories collected on the existing BE-125 survey but are not separately distinguished. The existing BE-125 service code 26, production costs related to live performances and events, will be eliminated because it overlaps with the new category, artistic-related services. Service code 31, other selected services, will be renamed “other business services” and redefined to include only business services that are not elsewhere classified. Additional details on the codes and their composition, including definitions for the new categories, will be addressed during the survey design process. The survey’s instructions will be clarified to define these new categories and to address any potential overlap between these and existing service categories.
- 4) “Maintenance services” will be collected separately from “installation, alteration, and training services.” The BE-125 currently includes the category “industrial-type maintenance, installation, alteration, and training services.” Maintenance will be broken out as a separate category on the BE-125 in order to more closely align BEA’s published statistics on maintenance and repair services with international guidelines. The survey’s instructions will be clarified to define the separate categories.

BEA estimates the proposed changes will increase the average number of hours per response from 16 hours to 18 hours for those reporting data. The reporting thresholds of the current BE-125 survey will be retained. The effort to keep current reporting thresholds unchanged is intended to minimize respondent burden while considering the needs of data users. Existing language in the instructions and definitions will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to clarify survey requirements.

The proposed information collection, BE-125 Quarterly Survey of Transactions in Selected Services and Intellectual Property with Foreign Persons, is necessary to provide quarterly information on U.S. trade in services and intellectual property and to ensure the quality of the services component of the ITAs.

The survey would be mandatory under the authority of the International Investment and Trade in Services Survey Act (P.L. 94-472, 22 U.S.C. 3101-08, as amended), hereinafter “the Act”. It is the subject of this supporting statement. The BE-125 quarterly survey will be required from U.S. persons whose sales of covered services or intellectual property to foreign persons exceeded \$6 million for the previous fiscal year or are expected to exceed that amount during the current fiscal year, or whose purchases of covered services or intellectual property from foreign persons exceeded \$4 million for the previous fiscal year or are expected to exceed that amount during the current fiscal year.

In Section 3 of Executive Order 11961, as amended by Executive Orders 12318 and 12518, the President delegated responsibility for performing functions under the Act concerning trade in services to the Secretary of Commerce, who has re-delegated it to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The implementing regulations for the international services surveys conducted under the Act can be found in 15 CFR Part 801.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used.

The information will be used by BEA in estimating the services component of the U.S. ITAs. For each country and region, BEA will estimate cross-border transactions in the services and intellectual property transactions covered by the survey. The quarterly collection of data will provide timely indicators of quarterly movements in transactions and provide the basis for quarterly estimates of the universe of transactions in selected services and intellectual property covered by the BE-120 Benchmark Survey of Transactions in Selected Services and Intellectual Property with Foreign Persons. Some specific uses of the data to be collected are discussed in greater detail below.

(a) Compile and improve the U.S. economic accounts:

Data from the BE-125 survey will be used by BEA to estimate the services component of the U.S. ITAs, which also enter the NIPAs and the Input-Output Accounts.

(b) Support U.S. government policy on services trade:

Data from the proposed survey are also needed by the government to monitor U.S. exports and imports of the services and intellectual property covered by the survey; analyze their impact on the U.S. and foreign economies; support U.S. international trade policy on services; and assess and promote U.S. competitiveness in international trade in services. In addition, they will improve the ability of U.S. businesses to identify and evaluate market opportunities.

The data are used by several U.S. government agencies including the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the International Trade Administration of the Commerce Department, the Departments of Treasury and State, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Federal Reserve Board to support U.S. international economic policy. The data also help identify areas where U.S. trade in services may be restricted.

The United States is a signatory to regional and multilateral commercial agreements that cover trade in services. The data from this and related surveys provide information that can be used both during negotiations and as an aid in monitoring resulting agreements. For example, trade in services are covered both by the General Agreement on Trade in Services, which is the principal World Trade Organization agreement on trade in services, and by the North American Free Trade Agreement among the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

(c) Other government uses:

Several agencies, including the U.S. Commercial Service (Commerce) and the Export-Import Bank, facilitate U.S. trade by providing information and assistance to businesses. They use data from the quarterly survey for this purpose. They also use the data to examine the impact of trade in services on developing countries.

(d) Non-government uses:

International organizations and private researchers also use data from the quarterly survey in assessing the impact of U.S. trade in services on the U.S. and foreign economies. International organizations that regularly make use of BEA data on U.S. trade in services

include the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and World Bank. Numerous private researchers use the data; use by researchers affiliated with the National Bureau of Economic Research has been among the most extensive.

The Section 515 Information Quality Guidelines apply to this information. The information is collected according to documented procedures in a manner that reflects standard practices accepted by the relevant economic/statistical communities. BEA conducts a thorough review of the survey input data using sound statistical techniques to ensure that the quality of the data is high before the final estimates are released. The data are collected and reviewed according to documented procedures and best practice standards along with on-going review by the appropriate supervisor. The quality of the data are validated using a battery of edit checks to detect potential errors and to otherwise ensure that the data are accurate, reliable, and relevant for the estimates being made. Data are routinely revised as more complete source data become available. The collection and use of this information complies with all applicable information quality guidelines, i.e., those of the Department of Commerce, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and BEA.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

BEA offers electronic filing through its eFile system for use in reporting the BE-125 quarterly survey form. The eFile system enables respondents to download the survey forms in PDF format for each reportable U.S. company, enter the required data, and submit the forms securely to BEA. BEA utilizes a secure messaging system, accessible through the eFile system, to ensure the confidentiality of correspondence with BE-125 respondents.

In addition, BEA provides links to all its survey forms and reporting instructions on its web site (www.bea.gov). Survey forms may be downloaded, printed, and submitted via fax or mail.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

Data on U.S. international transactions in selected services and intellectual property are available only from surveys conducted by BEA.

The Census Bureau conducts economic surveys of establishments in services industries and includes on those surveys broad questions pertaining to revenues derived from sales to foreign persons. While these surveys do not identify the type of service or the country of the foreign customer, both of which are required by the ITAs, BEA has used information reported on Census Surveys to expand the mailing lists for several of its surveys.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

A BE-125 survey would be required only from U.S. persons whose sales to foreign persons of covered services or intellectual property exceeded \$6 million for the previous fiscal year or

are expected to exceed that amount during the current fiscal year, or whose purchases from foreign persons of covered services or intellectual property exceeded \$4 million for the previous fiscal year or are expected to exceed that amount during the current fiscal year. While the survey does not collect data on total sales or other measures of the overall size of the businesses that respond to the survey, historically the respondents to the existing quarterly survey of selected services and intellectual property have been comprised mainly of major U.S. corporations.

To reduce reporting burden, respondents may provide estimates of their transactions with foreign persons where precise data cannot be obtained without undue burden.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

The data are needed on a quarterly basis to closely monitor U.S. international trade in services and intellectual property, when such trade is changing rapidly in size, variety, and complexity. The quality and accuracy of the ITAs and NIPAs, which are quarterly accounts, are improved by conducting quarterly surveys. In addition to quarterly estimates, monthly estimates must be derived from these data for inclusion in the joint BEA-Census Bureau monthly news release on trade in goods and services. The quality of the monthly estimates would be diminished if the data were collected less frequently.

Quarterly surveys also provide more accurate and timely current information on U.S. trade in services and intellectual property for use in connection with trade policy and promotion and for other economic uses.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

No aspects of the Quarterly Survey of Transactions in Selected Services and Intellectual Property with Foreign Persons require a special justification.

8. Provide a copy of the PRA Federal Register notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

This submission follows a public request for comments in the *Federal Register* August 4, 2015 (Vol. 80, page 46243). No comments were received. BEA maintains a continuing dialogue with respondents and with data users, including its own internal users through the Bureau's Source Data Improvement and Evaluation Program, to ensure that, to the extent possible, the required data serve their intended purposes, that the survey instructions are clear, and that unreasonable burdens are not imposed.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payments or gifts to the respondents will be made.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

BEA provides respondents with assurance that it will keep the reported data confidential. The following statement is taken directly from the reporting instructions for the survey:

“Confidentiality – The Act provides that your report is CONFIDENTIAL and may be used only for analytical or statistical purposes. Without your prior written permission, the information filed in your report CANNOT be presented in a manner that allows it to be individually identified. Your report CANNOT be used for purposes of taxation, investigation, or regulation. Copies retained in your files are immune from legal process.”

Sec. 5(c) of the Act (22 U.S.C. 3104) provides that the information collected can be used only for analytical and statistical purposes and access to the information shall be available only to officials and employees (including consultants and contractors and their employees) of agencies designated by the President to perform functions under the Act. The President may authorize the exchange of information between agencies or officials designated to perform functions under the Act, but only for analytical and statistical purposes. No official or employee (including consultants and contractors and their employees) shall publish or make available any information collected under the Act in such a manner that the person to whom the information relates can be specifically identified. Reports and copies of reports prepared pursuant to the Act are confidential, and their submission or disclosure shall not be compelled by any person without the prior written permission of the person filing the report and the customer of such person, where the information supplied is identifiable as being derived from the records of such customer.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

No questions of a sensitive nature are asked.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

The quarterly survey as proposed is expected to result in the filing of approximately 2,200 reports on a quarterly basis, or 8,800 per year. BEA expects approximately 1,700 to be filed each quarter by respondents that would report mandatory data and 500 other responses - exemption claims and voluntary responses that provide aggregate data only. The average annual burden for completing the survey with data is estimated at 18 hours, and the average annual burden for other responses is 1 hour, resulting in an overall respondent burden of an estimated 124,400 hours. This estimate covers the amount of time for respondents to review the instructions, search existing data sources, gather and maintain the data needed, and complete and review the information collection.

1,700 x 4 (times per year) = 6,800 x 18 hours per response = 122,400 burden hours
500 x 4 (times per year) = 2,000 x 1 hour per response = 2,000 burden hours

The actual burden will vary from respondent to respondent depending on the number and amounts of their transactions and the ease of assembling the data. The estimated cost to the public is \$4,976,000 based on an estimated reporting burden of 124,400 hours and estimated hourly cost of \$40.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).

Other than respondent cost associated with the estimated burden of 124,400 hours (see A.12 above), the total additional annual cost burden to respondents is expected to be negligible. Total capital and start-up costs are insignificant because new technology or capital equipment would not be needed by respondents to prepare their responses to the survey. As a consequence, the total cost of operating and maintaining the technology and capital equipment will also be insignificant. Purchases of services to complete the information collection are also expected to be insignificant.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

The annual project cost to the Federal Government for this survey is estimated at \$1,363,120, which consists of \$1,213,120 for salaries and related overhead and \$150,000 for equipment, supplies, form design, and computer processing.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported.

This request is for an extension with changes of a currently approved collection. The estimated change in the burden hours is an increase of 26,400 hours (from 98,000 to 124,400). The agency estimate of the average time to complete the survey with data has been increased from 16 to 18 hours. There has been an overall increase, from 1,500 to 1,700, in the estimated number of respondents meeting the (unchanged) mandatory requirements for filing on a quarterly basis. Approximately 100 of the additional quarterly respondents have been added as a result of research conducted by BEA to ensure adequate coverage of personal, cultural, and recreational services (see A.1.3).

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

The data from this survey will be used to estimate trade in services and intellectual property transactions by major world region and selected countries for the quarterly U.S. ITAs and for a detailed annual presentation of U.S. international services that is published in the *Survey of Current Business* each October. These estimates will be published on BEA's web site (www.bea.gov). The data will also be used to provide the basis for the estimates of transactions in selected services and intellectual property in monthly estimates of international services transactions, which are included in a joint BEA-Census Bureau news release on U.S. trade in goods and services.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

The OMB expiration date will be displayed on the forms.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

The BE-125 information collection is consistent with the certification in all aspects.