

## **Generic Information Collection Request**

**Request:** The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). The Census Bureau plans to conduct cognitive pretest interviews on additional proposed questions for the Annual Survey of Public Pensions (ASPP) which is an email out/electronic reporting survey conducted by the Census Bureau on an annual basis. ASPP collects information on the finances and membership of public employee defined benefit pension plans. Data from the survey are used to create national and state level estimates on the characteristics of public pensions. This survey is collected under the authority of Title 13, United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 161 and 182. Further information regarding ASPP can be found at this website: <http://www.census.gov/govs/retire/>.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this pretest is to obtain additional data from government units that operate defined benefit pension plans. The pretest includes follow-up questions relating to the actuarial data of these plans. Recent developments in the actuarial standards, Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statements No. 67 & No. 68, establish best practices for calculating and reporting information related to the actuarial status of pension funds. These new standards encourage the reporting of data items like net pension liabilities, covered payroll and assumed discount rates. This information is important to a number of users, including the Bureau of Economic Analysis, which would like to incorporate this data into their GPD calculations. Additionally, many market actors wish to have a better understanding of these plans' liabilities and the actuarial assumptions behind these liabilities.

Respondents will be asked these questions for all pension funds they may control. The results will be recorded and tabulated and a report produced that outlines the findings of the pretest and discusses the possibility of adding new questions starting with the 2017 Census of Governments.

**Population of Interest:** The new questions will be added to all ASPP forms, for both state- and locally-administered pension systems. We expect that larger governmental units will be able to report the requested data more easily, as they will already be in compliance with Statements No. 67 & No. 68. Smaller and medium size governments may not (yet) be compliant with these statements and therefore may not be able to easily report these new items.

**Timeline:** Testing will be conducted from January through March 2017.

**Language:** Testing will be conducted in English only.

**Method:** We plan to conduct cognitive interviews with respondents from state and local government entities in person (within a short travel distance from Washington, DC) as well as over the phone.

**Sample:** We plan to conduct a total of 20 cognitive interviews. The sample size necessary for this test was determined by experience. We plan to conduct interviews with a variety of sizes and types of state and local governments. We expect that larger governmental units will be able

to report the requested data more easily, as they will already be compliant with Statements No. 67 & No. 68. Therefore, we will recruit smaller and medium size governments more heavily.

**Recruitment:** Participants will be recruited using a list of potential government entities provided by the Pension Statistics Branch in ITMD. Respondents will be informed that their participation is voluntary. The interviews will be audio recorded, to facilitate summarization.

**Protocol:** Participants will first review the current ASPP questionnaire. Then participants will be asked to complete the new questions using a think-aloud protocol. After completing the questions, each participant will be asked debriefing questions.

**Use of Incentive:** Monetary incentives for participation will not be offered.

Below is a list of materials to be used in the current study:

1. Draft questions (Enclosure 1)
2. Protocol used for the study (Enclosure 2) including possible debriefing probes

**Length of interview:** We expect that each interview will last no more than 60 minutes (20 cases x 60 minutes per case = 20 hours). Additionally, to recruit respondents we expect to make up to 5 phone contacts per completed case. The recruiting calls are expected to last on average 3 minutes per call (5 attempted phone calls per completed case x 20 cases x 3 minute per case = 5 hours). Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 25 hours (20 hours for interviews + 5 hours for recruiting).

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and statistical aspects of the design of this research is listed below:

Kristin Stettler  
Data Collection Methodology & Research Branch  
Economic Statistics and Methodology Division  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, D.C. 20233  
(301) 763-7596  
Kristin.j.stettler@census.gov

Cc:

Ron Jarmin	(ADEP) with enclosure
Nick Orsini	(ADEP) with enclosure
Carol Caldwell	(ESMD) with enclosure
Carma Hogue	(ESMD) with enclosure
Diane Willimack	(ESMD) with enclosure
Amy Riemer	(ESMD) with enclosure
Kristin Stettler	(ESMD) with enclosure
Demetria Hanna	(ESMD) with enclosure

Philip Vidal	(ITMD FED) with enclosure
Russell Pustejovsky	(ITMD FED) with enclosure
Dale C Kelly	(ITMD FED) with enclosure
Melissa Therrien	(ITMD FED) with enclosure
Jennifer Hunter Childs	(ADRM) with enclosure
Jasmine Luck	(ADRM) with enclosure
Danielle Norman	(PCO) with enclosure
Mary Lenaiyasa	(PCO) with enclosure