

**Generic Information Collection Request:
Cognitive testing for the 2017 Annual Survey of Businesses**

Request: 1The 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 pretesting activities for the 2017 Annual Survey of Businesses (ASB).

Title 13 of the United States Code authorizes this survey and provides for mandatory responses. The ASB is conducted every five years as part of the Economic Census and is collected by the Census Bureau.

The ASB provides the only detailed, comprehensive, regularly collected sources of data on the status, nature, and scope of women-, minority-, and veteran-owned businesses. The ASB provides estimates for the number of employer and nonemployer firms, sales and receipts, annual payroll, and employment by owners' gender, ethnicity, race, and veteran status. Estimates will be available for the U.S., states, metropolitan and metropolitan statistical areas, counties, and places. Among other uses, the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) use results from the ASB to assess business assistance needs and allocate available program resources. More information on the ASB can be found at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sbo.html>.

The ASB is collected via a self-administered questionnaire using the Census Bureau's online survey reporting system. Respondents are mailed a letter informing them of the requirement to complete the survey and providing them with access information. Paper forms are not available, but respondents can download a PDF worksheet containing the survey questions and instructions.

Purpose: The ASB asks questions about the business owner(s) as well as various characteristics about the business. The 2017 ASB will include new questions to each of these sections. The changes being tested are described below.

- Revisions to several questions that ask about the percent ownership within the business. Revisions provide more explicit instructions and include more explicit skip instructions.
- Revisions to military service questions that include a specific yes/no question about a disability or injury incurred or aggravated during military service.
- Asking about the exact number of prior businesses that each owner has owned prior to the current business rather than just a yes/no question about prior businesses.
- A new question about the field of study for the highest degree completed for each owner.
- A revision to the citizenship question to ask if each owner is a citizen versus being born a citizen and a new question asking if the owner was born in the United States.

- A new question about owners having any hearing, vision, cognitive or mobile difficulties.
- Revisions to the options offered for why each owner chose to own their business.
- Revisions to the joint and family ownership questions to provide more clarification by using bold font and to include unmarried partners in addition to spouses.
- A new question that asks about where the owner(s) would like the business to be in 5 years.
- Revising several funding question to ask for ranges of dollars instead of an exact amount.
- Reducing the amount of options provided for the questions about sources of new funding and reasons for avoiding additional financing during the survey year.
- Asking more detail about why a business may have sought additional financing during the survey year.
- A new question about whether the business had profits, losses or broke even during the survey year.
- Explicitly providing an option for ‘other businesses’ as a source for total sales for the survey year.
- Noting the receipt of W-2 forms for the options of full and part time paid employees in the question asking about which types of worker were used by the business.
- Asking for more information about ways that businesses use the Web to promote or conduct business.

The results from the cognitive testing will be recorded and a report produced that outlines the findings of the pretest and recommendations for improvement.

Population of Interest: Sample members from the 2012 Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs (ASE). The ASE was an annual collection that requested most of the same information as the 2017 ASB. ASE sample members included small, medium and large companies in various industries and U.S. locations.

Timeline: Testing will be conducted from July through August, 2017

Language: Testing will be conducted in English only.

Method: We will conduct one round of cognitive interviews with up to 20 respondents in order to evaluate and refine the new and revised questions. During the interviews, respondents will answer self-administered questionnaires. We will use concurrent and retrospective probes to

assess respondents' understanding of the questions and the flow of the questionnaire. Travel is required for the cognitive interviews.

Sample: We plan to conduct a total of 20 interviews. We plan to conduct interviews with a variety of sizes and types (i.e., industries) of businesses.

Recruitment: Participants will be recruited using a list of respondents from the 2016 ASE. Before beginning the interviews, we will inform participants that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential under Title 13. The interviews may be recorded (with consent), to facilitate summarization.

Protocol: A copy of a draft interview protocol and a draft questionnaire for testing purposes are enclosed. Cognitive interviews will be conducted in person. Participants will be asked to complete the draft ASB questions. We anticipate all sessions will take 60 minutes to complete.

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

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

Attachment A: Draft protocol used to outline how the research study will be conducted

Attachment B: Draft ASB questions for evaluation

Attachment C: Consent form to obtain participant consent for participant and recording of the session

Length of interview: For cognitive interviews, 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 attempts per phone call per completed case x 20 cases x 3 minutes per case = 5 hours). Thus the estimated burden 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:

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