Request: 1The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). We will be conducting interviews in service of case studies for the Business Unit Harmonization Project (BUHP) for the Economic Directorate. This request is an update to a previously approved request, which was submitted around February 13, 2017, and approved on March 17, 2017.

Purpose: The Business Unit Harmonization team was tasked with researching business units on the Business Register to recommend options for a set of harmonized units that best align with the operating structure for the majority of companies. The purpose of this would be to allow responding organizations to provide survey data according to units that more closely align with their organizational structure, when responding to the Economic Census. The current practice asks for responding organizations to report by establishment, which can be burdensome if the organization does not track their data at the establishment level.

During the pilot phase, the Phase I team analyzed 52 of the most complex companies and concluded that one reporting unit structure will not meet the needs of all companies researched. In the second phase of the Business Unit Harmonization, the team was tasked with extending the research to focus on the "typical" multi-unit company on the Business Register in order to determine a harmonized business unit for a majority of these companies while continuing to meet the existing measurement objectives.

The Phase II team's recommendation for a harmonized business unit was the Industry Reporting Unit (IRU). This unit would contain all the establishments within the same six-digit NAICS code within the company. Additionally, the team suggested a Full Service Account Manager (FSAM) program for the companies that are very complex. The FSAM can create custom units for their assigned companies. These units may be similar to those used for public reports or other administrative data.

The next step in Phase II is to discuss these findings with companies that we researched in both Phase I and Phase II. These discussions will take the form of case studies, where representatives from the Census Bureau will meet with representatives from these companies (fifteen companies in total) and discuss the conclusions reached from the research done to date. Most importantly, these meetings will touch on the benefits and challenges to companies that would come from adopting this approach, such as changes in reporting burden, reporting personnel, the accuracy of data, and other such topics.

Staff from the Data Collection Methodology & Research Branch within the Economic Directorate of the Census Bureau will be working with staff from the Economic Directorate to conduct these case study interviews. We will interview respondents from up to 15 different companies via in person interviews in the Seattle metropolitan area, Southeastern Virginia, and the Washington, DC metropolitan area. We may use telephone interviews on a supplementary basis, in instances where it is not possible to arrange an in-person interview. The previously approved version of this request was for interviews with 5 respondents. We are requesting more interviews in order to get more comprehensive findings, and to make better use of the funds that will be spent on travel, when in-person visits are able to be scheduled.

Method:
Case study interviews will take place over the phone or in-person. The interviews will follow a pre-written interview protocol (attached).

Subject area specialists from Economy-wide Statistics Division (EWD) or Economic Indicators Division (EID) will participate in most, if not all, of the interviews. They will assist in cases where additional clarification of the subject matter is required, and provide information on the purpose and uses of the survey. Interviews may be audio recorded with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations.

Survey Population:
Potential respondents to these interviews were chosen based on specific criteria that indicates they will be most impacted by the proposed changes to the reporting unit structure. These companies are considered to represent the "most typical" multi-unit organizational structure. The dimensions used to assess the organizational structure were the business size (as measured by payroll), number of establishments, number of locations they exist in, the number of unique employer identification numbers (EINs) they have, and the number of industries they operate in.

Sample selection:
We will contact potential interviewees via phone, explain the nature of our research, and ask them to participate in our study. The sample of participants will be those who are able to be contacted and who agree to participate in the study. Participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be seen only by Census Bureau employees involved in the research project. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study. Once interviews are scheduled, researchers will send respondents a confirmation via email, and may conduct reminder calls a few days before the meetings.

Timeline:
Recruiting for these interviews will begin in July 2017, lasting through September 2017.

We anticipate that each interview will include up to two participants. We estimate that, on average, the interviews will take one hour. Thus, the total estimated burden for completed interviews is 30 hours (15 interviews X 2 company participant X 1 hour). The previously approved request estimated this portion at 5 hours (5 interviews X 1 company participant X 1 hour).

In order to schedule up to 15 interviews, we may contact approximately 75 companies, with each call lasting up to five minutes. We estimate the maximum associated recruiting burden to be approximately 6.25hours (75 X 5 minutes = 375 minutes, or 6.25 hours). The previously approved request estimated this portion at 1 hour (10 calls X 5 minutes).

The estimated total public reporting burden for this research is approximately 36.25 hours. The previously approved request estimated the burden at 6 hours.

Enclosed is the sample protocol that we will be using for the respondent debriefings.

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

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