Generic Information Collection Request:
Respondent Debriefings for the 2017 Annual Business Survey

The Census Bureau and NSF worked collaboratively to develop the materials for this research.

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 respondent debriefings for the 2017 Annual Business Survey (ABS).

The ABS is conducted annually as a supplement to the economic census collected by the Census Bureau and sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The ABS provides a detailed, regularly collected source of data on the status, nature, and scope of women-, minority-, and veteran-owned businesses. The ABS provides estimates for the number of employer firms, sales and receipts, annual payroll, and employment by owners' gender, ethnicity, race, and veteran status. The ABS also provides information on research and development activity and cost for businesses with 1-9 employees and includes survey questions to measure business innovation in firms of all sizes. For the 2017 ABS, estimates will be available for the U.S., states, and select metropolitan statistical areas (MSA). Among other uses, the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) use results from the ABS to assess business assistance needs and allocate available program resources. Data collected on research and development and innovation may be used to compare R&D costs across industries, determine where R&D activity is conducted geographically, and identify the types of businesses with R&D, to contribute to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) system of national accounts; to increase investments in research and development, strengthen education, and encourage entrepreneurship; and to compare US business innovation with innovation in other countries, including those in the European Union.

The ABS 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: These debriefing interviews will be conducted to gain a better understanding of the companies within the survey and within specific industries. We will use the company's answers to the questionnaire to frame our points of discussion. During these interviews, we will seek the following information:

- Understanding of specific questions and why respondents reported the way they did
- Assessing the respondent's ability to answer specific questions
- Identifying difficulties in completing the questionnaire

Staff from the Data Collection Methodology & Research Branch within the Economic Statistical Methods Division (ESMD) of the Census Bureau will be conducting debriefing interviews for

this testing.

Population of Interest: Sample members from the 2017 ABS.

Timeline: Testing will be conducted from October through November 2018.

Language: Testing will be conducted in English only.

Method: The method of research will be respondent debriefing interviews, which are interviews aimed at understanding how a respondent recently reported to a survey. Paradata may be used to inform questions. For the purposes of this research, the debriefing questions will be focused on the respondents' experiences in answering the survey questions. All interviews will be conducted over the telephone. The interviews will follow a semi-structured interview protocol (Attachment A). Subject area specialists from the Census Bureau and NCSES will participate in some of the debriefing interviews in order to observer the interview.

Attachment A contains the instructions for the respondent debriefings as well as the follow up questions for the survey in Attachment B.

Sample: We plan to conduct a total of 30 interviews. We plan to conduct interviews with a variety of sizes and types (i.e., industries) of businesses. This number of interviews was selected because it is a manageable number of interviews for the time period allotted, it should adequately cover target companies, and should be large enough to provide reactions to the questions in order to identify meaningful findings.

Recruitment: Participants will be recruited using a list of respondents from the 2017 ABS. 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 questionnaire for testing purposes are enclosed. Respondent debriefings will be conducted via telephone.

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 ABS questions for evaluation

Length of interview: For respondent debriefings, we expect that each interview will last no more than 30 minutes (30 cases x 30 minutes per case = 15 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 30 cases x 3 minutes per case = 7.5 hours). Thus, the estimated burden is 22.5 hours (15 hours for interviews + 7.5 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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