

Attachment I. BLS outreach to stakeholders

BLS did many presentations and briefings about the CWS to outside groups, including Congressional staff, industry groups, academics, nonprofit organizations, and other government agencies. These presentations described the data collected through the CWS; discussed the need for updated, comparable information; briefly explained BLS efforts to develop no more than four new questions that could be added to the end of the questionnaire; and stressed that because of the short timeline to prepare for fielding and the desire to maintain data comparability with earlier collections, major changes to the survey could not be implemented in the May 2017 CWS. Feedback to these sessions was generally supportive, though many individuals and organizations suggested that, if future collections of the CWS were funded, further changes or additions to the survey might result in improved measures of the changing economy.

In addition, BLS actively participated in the Department of Labor's Structure of Work Policy Work Group. A major concern of this group was the lack of up-to-date data that could be used to study how the structure of work had changed over time; such a lack of information made data-driven policy decisions about different types of work arrangements difficult. BLS also participated in DOL's December 2015 Future of Work Symposium, which brought together a diverse group of leaders from business, non-profits, labor, government, and academia to discuss the changing nature of work. Among other topics, this group discussed whether it would be beneficial to re-field the CWS, as well as what additional data might be needed.

BLS also sent a draft of the four new questions to a number of academics, industry experts, special interest groups, and other data users, once again stressing the tight timeline. In addition to asking about the four questions, BLS asked for suggestions about the data that should be collected should BLS receive funding for the CWS after 2017. BLS received many responses to their request for feedback. Responses about the four questions were wide-ranging, with suggestions that would involve:

- Changing the core CWS. As changes in question wording can result in different responses, this would likely adversely affect the comparability between the 2017 data and earlier collections. Examples of suggestions include: lengthening the reference period for the entire supplement and broadening the questions to cover economic activities that might not be considered "work" by respondents. These suggestions were rejected because BLS felt it was important to maintain data comparability.
- Rejecting the four new questions that had been drafted and developing an alternative set of additional questions for the CWS. Examples include questions about flexible work schedules, hours of work, advance notice of scheduled work hours, as well as questions about who workers would prefer to work for. Based on feedback from many data users, BLS believed there was a strong interest among researchers and policy makers for the information that could be collected in the four new questions that had already been drafted. Also, BLS did not believe there was sufficient time to develop, cognitively test, program, and debug an entirely new set of four questions prior to the May 2017 fielding. Finally, they believed that some of these suggestions covered data that were already available or would shortly become available from other BLS sources.
- Asking the four questions of all individuals, not just the employed. Some were concerned that people who were unemployed or not in the labor force might not think of

electronically-mediated jobs or tasks as “work” and so would be missed because they had not been previously identified as employed. BLS survey methodologists and subject-matter experts were concerned that, because respondents had already been asked about their previous week’s work activities in the basic CPS, they would be confused by additional questions about work that were similar to questions they had already answered. After extensive discussion, BLS decided that to implement this suggestion properly would involve changes to the core CWS that might jeopardize the data comparability, and that there was insufficient time for testing.

- Expanding the scope of the four questions to change the reference period from last week to a longer timeframe. After discussion, BLS survey methodologists and subject-matter experts thought that changing the reference period of last week—which is used throughout the basic CPS as well as the CWS—for the last four questions only would likely cause respondent confusion. There also was concern that a longer time frame would result in more inaccurate answers due to recall bias.
- Making minor modifications to wording of the four questions. Examples include making small changes to wording (for example, “short-term” instead of “short”), reordering words, or including different examples. These suggestions were very helpful, both in identifying areas of possible confusion and in providing alternative wording. BLS made a number of refinements to the questions based on these comments.

Responses also included a number of suggestions about data that BLS might collect in the future if the opportunity arose. Examples included: collecting more information about second jobs, such as whether the second job is contingent or involves an alternative employment arrangement; collecting more information about individuals’ work schedules, such as asking about how much workers’ hours vary week to week and whether workers’ schedules are set by an algorithmic scheduler; collecting more information about independent contractors, such as asking how they obtain their customers; and collecting more information about electronically-mediated workers, such the number platforms they use and whether they have access to disability benefits or paid leave.