

date September 24, 2019  
topic Census Bureau Economic Surveys  
re FY2020 Focus Group Research

## Census Economic Surveys FY2020 Known Respondent Focus Groups

### Moderator's Guide – FOR OMB SUBMISSION

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)**

##### Purpose of meeting

- We are going to talk about some of the information requests from the Federal, State and Local governments that businesses receive today – and specifically about surveys from the U.S. Census Bureau. We are going to talk about your experiences and get your opinions about these different requests. Let me assure you once that this is not a sales meeting of any kind. I don't have anything to sell you. This is a form of research conducted with members of the local business community, and all I'm interested in are your opinions.

##### About this focus group session:

- Form of market research, not selling anything
- Discussion will last about 2 hours
- Audio/video Recording
- One-way mirror; associates viewing, notes may come in
- All comments will be kept anonymous and confidential
- Have courage of convictions; don't let group sway you
- No right or wrong answers, only your opinion
- Don't have to raise hands; but speak one at a time
- Work for independent market research company
- Turn off cell phones



### Participant Introductions:

- First name only. **DO NOT reveal last name.**
- Type of business **DO NOT reveal company name.**
  - **Note: As directed by Census Bureau Policy Office – Participants will sign consent forms asking them not to share what was discussed in groups.**
- Years in business
- Number of employees
- Ice breaker

## II. Government Reporting (20 minutes)

1. Does your company receive surveys from government agencies asking for information about your business?
  - a. What types of surveys?
  - b. How many surveys does your company respond to each month?
  - c. What is your role in responding? Do you handle these requests personally or delegate response? Do you involve others inside your company or external, e.g. accountant? Why?
  - d. How do you decide which surveys to respond to? *Listen for but don't prompt voluntary vs. mandatory.*
  - e. How do you typically respond to these surveys – online, mail, telephone, fax?
  - f. Is it important to respond to these surveys? Why or why not?
  - g. What are the biggest barriers to responding?
2. Does your company receive business surveys from the U.S. Census Bureau? From the Department of Commerce? *Listen for awareness of which surveys are received -- all participants will be known respondents.*
  - a. How many surveys do you receive?
  - b. What kind of information is your company asked to provide in these surveys?



- c. Are these surveys typically easy or difficult to fill out? How so? What is it about them that is particularly easy or difficult?

*Listen for statements about “we don’t keep our records that way.” Probe: How so? Listen for level/amount of detail requested, unclear language/terminology, having to make judgments about what we’re asking for relative to their records, how they go about resolving the mismatches.*

### **III. Aligning Census Surveys with Company Financial Reports (10 minutes)**

3. What types of financial reports are created for your company (i.e. payroll, sales, expenses, external reporting)?
  - a. How often (i.e. weekly, monthly)?
  - b. At what detail (i.e. by state, physical location, product)?
  - c. Do you have direct access to the all the information needed to create those reports or do you need involve others? If so, who?
4. When you receive a government survey, can you typically provide the requested information right from your company’s financial reports, or do you have to manipulate the data to respond?
  - a. How much manipulation is required? Please provide details/examples.

### **IV. Census Survey Structure (20 minutes)**

5. Many companies have different operations that are categorized in different industries – for example an auto repair shop that also sells gasoline. Does this type of structure apply to your company?
  - a. Are company financial records and reports set up this way – different accounts for different industries or different areas of your company?
6. The Census Bureau currently conducts business surveys by industry – so if you’re an auto repair shop that also sells gasoline, you would receive two different questionnaires, one for auto repair (service) and one for gasoline (retail). ***Show sample forms with examples of industry-specific questions.***



- a. What do you think about this industry-based method of collecting data? Is this a good way to ask for company information? Why or why not?
7. Census is considering changing the structure of surveys to be topic-based – so instead starting with a series of specific questions by industry, they would start with topics at the top company level – so total revenue across the entire company, total expenses across the entire company, and then ask for details. **Show sample forms.**
  - a. What are your thoughts/reactions to this survey framework that starts by asking with topic-based questions?
  - b. How does this compare to the current framework that starts with industry-specific questions? **Compare sample forms.**
  - c. Would this topic-based approach make response easier for a company? Why or why not?
  - d. Which approach is better aligned with the way companies keep records and run their financial reports?

#### V. Use of the Data (15 minutes)

8. Do you know why your company is receiving these surveys and being asked for their information – what the data is used for?
9. Does your company use economic data provided by the government or other sources? If yes, how do you use it?
10. What is the difference between data from government sources and data you get online, e.g. from a Google search? Do you use it differently?
11. Are you aware that the results of the survey and economic data from the Census Bureau is available for your business to use? Online and free of charge?
12. We're now going to show you a video talks about Census Bureau data and these topics we've just discussed. **Show "James/Economic Surveys" video.**





- a. What is your overall reaction to this video?
- b. What information or key messages did you take away?
- c. Do you think it will make people more motivated to respond to Census Bureau surveys? Why or why not?
- d. Do you think it will change people's impressions of the Census Bureau? If so, how?
- e. This video would primarily be viewed online. Where would you expect to see it?
- f. Would you make any changes to the video – to make it more effective for encouraging survey response?

## **VI. Receiving Multiple Surveys (15 minutes)**

13. If you were going to receive multiple surveys, would you want to receive them all at once, in one mailing packet – or would you want to receive them one at a time? ***Show sample mailing packets.***

*Probe introduction letter, change in recipients, instructions to access surveys.*

14. Should multiple surveys all have the same due date or should due dates be staggered?
  - a. Why? What factors determine when you're best able to provide information?  
*Probe: Fiscal year, tax preparation, etc.*

15. Census may also send a flyer or brochure with information about your survey. ***Show sample brochure.***

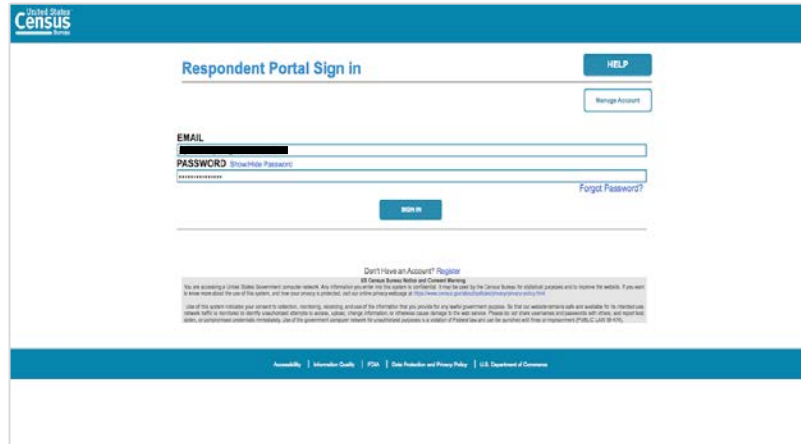
- a. Should this be included in the same mailing packet or sent separately? In advance?
- b. Would you prefer to receive a brochure like this electronically? Why or why not?

## **VII. Census Respondent Portal (15 minutes)**

Most of you have been through the process of responding to a Census Bureau survey online. We'd like to get some feedback about your experience.

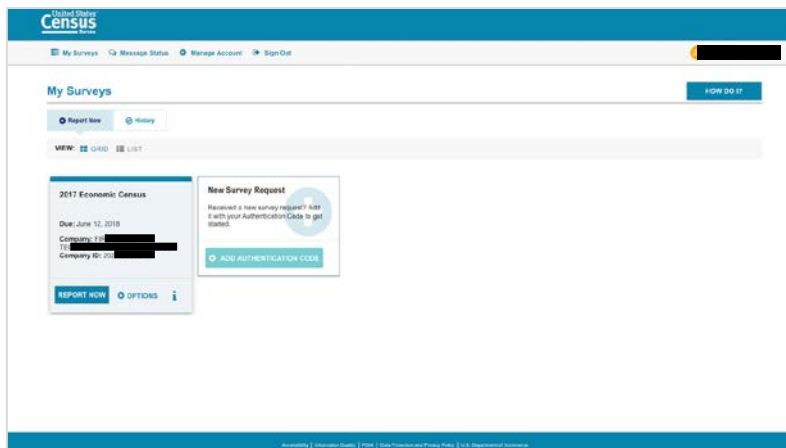


16. Your Census Online Account – After setting up your account for online reporting, should Census send you additional instructions and information about your survey at the email address you provided? **Show sample image from Respondent Portal.**



- a. What kinds of information would you be most interested in receiving, e.g. data products, submission confirmations, due date reminders, survey instructions?
- b. **Show email samples**

17. Census Surveys Dashboard – Your Surveys Dashboard gives you access to all Census surveys you are participating in in one place. Is this helpful to you? Why or why not? **Show sample image from Respondent Portal.**





a. If the Dashboard included banners with information about economic data product releases, would you click for more information? What other information would you expect to see?

b. *Show sample Dashboard with banners.*

18. Survey Preview – When you went through the online reporting process, did you download a preview of your survey? Was this sufficient to help you prepare your response? *Show sample image from Respondent Portal.*

## VIII. Reasons to Respond (10 minutes)

19. We're now going to show you another video that talks about survey response. *Show "Reasons to Respond" video.*



- What is your overall reaction to this video?
- What information or key messages did you take away?



- c. Do you think it will make people more motivated to respond to Census Bureau surveys? Why or why not?
- d. Do you think it will change impressions of the Census Bureau? If so, how?
- e. This video would primarily be viewed online. Where would you expect to see it?
- f. Would you make any changes to the video – to make it more effective for encouraging survey response?

**IX. Wrap Up** (5 minutes)

- 20. After today's discussion have your impressions of the U.S. Census Bureau changed? If so, how?
- 21. If you had to pick one thing from today's discussion that most influenced your willingness to respond to Census Bureau surveys, what would that be?

THANK YOU!





Participant Screener – FOR OMB SUBMISSION

**Summary Information:**

RESPONDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
COMPANY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_  
FOCUS GROUP CITY: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE OF GROUP: \_\_\_\_\_ TIME OF GROUP: (Circle one) 6pm/8pm  
INTERVIEWER: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE RECRUITED: \_\_\_\_\_

**Recruitment Questionnaire:**

**(ASK TO SPEAK TO THE NAMED PERSON ON LIST, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLETING BUSINESS INFORMATION SURVEYS FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.)**

**(READ:)** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_. We're conducting a short survey among the business community on behalf of the U.S. Census Bureau and I'd like to ask you a few questions. This is not a sales call of any kind. This is a public opinion survey that will take less than five minutes.

**A. (RECORD GENDER. DO NOT ASK.)**

- 01 Male      **→ GET A MIX**
- 02 Female

**B. (RECORD SAMPLE SOURCE/COMPANY SIZE. DO NOT ASK.)**

- 01 SU-S (Single unit – Single survey)
- 02 SU-M (Single unit – Multiple surveys)
- 03 MU-S (Multi unit – Single survey)
- 04 MU-S (Multi-unit – Multiple surveys)
- 05 MU-L (Large)
- 06 Economic Indicators



C. (RECORD FROM SAMPLE: ANY LISTED SURVEYS. DO NOT ASK.)

→ RECRUITING WILL TARGET PRE-DETERMINED MIX OF COMPANY SIZES AND PARTICIPATION IN DIFFERENT CENSUS SURVEYS ACROSS GROUPS.

1. First of all, are you the person in your firm responsible for completing government requests for business information? (READ LIST.)

- 01 Yes → CONTINUE
- 02 No → ASK TO SPEAK TO THAT PERSON AND BEGIN BY READING INTRODUCTION.

1A. Which statement best describes your role in completing government requests for business information?

- 01 You compile the information and complete request yourself
- 02 You along with others in your firm compile the information and complete request
- 03 You have overall responsibility of submitting the request, but you assign others to actually compile the information

2. How long have you been employed in your current position? (READ LIST.)

- 01 Three years or less → ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 3 PER GROUP
- 02 More than three years. → CONTINUE

3. Is this the headquarters location for your company?

- 01 Yes → CONTINUE
- 02 No → THANK AND TERMINATE

4. How many employees work at your location? (READ LIST.)

- 01 Less than 5
- 02 5 to 19
- 03 20 to 149
- 04 150 to 299
- 05 300 or more



5. What is the type or nature of your business? That is, what does your company do? (**PROBE AND CLARIFY.**)

\_\_\_\_\_

**→ RECRUITING WILL TARGET PRE-DETERMINED MIX OF INDUSTRY CATEGORIES ACROSS GROUPS.**

6. Is your business involved primarily in providing any of the following: (**READ LIST. IF "YES, THANK & TERMINATE.**)

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
In advertising, marketing research or public relations?	01	02

**– NOTE: IF YES TO ANY, THANK & TERMINATE.–**

7. When, if ever, was the last time that you participated in a market research group discussion or focus group?

- 01 Within the past 6 months **→ CONTINUE**
- 02 More than 6 months ago **→ CONTINUE**
- 03 Never **→ CONTINUE**

8. Do you consider yourself...?

- 01 White
- 02 Black/African American **TRY TO GET A MIX**
- 03 Native American or Alaskan Native
- 04 Asian
- 05 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 99 Decline to Answer

**INVITE QUALIFIED RESPONDENT TO GROUP.**

We are conducting a group discussion among local area business professionals such as yourself on behalf of the U.S. Census Bureau regarding their reactions to the business information surveys required by the Federal Government. Please be assured that this will not be a sales meeting. It is a part of a market research study. We think that you will find the discussion very interesting and we'd very much like to include your opinions.



<b>Group A</b>	<b>6:00 pm</b>
<b>Group B</b>	<b>8:00 pm</b>

The discussion is scheduled for **DATE at TIME pm at LOCATION**. You will be provided **\$75** for attending as a token of our appreciation for your time and opinions. This discussion will last about 2 hours and refreshments will be served.

Will you be able to attend?

- 01 Yes → **CONTINUE**
- 02 No → **THANK AND TERMINATE**

Also, so that I may send you a reminder and confirmation with directions, may I please have your email? Or if you prefer I can send you a letter to your mailing address including zip code. **(PLACE ALL INFORMATION ON FRONT OF SCREENER)**

To repeat, the group is scheduled for: **DATE at TIME pm at LOCATION**. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please call us immediately so we can invite another participant. We are only inviting a small number of people to the discussion.