



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-6000

OFFICE OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT  
AND RESEARCH

June 8, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: Joseph Nye, Office of Management and Budget

FROM: Shawn Bucholtz, Director of Housing and Demographic Analysis  
Division, Office of Policy Development and Research, HUD

SUBJECT: American Housing Survey Response Improvement Pilot

**Purpose**

HUD is seeking a non-substantive change to the recently approved 2017 American Housing Survey (AHS) information collection (OMB control number 2528-0017). HUD, in partnership with the Census Bureau Open Innovation Labs (COIL) and the Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) based at the General Services Administration (GSA), would like to pilot the use of five “partnership letters” to increase response rates, and to encourage faster responses (less enumerator trips to homes), which may lower survey costs. Findings from this pilot can help to inform other Federal survey outreach efforts, including the 2020 Decennial Census.

It is important to note that the partnership letters are in addition to the current introductory AHS letter that every selected household receives, which includes the OMB control number, a statutory authority citation for the AHS, and language about protecting respondent confidentiality. All households that respond to the AHS receive a thank you letter.

**Overview of Experiment Design**

The 2017 AHS partnership letters pilot is a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) to test the impact of sending an appointment scheduler, adding additional language about privacy and data security, the use of a trusted Federal partner, and the use of a nationally-recognized non-profit partner.

The pilot will include five "treatment" partnership letters (attached). There are approximately 120,000 households in the 2017 AHS sample. Census will randomly select approximately 10,000-15,000 households for each letter, with the remaining households serving in the "control group" will not receive a partnership letter.

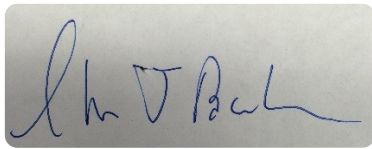
**A Note on Partnerships**

As the USPS is a long-time partner of the Census Bureau, and known for having the most trusted brand in the Federal government, COIL and OES are working with the USPS to obtain permission to use the USPS logo, a quote from a US Postal Employee (the quote in the attached letter is a placeholder), and a co-signature from USPS leadership.

Additionally, COIL and OES will explore the effect of two "National Non-Profit" partner: United Way and Great Nonprofits.

**A Note on OMB Control Number**

The five partnership letters will not include the OMB control number for the AHS. As noted above, the AHS introductory letter, which all households receive, includes the OMB control number.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature appears to be "Shawn Bucholtz" written in a cursive style.

Shawn Bucholtz  
202-402-5538