

MEMORANDUM FOR: Reviewer of 1220-0011

FROM: Nic Johnson
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics
Division of Current Employment Statistics
Current Employment Statistics (CES)

SUBJECT: Advance Letter Test

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Statistics (CES) program would like to test the impact of using different approaches to contact respondents on the CES enrollment rate (Attachment A). The CES program is seeking OMB approval to conduct the first in this series of tests. The first test involves sending an advance letter to newly sampled firms prior to asking them for their participation. The letter was developed in consultation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Office of Survey Methods Research and builds upon similar efforts undertaken by other BLS programs.

Currently, the CES program contact firms by telephone to establish a point-of-contact and to verify their mailing address. We would like to test sending the firms the 1-page pre-notice letter (Attachment B) to alert them of the upcoming phone call. The main purpose of the letter is to test whether it improves newly selected firms' cooperation by first establishing legitimacy and purpose of the CES program prior to the phone call and secondly, eventually lead to higher enrollment rates. The letter does not ask the firms to take any action. Pre-notice letters are commonly used for surveys and are generally thought to improve response.

The advance letter test will run for 3 months (July – September 2019) and will include a total of 5,000 firms. In each month approximately 1,200 firms will receive the advance letter. The results will be compared with the controlled group and the hope is that we'll obtain significantly higher cooperation and participation from the advance letter group.

If the test is successful, the CES program will seek OMB approval to revise the existing collection to include the use of the advance letter for all newly sampled firms.

Attachments:
Attachment A – CES Enrollment Package Test Plan
Attachment B – Advance Letter