

# Cognitive Interviewing Protocol

## Small Business Pulse Survey – Phase 2

6.23.20 draft

**Interviewer notes are in red.**

### Research Questions to Address:

- Are respondents able to answer the questions as intended?
- Are there any items that cause respondents problems?
  - o What can be done to fix those problems?
- Estimate of average time to complete?

### Introduction:

- Hello. Thank you for your time today. We are looking to obtain feedback on a revised version of a short survey that has been designed to learn more about the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on small businesses. (If applicable – I see that you completed the Round 1 version – so thank you so much for that!)
- Our purpose for speaking with you today is to see how respondents answer the survey questions, to evaluate how the questions work or don't work.
- We are *not* testing you– we only want to evaluate the questionnaire.
- Today, we will have you complete the short questionnaire, then we will review some of the questions with you to get your feedback.
- **Email link to Business Pulse survey to respondent.**
- I just sent you an email. Can you please click on the link to the Qualtrics survey (or open the pdf) and read over the first page? This study is being conducted under the authority of Title 13 USC. We plan to use your feedback to improve the survey questions and make sure they make sense to respondents like you. Do you agree to participate? Thank you. Please click on the checkbox at the bottom of the screen.

### Before the Questionnaire:

- Before we begin, could you tell me a little bit about your business -- what types of goods or services does this business provide?
- Thank you. And what is your role in the business? (What kind of responsibilities do you have?)
- Is your business currently in operation?
- (If completed Phase 1: Before we begin, could you tell me what you remember from completing the Phase 1 version of the Small Business Pulse Survey?)

### Have Respondent Complete the Questionnaire:

Now I'd like for you to go through the survey question by question. Please tell me your answer to each

question as you go along. After you are done, we will go back and discuss some of the questions in more detail.

Document responses to each question and the time respondent took to complete survey.

\_\_\_ minutes

The U.S. Census Bureau is requesting your assistance in understanding the effect of changing business conditions due to the Coronavirus pandemic on your business. Your response is especially important right now as it helps policy makers, government officials, and businesses like yours understand these effects. Please complete this short 20 question survey; it will take approximately 5 minutes.

This survey asks about the experience of your business over the last week, but also about the experience of your business since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. The White House declared a national emergency because of the Coronavirus pandemic on March 13, 2020.

1. Overall, how has this business been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic?

Select only one:

- Large negative effect
- Moderate negative effect
- Little or no effect
- Moderate positive effect
- Large positive effect

2. In the last week, did this business experience a change in operating revenues/sales/receipts, not including any financial assistance or loans?

Select only one:

- Yes, increased
- Yes, decreased
- No change

3. In the last month, what were the total operating revenues/sales/receipts for this business, not including any financial assistance or loans?

Select only one:

- \$0 - \$500
- \$501 - \$2,500
- \$2,501 - \$5,000

- \$5,001 - \$15,000
- \$15,001 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$125,000
- \$125,001 - \$200,000
- \$200,001 - \$500,000
- \$500,001 or more
- Don't know

4. In the last week, did this business have a change in operating status?

Select only one:

- Yes, opened previously closed location
- Yes, temporarily closed location
- Yes, permanently closed location
- No change

5. In the last week, did this business have a change in the number of paid employees?

Select only one:

- Yes, increased
- Yes, decreased
- No change

6. In the last week, did this business bring back any paid employees who had been furloughed or laid off after March 13?

Select only one:

- Yes
- No

7. In the last week, did this business have a change in the total number of hours worked by paid employees?

Select only one:

- Yes, increased
- Yes, decreased
- No change

8. In the last week, did this business have a change in the total number of hours paid employees worked from home (telework)?

Select only one:

- Yes, increased

- Yes, decreased
- No change

9. In the last week, did this business experience any of the following?

Select all that apply:

- Production delays at this business
- Domestic supplier production or shipping delays
- Foreign supplier production or shipping delays
- Difficulty locating alternate domestic suppliers
- Difficulty locating alternate foreign suppliers
- Delays in transit to customers
- None of the above

10. In the last week, have any of the following affected this business's ability to provide goods or services?

Select all that apply:

- Ability to re-hire furloughed or laid off employees and/or hire new employees
- Availability of employees to work
- Ability of employees to work from home (telework)
- Physical distancing of employees
- Physical distancing of customers and/or limits on the number of concurrent customers
- Availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and/or related equipment or supplies
- Availability of other supplies or inputs used to provide good or services
- None of the above

11. Relative to one year ago, at what level did this business operate in the last week?

Select only one:

- 0 - 20% of level of operations one year ago
- 21 - 40% of level of operations one year ago
- 41- 60% of level of operations one year ago
- 61 - 80% of level of operations one year ago
- 81 - 100% of level of operations one year ago
- More than 100% of level of operations one year ago

12. Since March 13, has there been an increase in this business's ability to offer goods or services using online platforms?

Select only one:

- Yes
- No

13. How would you describe the current availability of cash on hand for this business, including any financial assistance or loans? Currently, cash on hand will cover:

Select only one:

- 1-7 days of business operations
- 1-2 weeks of business operations
- 3-4 weeks of business operations
- 1-2 months of business operations
- 3 or more months of business operations
- No cash available for business operations
- Don't know

14. Since March 13, has this business missed any loan payments? Loan payments that have been forgiven or postponed should not be considered to be missed.

Select only one:

- Yes
- No

15. Since March 13, 2020, has this business missed any other scheduled payments, not including loans? Examples of other scheduled payments include rent, utilities, and payroll. Scheduled payments that have been forgiven or postponed should not be considered to be missed.

Select only one:

- Yes
- No

16. Since March 13, 2020, has this business requested financial assistance from any of the following sources?

Select all that apply:

- Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)
- Small Business Administration (SBA) Loan Forgiveness
- Main Street Lending Program
- Deferral of Federal Employment Tax Deposits and Payments
- Federal Sick and Family Leave Tax Credits
- Federal Employee Retention Tax Credit
- Other Federal programs
- State or local government programs
- Banks
- Self

- Family or friends
- Other sources
- This business has not requested financial assistance from any source since March 13, 2020.

17. Since March 13, 2020, has this business received financial assistance from any of these programs from the Federal government?

Select all that apply:

- Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)
- SBA Loan Forgiveness
- Main Street Lending Program
- Deferral of Federal Employment Tax Deposits and Payments
- Federal Sick and Family Leave Tax Credits
- Federal Employee Retention Tax Credit
- Other Federal programs
- This business has not received financial assistance from any Federal program since March 13, 2020.

**18.** In the next 6 months, do you think this business will need to do any of the following?

Select all that apply:

- Obtain financial assistance or additional capital
- Identify new supply chain options
- Develop online sales or websites
- Increase marketing or sales
- Learn how to better provide for the safety of customers and employees
- Identify and hire new employees
- Permanently close this business
- None of the above

19. In your opinion, how much time do you think will pass before this business returns to its normal level of operations relative to one year ago?

Select only one:

- 1 month or less
- 2-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-12 months
- More than 12 months
- I do not believe this business will return to its normal level of operations.
- There has been little or no effect on this business's normal level of operations.

- This business has returned to its normal level of operations.
- This business has permanently closed.

20. What is this business's 9-digit Employer Identification Number (EIN) used on its latest Internal Revenue Service 941 Employer's Federal Quarterly Tax Return?

**Review the Questionnaire:**

Thank you for completing the survey. What is your overall impression of this survey?

**Item 4 (Change in operating status)**

Ok, now let's look back at Item 4.

**4.** In the last week, did this business have a change in operating status?

Select only one:

- Yes, opened previously closed location
- Yes, temporarily closed location
- Yes, permanently closed location
- No change
  
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
- How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- What time period were you thinking about?
- What does "In the last week" mean to you?
- How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

**Item 6 (Bring back employees)**

Next let's look at Item 6.

6. In the last week, did this business bring back any paid employees who had been furloughed or laid off after March 13, 2020?

Select only one:

- Yes
  - No
- 
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
  - How did you come up with your answer to this question?
  - In your opinion, what are “paid employees”?
  - What does “bring back paid employees” mean to you?
  - What does “furloughed or laid off” mean to you?
  - Would it help to have “furloughed or laid off” defined?
  - How would you ask this?
  - What does “after March 13” mean to you?
  - How about this question -- “In the last week, did this business re-hire any paid employees who were told not to work after March 13?” Would that be more or less clear to you? What does “told not to work after March 13” mean to you?
  - How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
  - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
  - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

### Item 8 (Hours worked from home)

Let's skip to Item 8 now.

8. In the last week, did this business have a change in the total number of hours paid employees worked from home (telework)?

Select only one:

- Yes, increased

- Yes, decreased
- No change
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
- How did you come up with your answer to this question?
- What does “worked from home” mean to you?
- Is having “telework” in parentheses helpful or not helpful, in your opinion?
- How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?
- How do you think others in your industry might interpret this question?

#### Item 9 (Supply chain issues)

Now on to Item 9.

**9.** In the last week, did this business experience any of the following?

Select all that apply:

- Production delays at this business
- Domestic supplier production or shipping delays
- Foreign supplier production or shipping delays
- Difficulty locating alternate domestic suppliers
- Difficulty locating alternate foreign suppliers
- Delays in transit to customers
- None of the above
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
- How did you come up with your answers to this question?
- Looking at the answer categories, what do each of them mean to you?
- How confident are you in your answers? (If not confident, why?)
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)

- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

### **Item 10 (Business ability factors)**

Next let's look at Item 10.

**10.** In the last week, have any of the following affected this business's ability to provide goods or services?

Select all that apply:

- Ability to re-hire laid off or furloughed employees and/or hire new employees
  - Availability of employees to work
  - Ability of employees to work from home (telework)
  - Physical distancing of employees
  - Physical distancing of customers and/or limits on the number of concurrent customers
  - Availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and/or related equipment or supplies
  - Availability of other supplies or inputs used to provide good or services
  - None of the above
- 
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
  - How did you come up with your answer to this question?
  - What does "this business's ability to provide goods or services" mean to you?
  - Looking at the answer categories, what do each of them mean to you?
  - What time period were you thinking about?
  - How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
  - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
  - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?
  - How do you think others in your industry might interpret this question?

### **Item 11 (Level of operations)**

Now Item 11.

**11.** Relative to one year ago, at what level did this business operate in the last week?

Select only one:

- 0 - 20% of level of operations one year ago
  - 21 - 40% of level of operations one year ago
  - 41- 60% of level of operations one year ago
  - 61 - 80% of level of operations one year ago
  - 81 - 100% of level of operations one year ago
  - More than 100% of level of operations one year ago
- 
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
  - How did you come up with your answer to this question?
  - What does “at what level did this business operate” mean to you?
  - Do the answer categories seem appropriate, or should there be more, or fewer?
  - How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
  - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
  - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?
  - How do you think others in your industry might interpret this question?

### **Item 12 (Increase in online ability)**

Next let's look at Item 12.

**12.** Since March 13, 2020, has there been an increase in this business's ability to offer goods or services using online platforms?

Select only one:

- Yes
  - No
- 
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
  - How did you come up with your answer to this question?

- What were you thinking of when answering this question?
- What does “offer or provide goods or services using online platforms” mean to you?
- What time period were you thinking about?
- What does “Since March 13” mean to you?
- How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

**Item 18 (Six months, business needs)**

Let’s skip ahead to Item 18 now.

**18.** In the next 6 months, do you think this business will need to do any of the following?

Select all that apply:

- Obtain financial assistance or additional capital
  - Identify new supply chain options
  - Develop online sales or websites
  - Increase marketing or sales
  - Learn how to better provide for the safety of customers and employees
  - Identify and hire new employees
  - Permanently close this business
  - None of the above
- 
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
  - How did you come up with your answers to this question?
  - Looking at the answer categories, what do each of them mean to you?
  - What time period were you thinking about when answering this question?
  - What does “In the next 6 months” mean to you?
  - How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
  - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)

- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?
- How do you think others in your industry might interpret this question?

### **Other Items**

Are there any other questions you would like to go back and talk about?

(Review other items that raised concerns during survey completion.)

### **Wrap Up:**

We are almost done. I just have a few more questions.

- Overall, how easy or difficult was it to answer these questions?
- Do you have any other comments or suggestions about anything we have discussed today?
- Now I would like you to click on the second link in the email I sent you, and take a minute to read the invitation email we plan on sending out for this next phase of the Small Business Pulse Survey. (Wait.) What is your overall impression of the email? Do you have any suggestions to improve it? Do you have any concerns about the security of this survey? Does this email address those concerns? Do you have any suggestions to address those concerns?
- (If did not complete Phase 1: Do you remember receiving an email invitation to complete Phase 1 of this survey? Can you tell me what you remember about it and why you decided not to complete the survey? Do you have any suggestions for encouraging people to respond to the survey?)

That is all the questions I have for you today. Thank you very much for your time today. We really appreciate your help.

Document length of cognitive interview.

\_\_\_ minutes