

Non-substantive Change Request
Pilot of Coordinated Collection in Annual Economic Surveys
Applicable to the following surveys:
Annual Retail Trade Survey (0607-0013)
Annual Wholesale Trade Survey ((0607-0195)
Service Annual Survey (0607-0422)

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) conducted a study to re-engineer the Census Bureau's annual economic surveys. Recommendation 4.7 of the study states:

Census bureau should work to harmonize its communications and fieldwork strategies across its annual economic surveys, leading to a strategy for an Annual Business Survey System (ABSS) aimed at efficiently achieving accurate, complete, and timely responses from sampled businesses. This strategy would be informed by available information from pretest, post-field evaluations, experiments to test alternative approaches, and active monitoring of responses through paradata. A goal should be to develop a paradata-based monitoring system (or process control framework) that supports a responsive (or adaptive) design for fieldwork for an ABSS.

In an effort to address this recommendation, the Census Bureau is planning a pilot to better understand the processing, setup requirements, and data collection operations necessary to implement coordinated collection for three annual surveys with a future goal of expansion to the remaining annual current surveys and potentially other surveys.

The three surveys chosen for the pilot are the Annual Retail Trade Survey (ARTS), Annual Wholesale Trade Survey (AWTS), and the Service Annual Survey (SAS). Future phases will expand to cover the remaining in-scope annual surveys for the project: Annual Capital Expenditures Survey (ACES), Annual Survey of Manufactures (ASM), and the Manufacturers, Shipments, Inventories, and Orders Unfilled Orders Survey (M3UFO).

The goals of the pilot are as follows:

- Coordinate respondent communication across programs. Combine communication with respondents in multiple programs to collectively address initial survey requests and follow-up reminders.
- Eliminate duplication of mail packages, email messages, and telephone calls for overlapping surveys to save money and reduce respondent burden.
- Develop a framework system for consolidated collection with the flexibility to expand to additional annual surveys in the future.
- Implement a new consolidated strategy with various scenarios to investigate different alternatives to consolidating collection and measure the success of each in order to inform decisions for future years.

Respondents will be chosen from among those who are in sample for at least two of the surveys in the pilot. These respondents will receive communications from the Census Bureau, including phone calls, emails and letters that combine our request for their participation into one consolidated message. We

will also select a single contact within each company who will have primary responsibility for completing the surveys. This responsibility may be delegated. Respondents will continue to complete each survey separately. A single due date for all three surveys will be tested against staggered due dates. The pilot will include the addition of an advance contact to notify respondents of the changes as well as debriefings afterwards to help us analyze the impacts, benefits, and issues of implementing a coordinated collection effort.

We plan to conduct the pilot for the 2019 Survey Year, which will occur during 2020. Advance contact will occur from mid-December 2019 to mid-January 2020. Survey collection letters will go out in mid-January to mid-February 2020. Survey responses will be due from March 24, 2020 to April 28, 2020, depending on collection strategy group. Response evaluations will occur from February to May 2020. Respondent debriefings will take place from May through October 2020.

The attached High Level Plan details the coordinated contact and collection strategies to be employed. The attached Research and Analysis Plan discusses what we hope to learn and how we will determine whether the pilot has been successful. Based on the results of this analysis, we will make a determination of whether to implement a coordinated collection strategy in future years. Also attached to this request are the advance contact notification and survey collection letters to be utilized in the pilot.

The pilot will not impact the burden of the ARTS, AWTS and SAS. Survey content will not change and only respondents already in samples will be involved. The planned respondent debriefings will be submitted to OMB for review under one of the Census Bureau's generic clearances designed for this purpose.

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Request Checklist

- study plan
- what we plan to test
- the reason for the change in our collection strategy
- the pre-notifications
- the planned debriefings with respondents after the fact
- any follow-up testing
- the implementation timeframe
- and what would determine a go/no go for the following year