

# Respondent Debriefing Interviewing Protocol

## Business Trends and Outlook Survey – Work from Home Supplement

12.11.24 draft

**Interviewer instructions are in red.**

### **Method:**

We will conduct the interviews by Microsoft Teams.

### **Expected length of interview:**

30 minutes maximum

### **General probes that may be used throughout the interview:**

- Were these data easy to access?
- What else can you tell me about this?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- How confident are you in that response?
- What looked unclear or is confusing here?
- Reflect back on respondent's answer: "you said..."
- How did you arrive at this number/answer this question?
- Specifically, what did you include in this answer? What did you exclude?

### **Research Questions to Address:**

- Were respondents able to answer the questions as intended?
- What sorts of problems did respondents report?
  - What can be done to fix those problems?
- How accessible were the requested data?
- Did respondents have to utilize records/other sources to report?
- Estimate of average time to complete?

### **Introduction and Background:**

- Hello. Thank you for your time today. We are looking to obtain feedback on a survey that you recently completed – the Business Trends and Outlook Survey. The Census Bureau has been conducting BTOS to provide insight into the state of the economy by providing timely data for key economic measures and business expectations about future economic conditions.
- We plan to use your feedback to improve the survey questions in the future and make sure they make sense to respondents like you. We are *not* testing you– we only want to evaluate the questionnaire.

- Today, we will discuss your experience completing the Business Trends and Outlook Survey and then we will review some of the questions to get your feedback.
- *If necessary:* you have a chance to review and sign the consent form yet?

[IF YES] Did you have any questions about any of the information presented there?

[IF NO] Please open up the link now and review the form, then sign it. Take your time and let me know if you have any questions.

- Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me today!
- Our interview is being conducted under the authority of Title 13, which means that your responses are confidential, and neither your name nor the name or identifying information about your company will be included in any of our findings.
- Do you have any questions before we get started?
- I'd like to record our session today so that when I go to analyze the results of these interviews, I can use the recording to pick up on anything I may have missed in my notes. Do I have your permission to record our session today?

[Turn on recording, repeat consent on recording: Do you agree to participate in the interview today? Is it okay if I record our conversation?]

- Before we begin, could you tell me a little bit about your business -- what types of goods or services does this business provide? How is the business organized? How many employees does this business have?
- Thank you. And what is your role in the business? (What kind of responsibilities do you have?) Are you the person who typically fills out Census surveys?

### **Review the Questionnaire:**

On your screen, after the consent form, should be a list of the questions from the Business Trends and Outlook Survey.

- First, what was your overall impression of this survey?
- How long would you say it took you to complete the Business Trends and Outlook Survey this time? (total hours/minutes, not elapsed time)
- Compared to other Census Bureau surveys you may have completed in the past, how easy or difficult was it to answer the Business Trends and Outlook Survey? Why?
- Do you recall any questions or topics that were particularly difficult for you to answer?

## **Item 3**

Now let's look at Item 3.

Between MMM DD – MMM DD, how did this business's operating revenues/sales/receipts change? *Please compare this two-week period to the two weeks prior. Estimates are acceptable.*

- Increased
- Decreased
- No change
  
- How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you need refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  
- Do you find the instruction after the question helpful or not helpful? Do you have any suggestions for improving this instruction?
  
- How easy or difficult was it to answer this question – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?
  - Very easy
  - Somewhat easy
  - Neither easy nor difficult
  - Somewhat difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)
  - Very difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)

### Item 3-alternate

Now let's look at an alternate version of Item 3, which is displayed below current Item 3.

How did this business's operating revenues/sales/receipts change in January, compared to December? *Estimates are acceptable.*

- Increased
- Decreased
- No change
  
- What is your reaction to this version of the question? What do you notice is different?
  
- Would answering this question for a full month versus a two-week time period be easier or more difficult for you? Why?
  
- How easy or difficult do you think it would be to answer this question – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?
  - Very easy

- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Neither easy nor difficult
- ☐ Somewhat difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)
- ☐ Very difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)

## Item 6

Now let's look at Item 6.

Between MM DD - MM DD, did this business have any paid employees who worked from home for at least one workday? *A workday is 6 or more hours.*

- Yes
- No
- How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
- What does “worked from home for at least one workday” mean to you in the context of this question?
- Did you find the definition after the question (“*A workday is 6 or more hours.*”) helpful or not helpful?
- How easy or difficult was it to answer this question – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?
  - ☐ Very easy
  - ☐ Somewhat easy
  - ☐ Neither easy nor difficult
  - ☐ Somewhat difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)
  - ☐ Very difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)

## Item 6-alternate

Now let's look at an alternate version of Item 6, which is displayed below current Item 6.

Did this business have any paid employees who worked from home for at least one workday in January? *A workday is 6 or more hours.*

- Yes
- No

- What is your reaction to this version of the question? What do you notice is different?
- Would answering this question for a full month versus a two-week time period be easier or more difficult for you? Why?
- How easy or difficult do you think it would be to answer this question – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?
  - o Very easy
  - o Somewhat easy
  - o Neither easy nor difficult
  - o Somewhat difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)
  - o Very difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)

## Item 15

Now let's skip to Item 15.

In the last six months, did this business experience any monetary losses due to an extreme weather event (for example, hurricane, flood, drought, or heat wave)?

- 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? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
- What does “experience any monetary losses” mean to you?
- What does “an extreme weather event” mean to you?

## Item 16 (only review if answered Yes to Q15)

What type of extreme weather event caused the monetary losses? *Select all that apply.*

- Wildfire
- Earthquake
- Hurricane
- Tornado
- Flood
- Drought
- High winds

- Severe storm/hail
  - Snow/blizzard/ice
  - Extreme temperature (heat or cold)
  - Other (please describe \_\_\_\_\_)
- Are the response options clear or unclear? Are there any answer choices potentially missing from this list?

## Item 27 (Work from Home Supplement begins)

Next let's look at Item 27.

Approximately what percentage of this business's paid employees currently work from home any of their workdays? *A workday is 6 or more hours. Total must equal 100% of paid employees. Estimates are acceptable.*

\_\_\_\_\_ % never work from home

\_\_\_\_\_ % work from home occasionally

\_\_\_\_\_ % work from home 1 day per week

\_\_\_\_\_ % work from home 2 days per week

\_\_\_\_\_ % work from home 3 days per week

\_\_\_\_\_ % work from home 4 days per week

\_\_\_\_\_ % work from home 5 or more days per week

\_\_\_\_\_

100% paid employees

- Do not know/Not applicable
- How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  - How easy or difficult was it to report percentages for each of the categories? Was it clear that the percentages should add to 100%?
  - How easy or difficult was it to answer this question – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?
    - Very easy
    - Somewhat easy

- ☐ Neither easy nor difficult
- ☐ Somewhat difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)
- ☐ Very difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)

## Item 28

Five years ago (in 2019), approximately what percentage of this business's paid employees worked from home any of their workdays? A *workday* is 6 or more hours. Total must equal 100% of paid employees. Estimates are acceptable.

\_\_\_\_% never worked from home

\_\_\_\_% occasionally worked from home

\_\_\_\_% worked from home 1 day per week

\_\_\_\_% worked from home 2 days per week

\_\_\_\_% worked from home 3 days per week

\_\_\_\_% worked from home 4 days per week

\_\_\_\_% worked from home 5 or more days per week

\_\_\_\_

100% paid employees

- Do not know/Not applicable
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking. How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to answer for this time period – five years ago?
- How easy or difficult was it to answer this question – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?
  - ☐ Very easy
  - ☐ Somewhat easy
  - ☐ Neither easy nor difficult
  - ☐ Somewhat difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)
  - ☐ Very difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)

## Item 29

Looking forward to five years from now (in 2029), approximately what percentage of this business's paid employees do you think will work from home any of their workdays? *A workday is 6 or more hours. Total must equal 100% of paid employees. Estimates are acceptable.*

\_\_\_\_% will never work from home  
\_\_\_\_% will occasionally work from home  
\_\_\_\_% will work from home 1 day per week  
\_\_\_\_% will work from home 2 days per week  
\_\_\_\_% will work from home 3 days per week  
\_\_\_\_% will work from home 4 days per week  
\_\_\_\_% will work from home 5 or more days per week  
\_\_\_\_  
100% paid employees

- Do not know/Not applicable
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking. How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to answer for this time period – five years from now?
- How easy or difficult was it to answer this question – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?
  - o Very easy
  - o Somewhat easy
  - o Neither easy nor difficult
  - o Somewhat difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)
  - o Very difficult (Can you tell me more about that?)

## Item 30

Does this business pay its fully remote employees based partly on the cost of living where they live (locality pay)?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know/ Not applicable



- Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
- What does “based partly on the cost of living where they live” mean to you in the context of this question?
- Does the parenthetical “(locality pay)” help or not help in terms of understanding the question?

## Item 31

What factors limit the ability of this business’s paid employees to work from home?

*Select all that apply.*

- Parts or all of the job cannot be performed from home
  - Management of employees working from home too costly/complicated
  - Efficiency/productivity concerns
  - Challenges around mentoring/learning or teamwork/socialization
  - Legal/regulatory/tax reasons
  - Security concerns (IT or other)
  - Other (*please describe \_\_\_\_\_*)
  - No factors limit work from home
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking. How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  - Are the response options clear or unclear?

## Item 32

Does this business have a work from home policy with any minimum in-person (onsite) requirements?

- 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? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  - What does “minimum in-person (onsite) requirements” mean to you?

## Item 33

How does this business track whether paid employees meet the minimum in-person (onsite) requirements? *Select all that apply.*

- Badge swipe or sign-in sheet
  - Attendance at in-person meetings
  - Manager checks
  - Other (*please describe* \_\_\_\_\_)
  - This business does not track whether in-person (onsite) requirements are met
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking. How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  - Are the response options clear or unclear? Are there any answer choices potentially missing from this list?

## Item 34

How does this business monitor the activity of paid employees working from home? *Select all that apply.*

- Computer activity
  - Attendance/participation in online meetings
  - Specific measures of output (for example, number of customers served or calls answered, sales, units produced, etc.)
  - Other (*please describe* \_\_\_\_\_)
  - This business does not monitor paid employees working from home
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking. How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  - Are the response options clear or unclear? Are there any answer choices potentially missing from this list?

## Item 35

How does this business monitor the activity of paid employees working in-person (onsite)? *Select all that apply.*

- Arrival/departure times
- Computer activity

- Attendance/participation in meetings
  - Specific measures of output (for example, number of customers served or calls answered, sales, units produced, etc.)
  - Other (*please describe \_\_\_\_\_*)
  - This business does not monitor paid employees working in-person (onsite)
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking. How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  - Are the response options clear or unclear? Are there any answer choices potentially missing from this list?

## Item 36

Has this business observed differences in productivity for paid employees based on whether they are working from home or in-person (onsite)?

- Yes, work from home more productive
  - Yes, in-person (onsite) more productive
  - No observed differences in productivity
  - Do not know/Not applicable
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking. How did you come up with your answer to this question? Did you refer to records or reach out to anyone else in your business to answer this question? If yes, Who/what?
  - What does “differences in productivity for paid employees based on whether they are working from home or onsite” mean to you?
  - Are the response options clear or unclear?

### Wrap up/Debriefing:

Wrapping up now!

Overall, how confident are you in your answers to the questions on the Business Trends and Outlook Survey – very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident or not at all confident?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not very confident (Can you say more about this?)

- Not at all confident (Can you say more about this?)

Thinking back through all the questions you answered for your company, do you feel you were the best person to answer these questions or would someone else at the company have been a better fit?

- Yes, I was the best person
- No, someone else would have been a better fit (What is that person's job title?)

Overall, how easy or difficult was it to answer the Business Trends and Outlook Survey – very easy, somewhat easy, neither easy nor difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult?

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Neither easy nor difficult
- ☐ Somewhat difficult (Can you say more about what was difficult?)
- ☐ Very difficult (Can you say more about what was difficult?)

That's all the questions I have for you today! Do you have any other comments or suggestions about anything we have discussed today?

Thank you very much for your time today. We really appreciate your help.