Generic Information Collection Request:
Respondent Debriefing Interviewing
for the Annual Integrated Economic Survey (AIES)

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). Researchers will be conducting debriefing interviews with AIES respondents.

Background and Previous Research: The Census Bureau's Economic Directorate asked the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to convene an expert panel to review their appropriated annual economic surveys and recommend improved methodologies for conducting and processing them. The panel started work in July 2015 and [the final report, with recommendations, was released in May 2018](#).

To address these recommendations, the Economic Directorate has been conducting research into harmonizing and simplifying the design and production process for these economic surveys and the Economic Census. The results of several years of this research have culminated into a single harmonized survey instrument designed to be administered as one survey cycle throughout the economy, regardless of company size, industry, or other characteristics. The full suite of research conducted in support of the AIES development is documented in the prior OMB submission, *Census Bureau Participant Debriefing Research for the 2023 Annual Integrated Economic Survey* (under OMB clearance number 0607-0725). The first AIES was deployed to respondents in Spring 2024, while the second AIES began in Spring 2025, with a launch date of March 14th, 2025.

Purpose: For respondents who completed the 2024 AIES, debriefing interviews will be conducted to assess the respondent experience, the way respondents collect data for the survey, and the way respondents enter data into the online instrument.

Objectives for the research include the following:

- Evaluating the instrument's ease of use and navigation
- Identifying areas of the survey that are problematic for respondents
- Evaluating the ability of respondents to provide accurate data with minimal burden
- Provide recommendations for improvements to the instrument to increase respondent response rates and respondent satisfaction with the survey experience

Staff from the Economic Statistical Method Division's (ESMD) Data Collection Methodology and Research Branch (DCMRB) will be conducting the debriefing interviews for this research.

Population of interest: Respondents representing single-unit and multi-unit companies across all sectors will be included in this research. Respondents will be selected from a sample of SY2024 AIES respondents who completed the survey

Results: The results from the debriefing interviews will be documented in a report, outlining the findings of the interviews and suggesting recommendations to help improve the respondent experience and increase respondent participation.

Timeline: Testing will be conducted from April through August 2025.

Language: Testing will be conducted in English only.

Method: The method of research will be in-depth interviews. By using interviews to ask respondents about their processes for completing instrument data collection and entry tasks, we will be able to assess any difficulties with survey completion. Interviews will be conducted online via the secure platform Microsoft Teams. Interviews will occur at a time convenient to the respondent. Interviews will follow a semi-structured interview protocol (Attachment A) that include a set of questions to examine the respondent experience and ways to improve the survey instrument to reduce respondent burden. Additionally, by using a pre-screener (Attachment B) that will guide the interview, as well as response data and analyst case notes (if applicable) we will specifically focus on targeted topics the respondents identified as challenging or confusing. By using the respondent's response data, we will be able to identify areas where the respondents may have not answered some survey items and identify possible barriers to instrument completion.

Interviews will be recorded (with consent) to facilitate accurate summarization.

Sample: Attachment C contains the recruitment email sample text. We plan to conduct a maximum of 40 interviews with a variety of single- and multi-unit organizations across industries and sizes. The sample size necessary for this test was determined by qualitative research experience. This sample will yield a suitable, broad representation of U.S. businesses for this testing, and it should be large enough to provide reactions and information about the instrument in order to identify meaningful findings.

Recruitment: Participants will be recruited using a sample file which was developed using the AIES sample frame, which will be updated regularly to provide us with respondents who had recently submitted the SY2024 survey. Before beginning the interviews, we will provide participants a consent form (Attachment D), informing them that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential. First, we will send an email to the contact from the sample file. This email will include instructions for respondents to schedule an interview time and date. We will verify the appointment time and respond by an emailed Teams calendar invitation to the respondent with confirmation of scheduling; then proceed with the interview.

Protocol: A copy of the interview protocol and pre screener for respondents is attached (Attachment A).

Use of incentive: Monetary incentives for participation will not be offered.

Length of interviews: We expect each interview to last no more than 45 minutes (40 cases x 45 minutes per case = 30 hours). To recruit participants, we expect to reach out via email up to 3 times per completed case. The emails are expected to take on average 2 minutes to read and act upon (3 email contacts per completed case x 40 cases x 2 minutes per case = 4 hours). Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 34 hours (30 hours for interviews + 4 hours for recruiting).

Below is a list of documents referenced and included as attachments:

Enclosures: Below is a list of materials to be used in the current study:

1. **Attachment A:** Protocol used to outline how the research study will be conducted and pre screener sent to respondents once session is scheduled
2. **Attachment B:** Instrument screenshots to illustrate features of the instrument that are being evaluated. This will be shown to the participant at the time of the interview
3. **Attachment C:** Recruitment email sample text
4. **Attachment D:** Consent form example, including PRA/PA statements

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and statistical aspects of the design of this research is listed below:

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