

This letter is to inform you of our plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research (OMB number 0607-0725). The Census Bureau plans to conduct unstructured respondent debriefings on the BE-577, which is a self-administered mail out/mail return survey conducted by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) on a quarterly basis. The BE-577 is used to collect information on U.S. direct investment abroad for inclusion in the U.S. international transactions and the national income and product accounts. The Census Bureau and BEA have a memorandum of understanding in place to cover the redesign of these questionnaires; the respondent debriefings are one step in the redesign process.

The purpose of these respondent debriefings is to discover how respondents react to the new design of the BE-577 form. These are qualitative respondent debriefings, which are semi-structured interviews intended to collect qualitative data. Non-leading, open-ended questions and follow-up probes are used to investigate respondents' processes for completing the survey. Specifically, we intend to address the following questions: Do the changes in the redesign layout adversely affect the response process, and the responses provided? What effect (if any) does the placing of instructions with the questions have? Do respondents have issues with comprehending the terminology used on the questionnaire? And is the requested information available in respondent's records? Findings will be used to inform any future changes to the BE-577 form.

Starting in June and continuing into September, 2011, staff from the Census Bureau's Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS) will conduct a maximum of 25 company visits in the Washington, DC area and two additional metropolitan areas yet to be determined. The sample will be selected on a rolling basis as mail returns are received by BEA. We plan to conduct the respondent debriefings within 1-2 months of receipt of the form.

Cases to be selected for debriefing will vary on several criteria, including: "problematic" and "easy" respondents, large and medium size companies, levels of corporate complexity, and industry. BEA will handle the sample selection and recruitment of these companies, as they are better able to determine which companies fit the profile of most interest to them.

Respondents will be told that their participation is voluntary. Monetary incentives for participation will not be offered. After companies are recruited, BEA staff will provide follow-up reminders by telephone and/or email.

Debriefings will be conducted by members of the Response Improvement Research Staff (RIRS) of the Census Bureau. Subject matter experts from BEA will likely accompany RIRS interviewers on most or all of the interviews to observe and to clarify survey content as needed. We will record the interviews with the participants' permission, to aid researchers in accurately reporting findings and recommendations. We also will inform the participants that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with anyone not directly involved in this research project.

Enclosed are a copy of the BE-577 questionnaire and a draft respondent debriefing protocol.

We expect that each interview will last approximately 90 minutes. Thus, the total estimated reporting burden for this research is approximately 38 hours (1.5 hours X 25 visits).

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and analysis of the respondent debriefing is listed below:

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