

**Department of Commerce
United States Census Bureau
OMB Information Collection Request
Construction Progress Reporting Surveys
OMB Control Number 0607-0153**

Supporting Statement Part A. - Justification

1. Necessity of Information Collection

The U.S. Census Bureau is requesting an extension with minor revisions of a currently approved collection for forms C-700, Private Construction Projects; C-700(R), Multifamily Residential Projects, C-700(SL), State and Local Governments Projects and C-700(F), Federal Government Projects (see Attachments A - D).

These forms are used to conduct the Construction Progress Reporting Surveys (CPRS) to collect information on the dollar value of construction put in place on non-residential building projects under construction by private companies or individuals, private multifamily residential buildings, and building projects under construction by federal and state and local governments. The CPRS are authorized under Title 13, United States Code, Sections 131 and 182.

The Census Bureau uses the information collected on these forms to publish estimates of the monthly dollar value of construction put in place. Statistics from the CPRS become part of the monthly “Value of Construction Put in Place” or “Construction Spending” series, a Principal Economic Indicator that is used extensively by the federal government in making policy decisions and used to estimate the gross domestic product (GDP). The private sector uses the statistics for market analysis and other research. Construction now accounts for approximately five percent of GDP.

There are two changes planned to the content of these questionnaires. The first is the elimination of the data item for square footage of the construction project. This information was used for editing but is no longer needed. The second change is the addition of a data item to collect the projected completion date to assist with imputation if a response is not obtained in future months.

2. Needs and Uses

Form C-700 is used to collect data on construction of privately-owned nonresidential buildings and structures. Form C-700(R) is used to collect data on privately-owned residential building projects with two or more housing units. Form C-700(SL) is used to collect data on state and local government construction projects. Form C-700(F) is used to collect data on federal government construction projects.

Published statistics are used by all levels of government to evaluate economic policy, to measure progress toward national goals, to make policy decisions, and to formulate legislation. For example, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) staff uses the data to develop the construction components of gross private domestic investment and government investment in the Gross Domestic Product. The Federal Reserve Board and the Department of the Treasury use the data to develop monetary policy. Private businesses and trade organizations use the data to estimate demand for building materials and to schedule production, distribution and sales efforts.

Information quality is an integral part of the pre-dissemination review of information disseminated by the Census Bureau (fully described in the Census Bureau's Information Quality Guidelines). Information quality is also integral to information collections conducted by the Census Bureau and is incorporated into the clearance process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act.

3. Use of Information Technology

Respondents are offered the option to report data online via Centurion. Centurion is the Census Bureau's secure online reporting system for respondents. Approximately 26 percent of the total responses come from Centurion. Respondents who choose to respond via Centurion receive email notifications rather than paper forms or letters.

We use a computer- assisted interview process referred to as the Call Scheduler to collect data over the telephone for approximately 24 percent of the total responses. This is part of a database system that not only alerts the Census interviewer to call a respondent at a predetermined date and time, but also allows them to enter responses via the database at which time the data are electronically edited for accuracy and consistency.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The C-700, C-700(R), C-700(SL) and C-700(F) have existed since 1961, 1975, 1976 and 2002, respectively. Frequent discussions with people in and out of government who use these statistics and are knowledgeable about the construction statistical sources indicate that the monthly value put in place series for private nonresidential construction, private multifamily residential construction, and state and local government construction are unavailable elsewhere.

5. Minimizing Burden

Data for these surveys are collected on a sample basis from owners of private nonresidential projects, owners of private multifamily residential building projects, state and local agency officials, and federal government officials. Total projected cost estimates are requested the first month and monthly progress reports are requested until the project is completed. Respondents are told that if actual values are not readily

available from records, estimates are acceptable. Information on projects valued under \$75,000 is not collected for federal, state and local, or private nonresidential building projects.

Many respondents are called by a Census interviewer and report the data over the phone. The Call Scheduler schedules each respondent's contact time as requested by the respondent. Having the information available from a database at the time of the scheduled call helps reduce the time respondents spend on the telephone, therefore reducing the respondent burden.

We continually review our processes to identify any data items that are no longer necessary. We are eliminating the data item for square footage of the construction project because an evaluation of our editing processes determined that it did not significantly improve the data quality.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

Many policies, decisions, and analyses are formulated and updated monthly using information collected from CPRS. Month-to-month changes in construction activities are erratic due to unusual weather conditions, material shortages, labor shortages, changes in the availability of funds and interest rates, and shifts in government grant programs. Less frequent collection of these data would miss these short-term changes.

7. Special Circumstances

We ask respondents to report within ten days in order to ensure the timely release of the Construction Spending data on the first workday of each month. Additionally, the response is requested within ten days because of our programming needs and the scheduling of nonresponse follow-up caseloads.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

Comments are received on a continuing basis from data users and from representatives of federal, state and local agencies, private nonresidential projects, and private multifamily residential projects who were asked to review the report forms for clarity and ease of reporting. These consultations are informal, and comments were not solicited for purposes of reaching a consensus opinion. Commenters were in agreement with the removal of the square footage item and indicated that the projected completion date was readily available and it would not be burdensome to add this item.

We published a notice in the Federal Register on August 31, 2015 (Vol. 80, No. 168, Pages 52443-52444) inviting public comments on our plans to submit this request. We received one letter from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The BEA strongly supports this data collection, because these data are critical in preparing estimates for

key components of BEA’s economic statistics (see Attachment E).

9. Paying Respondents

Respondents are not paid or provided gifts for their participation.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

The following statement of confidentiality is printed on the top of report forms C-700 and C-700(R) (see Attachments A and B): “Title 13, United States Code, Sections 131 and 182 authorizes the Census Bureau to conduct this collection and to request your voluntary assistance. By Section 9 of Title 13, United States Code, your report is confidential. It may be seen only by persons sworn to uphold the confidentiality of Census Bureau information, and may be used only for statistical purposes. The law also provides that copies of your report retained in your files are immune from legal process.” This information also appears in the letters to respondents (see Attachments F and H) and on the login screen for the online reporting instrument (see Attachment J).

The C-700(SL) and C-700(F) are also voluntary. However, the data provided come from government agencies and are public in nature and are exempted from confidentiality under Title 13. The following statement is printed on the top of the report forms (see Attachments C and D): “Title 13, United States Code, Sections 131 and 182 authorizes the Census Bureau to conduct this collection and to request your voluntary assistance. These data are subject to provisions of Title 13, United States Code, Section 9(b) exempting data that are customarily provided in public records from rules of confidentiality.” This information also appears in the letters to respondents (see Attachments G and I) and on the login screen for the online reporting instrument (see Attachment J).

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The survey forms contain no sensitive questions.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden

We estimate responses from approximately 12,200 state and local government projects, 6,900 private nonresidential projects, 1,600 federal projects, and 3,300 multifamily residential projects annually. The respondents will each complete 12 monthly reports on average. The total number of annual responses is 288,000. We estimate it will take 30 minutes to complete the survey the first month and 10 minutes each remaining month that the project is under construction, regardless of reporting format (see Attachment K). These estimates are based upon previous experiences and conversations with respondents. The total annual burden is 56,000 hours.

13. Estimating Cost Burden

We do not expect respondents to incur any cost other than their time to respond. The information requested is of the type and scope normally carried in company records. No special hardware, accounting software, or system is necessary to provide this information. Respondents are not expected to incur any increase in capital, startup, or systems maintenance cost in responding.

14. Cost to Federal Government

The total cost in FY 2015 for the CPRS program was \$4.9 million, all borne by the Census Bureau. The estimated cost includes postage and forms printing, and salaries for staff performing data entry and telephone followup operations. The estimates also include salaries for staff at headquarters responsible for methodology, instrument design, data analysis and dissemination, and project management. The costs are expected to stay relatively consistent for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017.

15. Reason for Change in Burden

The annual burden estimate has been adjusted upward due to an increase of activity in the construction sector.

The data item of square footage was removed, while the data item of projected completion date was added. The offset of these changes resulted in no change in the burden.

16. Project Schedule

The monthly value in place data are collected during the first three weeks of the month following the survey month. Data are edited and keyed on a flow basis during this period. A tabulation follows during the early days of the fourth week. Statistics are published on the first workday of the following month in the monthly "Construction Spending" press release. Data are published showing the dollar amount of construction work done during the month in the United States by type of ownership and type of construction. Detailed data are available online at www.census.gov/constructionspending. Data are shown in actual and seasonally adjusted dollars.

17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date

The expiration date is displayed on the data collection forms.

18. Exceptions to Certification

There are no exceptions.