



Committee on Economic Statistics

Federal Data Collection Comment Opportunity for AEA Members

2017-21 Annual Business Survey

U.S. Census Bureau

Comments Due February 5, 2018

The U.S. Census Bureau asks OMB to approve the 2017-21 Annual Business Survey (ABS). ABS estimates will include the number of firms, sales/ receipts, annual payroll, and employment by gender, ethnicity, race, and veteran status as well as R&D and innovation. The ABS replaces the five-year Survey of Business Owners for employer businesses, the Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs, and the Business R&D and Innovation for Microbusinesses survey. The ABS will be conducted jointly by the Census Bureau and the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics of the National Science Foundation.

The ABS will incorporate new content each survey year based on topics of relevance. Topics for the 2017 ABS include: Owner & Business Characteristics; R&D from microbusiness; Innovation; and Technology.

The ABS will sample approximately 850,000 employer businesses in 2017 and approximately 300,000 employer businesses in years 2018-2021. The sample is stratified by state, frame, and industry.

AEA members are encouraged to:

- provide opinions on the value of the 2017-21 ABS for economic research;
- comment on the data collection instruments and methods; and
- propose topic modules for future years; and
- suggest changes that would enhance data quality, value, and accessibility and lower respondent burden and federal cost.

Federal Register notice: [December 28, 2017](#) (includes instructions for submitting comments)

- [Information Collection Request](#) (ICR) submitted by Census to OMB, including:
 - [ABS survey instruments](#)
 - [Supporting Statement](#) describing needs, uses, plans, methods, sample, and costs
 - Due date for comments: February 5, 2018
 - More information: Patrice Norman, Chief, Business Owners Branch, U.S. Census Bureau, 301.763.7198, patrice.c.norman@census.gov
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Information on ICR Process:

- By law, each data collection carried out by a federal agency must be cleared by OMB. Through the *Federal Register* notice, Census is announcing that it has
- submitted a request to OMB for clearance to conduct the 2017-19 ABS and offers the public a 30-day opportunity to submit comments to OMB.
- After the close of the 30-day comment period, OMB will make its decision.

Guidance to AEA Members on Preparing Comments:

- Can comment on any aspect of the proposed data collection. Possible topics, for instance, include needs, uses, methodology, design, cost, schedule, and consultation with data users.
- May frame comments on specific topics in any way, such as:
 - assessments – identifying what you do and do not like and support
 - suggestions – for how Census might proceed in this or future collections
 - requests – for example, for a change in the design of the survey instrument, to be consulted in the future, to carry out research on an alternative approach
 - observations – for example, implications of the sample size for statistical reliability
- May propose that OMB incorporate a request in its “terms of clearance.” For instance, you could suggest as a term of clearance that Census research the efficacy of an alternative set of questions and report back to OMB in a year on the results.

Additional AEA Resources:

- [A Primer on How to Respond to Calls for Comment on Federal Data Collections](#)
- After reviewing materials, you may provide your observations, critiques, and requests to AEASTat staff Andrew Reamer at areamer@gwu.edu and he will organize them into a draft letter for your review. Prof. Reamer is experienced in crafting comment letters for impact.