

Comments on *Economic Programs
Updates: 2017 Economic Census,
Census of Governments, Improving
Economic Statistics*

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Overview

- Excellent update – with clearly outlined objectives and accomplishments
- Abundantly clear that the balancing act between improving data quality/timeliness while managing costs and response burden is **very difficult** – but admirable progress is being made
- Will follow up with a few specific questions in select areas

Internet Collection

- Move towards 100% Internet Collection for Economic Census (EC) core program, the Survey of Business Owners (SBO) and Census of Governments
- Obviously exciting on a number of dimensions
 - Reduce response burdens and allow customization/automation
 - Data that is more timely, comprehensive and higher quality
- Some questions
 - How should we think about impact on who responds?
 - Small vs large?
 - Any learnings from tests on break off and non response (check in vs unit response rates)?

North American Product Classification System

- Transition to NAPCS is a potential challenge for respondent reporting
 - Some discussion of the idea that the way businesses think of the goods and services they produce may not align with the NAPCS categories and terminology in all cases.
- Part of the discussion around increasing efficiency was 'Testing functionality for the collection of products from the North American Product Classification System'
 - But any details on how respondents are reacting to the new system?

More Data Faster

- Some of the metrics here are really impressive on the timeliness of Economic Census
- For example:
 - ‘State statistics available at 2-3 or 2-4 digit NAICS levels for all sectors up to 18 months earlier than 2012.’
- A little more color in what drives this and what could be adopted in other programs? Where are the time savings coming from?

Five Year Plan: Improve and modernize Census Retail Trade Statistics

- With surveys remaining the bedrock of retail sales estimates – the first goal seems the most crucial
 - **Improve quality of Monthly Retail indicator data**
- Outreach is worth trying, but remain unconvinced that large retailers reluctant to supply data will be convinced by outreach at NABE, or by the Secretary of Commerce will meaningfully move the needle
 - But hard to see what a better carrot (or stick) looks like
 - Traditional models like give to get don't seem to apply
 - Increased promotion of the data or more clearly defined benefits?
- Any reaction regarding Advance Economic Indicator Report?