American Community Survey

Content Review Summit

April 29, 2014
Welcome

James Treat, Chief, American Community Survey Office
U.S. Census Bureau
ACS Content Review (CR) Summit

Objectives:
1. Open lines of communication
2. Provide an overview on the ACS Content Review (CR)
3. Communicate why we need your participation
4. Highlight upcoming milestones and your role

Outcomes:
1. Clear understanding of the ACS CR
2. Understanding of timelines, next steps and actions
3. Adjustments to CR Data Collection Tool
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>James Treat, <em>Chief, American Community Survey Office</em> U.S. Census Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 am</td>
<td>Executive Remarks</td>
<td>Dr. Mark Doms, <em>Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs,</em> U.S. Department of Commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Overview of Content Review</td>
<td>James Treat</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Respondent Burden</td>
<td>Tim Olson, <em>Respondent Advocate, U.S. Census Bureau</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15 am</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Agency Experience</td>
<td>Cheryl Chambers, <em>Chief, Communication Management and Support Branch,</em> American Community Survey Office, U.S. Census Bureau</td>
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<td>George Sheldon, <em>Department of Veterans Affairs</em></td>
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<td>Joan Turek, PhD, <em>Department of Health and Human Services</em></td>
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<td>11:15 am</td>
<td>Agency Role</td>
<td>Gary Chappell, <em>Content Review Program Manager,</em> American Community Survey Office, U.S. Census Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:50 am</td>
<td>Logistics for the Afternoon</td>
<td>Gary Chappell</td>
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<td>12:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch (cafeteria/food court)</td>
<td>All: Informal group discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 pm</td>
<td>Walkthrough of CR Data Collection Tool</td>
<td>Marisa Hotchkiss &amp; James Treat, American Community Survey Office, U.S. Census Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>Next Steps and Closing</td>
<td>James Treat</td>
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<td>2:45 pm</td>
<td>Q &amp; A</td>
<td>U.S. Census Bureau Subject Matter Experts</td>
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Dr. Mark Doms, *Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, U.S. Department of Commerce*
Overview of the Content Review

James Treat, Chief, American Community Survey Office, U.S. Census Bureau
In April 2011, the Census Bureau began a comprehensive assessment of the ACS program – including an initiative to examine and confirm the value of each question on the ACS.

In June 2012, OMB initiated a process to confirm and update information the statutory and regulatory authority for the questions on the ACS with select federal agencies (Sunstein Memo).

In August 2012, the Interagency Council of Statistical Policy (ICSP) Subcommittee for the ACS was formed with a mission, in part, to ensure that the ACS would “provide the most useful information with the least amount of burden.”

To support the ICSP Subcommittee, the ACS Content Review is the next logical step in reviewing content beyond what was accomplished with the OMB effort.
We will review all topics on the questionnaire

Phase 1 (May): We will place our initial focus on four high-profile topics:
  - Plumbing: 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d
  - Disability: 17a, 17b, 18a, 18b, 18c and 19
  - Journey to Work: 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34
  - Income: 47a, 47b, 47c, 47d, 47e, 47f, 47g, 47h and 48

Phase II (June): We will begin to review the remaining topics on the questionnaire
Project Timeline

- Request agencies identify Point of Contact (POC) : Mar 2014
- Hold kickoff meeting with all Federal agency POCs : Apr 2014
- Gather input from all Federal agency POCs : May – Jun 2014
- Analyze input and make content decisions: May – Sep 2014
- Formally announce decisions and seek public input via Federal Register notice: Oct – Dec 2014
- Implement decisions CY2016 and beyond in coordination with OMB
- Continue efforts to complete a comprehensive top-to-bottom assessment
In order to evaluate ACS content to determine which variables were most valuable, we initiated a cost-benefit analysis in which:

- “cost” is the difficulty in obtaining quality information
- “benefit” is the usefulness and quality of the data

The Census Bureau then identified and selected the decision criteria that fit into these two categories.
Decision Criteria

- The Census Bureau has identified 19 decision criteria in all:
  - 13 that measure the utility and quality (benefit) of a variable
  - 6 that measure the difficulty (cost) of obtaining information

- The Census Bureau will rely on YOU – federal agencies to provide information for about one-third of the criteria

- We are also gathering input from:
  - Survey Respondents (website feedback form – May 2014)
  - Field Representatives; other operational measures (May 2014)
  - Data users (website feedback form – June 2014)
# Utility vs. Difficulty

## Utility (Benefit)
- Uses at Block Group/Tract Level—Statutory
- Uses at Place/County/MSA Level—Statutory
- Uses at State/Nation Level—Statutory
- Uses at Block Group/Tract Level—Required
- Uses at Place/County/MSA Level—Required
- Uses at State/Nation Level—Required
- Uses at Block Group/Tract Level—Programmatic
- Uses at Place/County/MSA Level—Programmatic
- Uses at State/Nation Level—Programmatic
- County-Level Interquartile Range in Values
- Used to Select frame for a Federal Survey
- Other Data Sources Exist
- Median County-Level Coefficients of Variation

## Difficulty (Cost)
- Cognitive Burden
- Sensitivity
- Overall Difficulty
- Number of Complaints
- Seconds to Answer
- Median Item Response Rate at County Level
Notional Example
Respondent Burden

What Congress and ACS Respondents Really Think

Tim Olson, Respondent Advocate, U.S. Census Bureau

Respondent-advocate@census.gov
My Vantage Point In This Discussion

Respondent Advocate position created at the request of Congress in 2013

American Community Survey focus
• 3.54 million households in ACS each year
• Most respond on their own (59.76%)
• Phone and field interviews boost response (97.38%)
• Approximately 8,000 refusals in 2012
• 242 Congressional letters on behalf of constituents since April 2012 (0.00343%)

Advocate for and represent the respondent’s perspective throughout the survey lifecycle, including survey design and data collection.

Resolve household survey respondent concerns.

Improve key stakeholder experience in relation to respondent concerns.
Congressional Interaction

- I have met with 108 Congressional offices this past year
  - All receive complaints from constituents about the ACS.
  - Most are surprised to learn that approximately 8,000 addresses within their district are part of the ACS each year.
  - Most are impressed at the high response rates in their district (95-99%).
  - Many understand the value of ACS data and use it for policy making and speeches.
  - All express strong appreciation at having a “go to” Census person for difficult constituent situations.

- There is a strongly-felt reservation about a mandatory survey
  - HR 1078 would make the ACS voluntary and has 52 co-sponsors (in the last Congress there were 70).
  - I discuss the impact of a voluntary ACS on smaller population areas, particularly rural areas, referencing Statistic Canada’s recent experience in 2011, as well as the Census Bureau’s 2003 study regarding impact of a voluntary ACS.
ACS Respondent Interaction

- Most people have never heard of the American Community Survey
  - They remember the last decennial census
  - They have never heard of the ACS and assume it is a scam

- Some have had a bad experience with an interviewer
  - Repeated contact attempts by phone and in person
  - Weekend and evening contacts

- Some have exceptionally strong and expressive political views
  - The Feds telling citizens they will be fined if they don’t answer a 35 minute survey

- Some are worried about identity theft
  - Income questions
  - Time one leaves home for work and work address

- Some questions are really hard to answer
  - Interest and dividends earnings
  - Type of Internet access

- Many just can’t fathom that we don’t already have this information
Challenge for Federal Agencies

- Every ACS Question must have compelling justification
  - What is the legal or regulatory basis?
  - Which program(s) is directly affected?
  - How does data impact local community?

- “Interesting to know” or “needed for research” is not justification to keep question on the ACS
Break
Agency Experience

Cheryl Chambers, *U.S. Census Bureau*

George Sheldon, *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*

Joan Turek, PhD, *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*
Questions

What process was followed in the past?

How did you organize to meet this request?
Questions cont’d

How did you make a compelling case that ACS data was needed by your federal agency?

How did you identify alternative sources of information to the ACS for administering your program?
Helpful Points

- Successful participation in the ACS content review will require a high level of cooperation between the Department of Commerce and each individual federal agency.

- Each agency will need to identify staff resources (point of contact and/or subject matter experts) for this effort when these resources may be scarce.

- An agency may need to establish a team to coordinate in a proactive way any research required for this effort.

- Willingness to support a sustained engagement in this project is critical.
Agency Role

Gary Chappell, Content Review Program Manager
American Community Survey Office
U.S. Census Bureau
Project Timeline – Phase 1 and 2

- Request agencies identify POCs: Mar 2014
- Hold kickoff meeting with all Federal agency POCs: Apr 2014
- Gather input from all Federal agency POCs: May – Jun 2014
  - Phase 1:
    - Plumbing Facilities: May 15, 2014
    - Disability: May 15, 2014
    - Journey to Work: May 15, 2014
    - Income: May 29, 2014
  - Phase 2:
    - All other topics: June 12, 2014
- Analyze input and make content decisions: May – Sep 2014
- Formally announce decisions and seek public input via Federal Register notice: Oct – Dec 2014
- Implement decisions CY2016 and beyond in coordination with OMB
- Continue efforts to complete a comprehensive top-to-bottom assessment

We have created a CR Data Collection Tool to help in this process
Your participation is essential

- The ACS Content Review is a critical opportunity for you to weigh in on how you use ACS data and what topics and questions are important to you.
- If you do not participate we may not be able to justify the need for the question.
- The question could be eliminated which may impact your data needs and thus may impact your stakeholder needs.
- As a federal agency, you are representing the needs of other state and local stakeholders and data users who depend on ACS data. You are the champion for their data needs.
Agency Next Steps (when you leave today)

1. Review the CR Data Collection Tool
2. Contact with your agency colleagues
3. Contact with your General Counsel
4. Complete the CR Data Collection Tool
5. Make yourself available for follow-ups
1. Review the CR Data Collection Tool

- For agencies who responded to the 2012 OMB data collection request – we have pre-populated the tool with all of the information you previously provided to us (and now you will validate and update it, and respond to further questions)

- For agencies not previously responding to the Census Bureau under the 2012 OMB request – you will be filling out the same information with a blank tool

- If we do not receive a completed response from you, we may not be able to defend your need for the question
Welcome to the American Community Survey (ACS) Content Review Extranet

This site is intended for federal agency points of contact and subject matter experts to collaborate with U.S. Census Bureau staff on the American Community Survey Content Review effort.

To access your documents, please choose one of the links on the left side of this page. You will have access to General Information (below) and the library for your agency. Other agencies will not have access to your library and you will not have access to theirs.

If you have questions, technical problems, or need to add or delete team members please contact your Census Bureau liaison.

General Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Modified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Document]</td>
<td>OMBMemoonACS</td>
<td>AKA Sunstein Memo, 2012 memo sent to agencies requesting updated use information</td>
<td>4/21/2014 11:54 AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add document
Leverage the Extranet Site cont’d

Agency-specific Library of Documents

Each agency has their own tailored tab where documents can be updated, shared, and viewed.
2. Contact your agency colleagues

- Not everyone who needs to provide input may be here today

- Relying on you to coordinate efforts on behalf of your agency and the stakeholders you serve who may rely on ACS data

- Reach out to those individuals, share materials you’ve received today and include them moving forward
## Agency POCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Agency POC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System</td>
<td>Tonda Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</td>
<td>Jennifer Madans, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Budget Office</td>
<td>Joseph Kile, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Research Service Library of Congress</td>
<td>Laura Shrestha, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>Joe Reilly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis</td>
<td>Tiffany Burrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration</td>
<td>Evelyn Remaley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Sharon Bovin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Energy</td>
<td>Robert Adams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>Joan Turek, Ph.D.</td>
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<td>Department of Housing and Urban Development</td>
<td>Peter Kahn</td>
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<td>Department of Justice</td>
<td>William Sabol</td>
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<td>Department of Labor</td>
<td>James Moore, Jr., Ph.D.</td>
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<td>Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Rolf Schmitt</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
<td>Courtney Kerwin</td>
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<td>Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</td>
<td>Elvira Sisolak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Communications Commission</td>
<td>Morgan Walls-Dines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institutes of Health</td>
<td>Dr. Rebecca Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Science Foundation</td>
<td>John Gawalt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Contact your General Counsel

- Confirming the legal basis or the lack thereof for an ACS use is a critical aspect of the Content Review
- Please reach out to your General Counsel
- If they have questions, contact DOC Office of General Counsel:
  - Barry Robinson: brobinson@doc.gov (202-482-5165)
  - Melissa L. Creech: melissa.l.creech@census.gov (301-763-9844)
  - Letitia McKoy: letitia.w.mckoy@census.gov
  - Morgan Hallmon: mhallmon@doc.gov
  - Miles Ryan III: miles.f.ryan.iii@boc.gov
4. Complete the CR Data Collection Tool

- Review the CR Data Collection Tool with information pertinent to your agency (if applicable)

- Leverage the *Guide* for the CR Data Collection Tool

- We encourage you to begin filling out the CR Data Collection Tool as soon as possible
5. Make yourself available for follow-ups

Timing is critical – next six months

- May and June – agencies gather information and submit responses to the Census Bureau
- July – Census Bureau drafts the initial set of recommendations
- August – Census bureau incorporates agency comments and feedback
- September – Census Bureau drafts proposed decisions
- October – Census Bureau submits the Federal Register notice
Logistics for the Afternoon

Gary Chappell, *Content Review Program Manager*
*American Community Survey Office*
*U.S. Census Bureau*
Lunch

We encourage you to lunch with others from your agency and consolidate your questions on the CR Data Collection Tool for the afternoon discussion.
Welcome back from lunch

Touch base on Q&A submitted
Walkthrough CR Data Collection Tool

Marisa Hotchkiss, American Community Survey Office
James Treat, American Community Survey Office
U.S. Census Bureau

Please refer to your Agency CR Data Collection Tool and Tool Guide
Each agency will receive an Excel spreadsheet via the Extranet site.

It will either be “blank” or populated with details provided by your agency in response to the 2012 Sunstein Memo.

We need you to add, validate and complete information in the tool.
Step 1: Review the description of each use

• Describe your agency’s use of ACS statistics in plain language, with an emphasis on whether or not the use affects small communities

• Verify or edit the description of each use

• Avoid text such as “see above”

How do you use ACS information?
Step 2: Review the citation for each use

For each use, please list any public laws, federal statutes, regulations, or other decisions that require the use of American Community Survey or Census Bureau data. If possible, please provide an excerpt of the specific language as well. Our goal is to combine all citations into one complete citation, using a standard format (columns C-F automatically generate the full citation in column B).

- Please work with your general counsel to ensure these citations are accurate (particularly if the citation is highlighted in red).
- If the citation cites a large portion of text, please evaluate whether a more detailed citation can be used.
- If only one type of citation is mentioned, but others apply to this use, please add them.
- If there is no citation to support this use, leave columns C-G blank, but complete H and I.

Most importantly, we need a clear, plain language justification for using ACS estimates (vs other data sources), and an understanding of your other options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Description</th>
<th>Full Citation (see Table columns D, E, F, and G for more detail)</th>
<th>Citation: Public Law</th>
<th>Citation: U.S. Code</th>
<th>Citation: Code of Federal Regulations</th>
<th>Citation: Other</th>
<th>Sample Citation Text</th>
<th>Why are ACS statistics used for this? (Please provide a clear justification.)</th>
<th>Without ACS data, how would your agency accomplish this activity? (Other data sources, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Used to determine qualified development areas for NE grant and tax credit program and to determine state allocations of development funds.</td>
<td>[Full citation]</td>
<td>[Public Law]</td>
<td>[U.S. Code]</td>
<td>[Code of Federal Regulations]</td>
<td>[Other]</td>
<td>[Sample citation]</td>
<td>[Why ACS statistics used for this?]</td>
<td>[Without ACS data, how would your agency accomplish this activity?]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are there any public laws, federal statutes, regulations, or other decisions that require the use of ACS data for administering your program? Why are ACS statistics used for this? Without ACS data, how would your agency accomplish this activity?

You may need to engage your General Counsel.
Step 3: Review the ACS topics needed

- Verify which ACS survey questions are necessary for each use
- If your agency previously indicated a use for the topic, there will be an “X”
- Determine if each “X” is Essential or Secondary – replace with “E” or “S”
- All questions that are not required should be marked “N/A”
- Make sure no empty cells remain

What ACS topics are essential for your use?
Step 4: Provide detailed justification by ACS topic

- If you marked a topic as “E” in Step 3 – you will see it reflected in Step 4
- If the cell is an “E” please explain why that particular question is “essential”
- Only explain “E” cells (“S” values are not displayed)
- If you realize a cell should be categorized by something other than what it is (E, S or N/A) – reflect it first in Step 3

Of the ACS topics that your agency uses, are there specific questions or parts of the questions that are necessary for your use? Why are they essential?
Step 5: Review the lowest level of geography necessary

- Identify the lowest level of geography needed and any additional levels
- Examples of geographies can be found in the “ACS Geographies Reference” tab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Lowest level of geography needed</th>
<th>Additional levels of geography needed</th>
<th>Are geographies mentioned in the citations listed in Step 2?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Used to determine qualified development areas for XYZ grant and tax credit program and to determine state allocations of development funds.</td>
<td>Block group</td>
<td>Tract</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What level of geography is needed for each use?
Step 6: Review the stakeholders

Please help us understand the size and scope of the stakeholder groups involved in each use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Who is Accessing the ACS Stats</th>
<th>Who is the User?</th>
<th>Who is Affected by this Use</th>
<th>How Much Funding is Distributed? (And How Often?)</th>
<th>How Frequently is ACS Information needed? (i.e., Annually, every 3 years, every 5 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE: Used to allocate funds to state offices for job training</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>50 State Offices</td>
<td>Job seekers</td>
<td>$5 million per FY</td>
<td>Annually</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example: Used to determine qualified development areas for XYZ grant and tax credit program and to determine state allocations of</td>
<td>Federal</td>
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Who is accessing the data?  Who is the user?  Who benefits from the use?  Is funding distributed?  How frequently is ACS information needed?
Step 7: Review collected information

This is a summary of all previous tabs which will help determine what questions on the ACS are essential for your data use or if we can eliminate questions or parts of questions to minimize burden.
### Step 8: Final thoughts (optional)

This tab provides the opportunity for you to give us any other information that should be considered as we review these uses.

Possible additional information might be historical or future changes to this use, websites where additional information can be found, etc.

This tab completes your response.

**Upload to Extranet site**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Step 8: Final Thoughts (optional)</strong></td>
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<td>(Provide any additional information in Column B)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Is there any other information about this use that should be considered?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Use</strong></td>
<td><strong>Notes</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Example: Used to determine qualified development areas for XYZ grant and tax credit program and to determine state allocations of development funds.</td>
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Is there any other information about this use that should be considered?
Next Steps and Closing Remarks

James Treat, Chief, American Community Survey Office

U.S. Census Bureau
Recap: Agency Next Steps

- Review the CR Data Collection Tool
  - Set up your Extranet Site account (*Remember to leverage our extranet site to ask questions at any time*).
- Connect with your agency colleagues, general counsel, and data users
- Complete the CR Data Collection Tool
  - Phase 1:
    - Plumbing Facilities: May 15, 2014
    - Disability: May 15, 2014
    - Journey to Work: May 15, 2014
    - Income: May 29, 2014
  - Phase 2:
    - All other topics: June 12, 2014
- Be available for follow-ups
Q & A

U.S. Census Bureau Subject Matter Experts
Thank you!

General Information:
https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/acs_content_review/

Questions?
https://share.census.gov/div/acso/CR/SitePages/Home.aspx
(requires log-in to Extranet)