

# Attachment F: Results from the Record Keeping Study

## Odyssey Respondent Research **Record Keeping Study**

Odyssey Program Seminar  
February 26, 2020

*Diane Willimack*

*Erica Marquette*

*Demi Hanna*

ESMD



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

The Census Bureau has reviewed this data product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and has approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied. (Approval ID: CBDRB-FY20-ESMD002-011)

1

## Outline

- Current Collection Strategy
- Research Goals and Methods
- Respondent Profile
- Preliminary Findings and Conclusions
- Next Step Recommendations

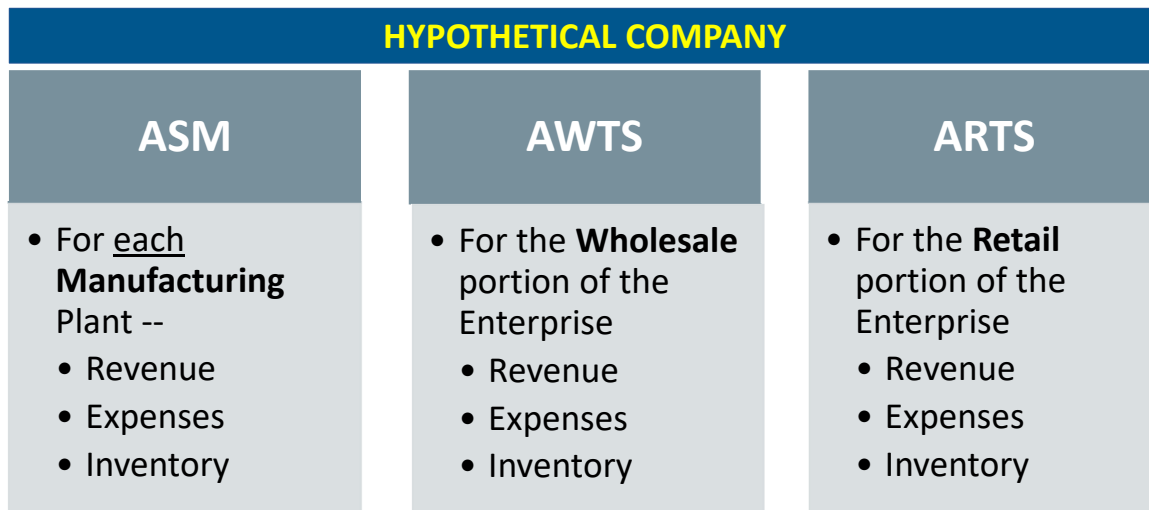


U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

2

2

## CURRENT Collection Strategy: Industry-based



3

## Research Goals

- **DEFINITION:** How do companies define data items based upon their charts of accounts and financial reporting requirements? Can we determine a harmonized definition that aligns with company records?
- **UNIT:** What data are available at what level? (e.g. establishment, company, industry, state)
- **TIMING:** When are the data available? Are different data items available at different times? If so, what and when?
- **BURDEN:** How readily available is the information we are asking? Are some items easier? Harder? Why?

4

## Research Methods

- Created interview guide with exploratory questions, for example:
  - Definitions: In what industry do you classify your business?
  - Unit: At what level is the data available?
  - Timing & Burden: How much time does it take and how many people or data sources are involved?
  - Burden: How much manipulation of data in business records is involved in order to provide data that meets Census Bureau requirements
- Interviewed 28 “medium size” companies August 5 – November 14, 2019, in 4 cities in the Northeast and Southern regions



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

5

5

## Respondent Profile

- All companies were sampled in at least two in-scope surveys
- Nearly all interviewed companies were in at least 2 sectors
- 13 companies had over 50 establishments
- 17 companies operated in more than 5 states
- 4 public for-profit companies, 6 not for-profit companies
- Over 70 different 6-digit NAICS



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

6

6

## Preliminary Findings: Definition

- All companies followed a general chart of accounts, the difference was in the detail
- At least 7 companies may have been **misclassified** or may not have understood our **distinction** among classifications
  - Different questionnaires = different industries (4- or 6-digit NAICS)

Generic Chart of Accounts	
Account Category	Account Code
Current Assets	1000
Property, Plant & Equipment	1100
Other Assets	1800
Current Liabilities	2000
Long Term Liabilities	2100
Equity	3000
Revenue	4000
Direct Program Costs	5000
Fringe Benefit Costs	6000
Overhead Costs	7000
General & Administrative (G & A) Costs	8000
Unallowable Costs	9000



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
census.gov

7

7

## Preliminary Findings: Unit

- Companies do not use the term “establishment”
  - Region, Office, Location
  - Cost center, Department, Business segment
- “Establishment” level data:
  - For some companies, revenue was not easily attributed to individual locations
  - If location is meaningful to management decisions, records were kept to support that
  - Some companies track information by “establishment” for budget purposes
- For almost all of the companies, their product details did not align with our categories



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
census.gov

8

8

## Preliminary Findings: Timing

- 17 of the companies had fiscal years that were approximately calendar year
- Almost all companies said June was a good time for survey response
- 50/50 split among respondents between reporting survey data all at once and staggering it
- Want some type of “reporting calendar” so they know what is coming and when and what is the due date



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

9

9

## Preliminary Findings: Burden

- Nearly all companies said they had to ask internal colleagues for information to complete the surveys
- Census surveys do not match up to internal reporting
  - Management reports
  - Financial reports
  - Regulatory reports
- Respondents do not like to make decisions on how to manipulate their data to match our requests



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

10

10

## Conclusions

- Sources of burden:
  - Identifying the portion of their company to report for (on different forms)
  - Interpreting the meaning of our questions
  - Allocating their data to what (they think) we're asking for
- From the respondents' perspective, NAICS classifications tends to be artificial
  - They don't recognize our distinctions across forms
  - Confused when we only ask for data about a piece of their company

➤ **Our lack of a holistic view of their company in data collection causes respondents confusion in responding to our surveys, which impacts:**

- Data quality
- Reporting burden



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

11

11

## Next Step Recommendations

- **Create proof of concept instrument that:**
  - Starts with consolidated figures (e.g., "top level numbers")
  - Asks for breakdown of data by:
    - Location?
    - Business segment?
    - Cost center?
  - Follows major categories of an Income Statement or Balance Sheet
- **Conduct cognitive testing of multiple alternatives**
  - Which data are readily available at what level?
  - How to help respondents "map" their data to our requests?
    - Nature and degree of discrepancies



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

12

12

## CURRENT Collection Strategy: Industry-based

HYPOTHETICAL COMPANY		
ASM	AWTS	ARTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For <u>each</u> <b>Manufacturing</b> Plant --</li> <li>Revenue</li> <li>Expenses</li> <li>Inventory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the <b>Wholesale</b> portion of the Enterprise</li> <li>Revenue</li> <li>Expenses</li> <li>Inventory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the <b>Retail</b> portion of the Enterprise</li> <li>Revenue</li> <li>Expenses</li> <li>Inventory</li> </ul>

13

## Proof of Concept PROPOSED Collection Strategy: Topic/Account-based

HYPOTHETICAL COMPANY		
Total Revenue	Total Expenses	End-of Year Inventory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Enterprise Level for:</b></li> <li><b>Manufacturing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For each plant (?)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Wholesale</b></li> <li><b>Retail</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Enterprise Level for:</b></li> <li><b>Manufacturing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For each plant (?)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Wholesale</b></li> <li><b>Retail</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Enterprise Level for:</b></li> <li><b>Manufacturing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For each plant (?)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Wholesale</b></li> <li><b>Retail</b></li> </ul>

14

## Proof of Concept **PROPOSED** Collection Strategy: Topic/Account-based

### HYPOTHETICAL COMPANY

#### Total Revenue

- Enterprise Level for:
  - Manufacturing
    - For each plant (?)
  - Wholesale
  - **Retail**
    - *Details*

#### Total Expenses

- Enterprise Level for:
  - Manufacturing
    - For each plant (?)
  - Wholesale
  - Retail

#### End-of Year Inventory

- Enterprise Level for:
  - Manufacturing
    - For each plant (?)
  - **Wholesale**
    - *Details*
  - Retail



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

15

15

## Thank you!

### Contact info:

Diane K. Willimack

[diane.k.willimack@census.gov](mailto:diane.k.willimack@census.gov)

x3-3538

Kristin Stettler

[kristin.j.stettler@census.gov](mailto:kristin.j.stettler@census.gov)

x3-7596

Erica Marquette

[erica.marquette@census.gov](mailto:erica.marquette@census.gov)

x3-7603

Melissa Cidade

[melissa.cidade@census.gov](mailto:melissa.cidade@census.gov)

x3-8325

Demi Hanna

[demetria.v.hanna@census.gov](mailto:demetria.v.hanna@census.gov)

x3-3351



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

16

16