BLS Response to CNSTAT Recommendations: The Road Ahead

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Presentation Goals

1. Gemini Project Overview
2. BLS Response to CNSTAT Recommendations
3. The Road Ahead
GEMINI OVERVIEW
Redesign Objectives

- Why redesign:
  - Evidence of measurement error
  - Changes in technology and spending behaviors
  - Need for greater flexibility

- Stated objective:
  - Verifiable reduction in measurement error, with a particular focus on underreporting
Redesign Process

- **Stage 1: Gather**
  - Identify user needs
  - Gather external input
  - Define data quality

- **Stage 2: Decide**
  - Data requirements, design decisions
  - Develop research roadmap

- **Stage 3: Implement**
  - Test
  - Implement
  - Evaluate
Redesign Constraints

- Final survey has to meet Office of Prices and Living Conditions (OPLC) requirements
  - Provide required data for CPI
  - Address other user needs as possible
- No increase in survey data collection and processing costs
- Maintain or improve response rates
Redesign Challenges

- Defining survey requirements
  - Identifying varied user needs
  - Balancing requirements with respondent task
- Maintaining ongoing research efforts while making redesign decisions
- Keeping up with technology
- Funding uncertainties
BLS RESPONSE TO CNSTAT RECOMMENDATIONS
Key Inputs

- Recognizing there was much we needed to decide but not unlimited time or money for empirical evidence, CE looked to several sources for inputs
  - Expert panels
  - External events
    - Outreach for redesign
    - Data users forum
    - Collecting information and advice
  - Ongoing research on key topics
  - CNSTAT
CNSTAT Panel

- CNSTAT Consensus Panel contracted to conduct workshops, evaluate CE and come up with design recommendations

- Tasked with:
  - Synthesizing information
  - Creating a menu of comprehensive design options with flexibility to allow for variations in budget and resources
  - Recommend future research
  - Evaluate the benefits, costs, and risks
CNSTAT Report

- Concurrence on main issues facing CE, validation of past work and future plans
- Three design proposals
- Cost estimates
- Twelve recommendations, specific ideas that will be useful throughout the redesign, including
  - Prioritize CE data uses for redesign trade-offs
  - Pursue a long-term research agenda and research sample
  - Engage outside experts in app development
- Support for additional resources
Concurrence with Panel’s Recommendations

6-01 Prioritize CE Data Uses for Redesign Trade-offs
6-02 Implement a Major Redesign ($)
6-03 Fund Several Major Feasibility Studies ($)
6-04 Sync Reference Periods for Exp & Non-Exp Items
6-05 Use Tablet for Self-Administration (w/Paper) ($)
6-06 Develop a Redesign Roadmap within 6 Months
6-07 Use Incentives ($)
6-08 Pursue a Long-Term Research Agenda
6-09 Increase Size & Capability of Research Staff ($)
6-10 Engage Outside Experts in App Dev ($)
6-11 Target Research on CNSTAT Recommended Topics
6-12 Fund a Methods Panel (or Research Sample) ($)
Promising Design Features

- One sample design
- Flexible recall periods & interview structure
- Increased use of technology, e.g., tablets
- Use of tech to encourage ‘in the moment’ reporting
- Increased reliance on self-administration
- Increased use of records
- Reduce proxy reporting
- Mixed mode data collection
- Large incentives
- Modular design, with a core survey
THE ROAD AHEAD
Gemini Design Team

- Interagency team
- Review and synthesize existing research
- Evaluating multiple inputs
  - CNSTAT report
  - Westat redesign proposals
  - Staff input
- Final output is single redesign recommendation
- Team has begun making preliminary decisions
  - High level decisions to be completed in January
Decision Process

- Making decisions
  - Requires facilitation and organization, e.g., identifying what we can decide based on what we know now, versus what we need more information about

- Arriving at consensus and staying there
  - Documenting the *what* and *why* crucial

- Deciding on data priorities has been critical
  - 1st version of CE priorities released in May, 2011
  - 2nd version forthcoming
  - Cannot do everything for everyone
Guiding Principles

- Keep it simple
- Make it work for all types of respondents
- Reduce measurement error
- Keep costs neutral & do not harm response rates
- Increase flexibility
  - Content
  - Mixed-mode
  - Technology
- Seek “proactive” data keeping
- Allow for “future enhancements”
Select Consensus Design Decisions

- **No:**
  - Administrative data to replace survey data
  - Event history calendar
  - Large-scale matrix sampling (in the initial iteration)

- **Yes:**
  - Census Bureau as data collection provider
  - Multi-mode surveying
  - Individual surveying

- **Upcoming issues TBD:**
  - Technology
  - Proactive vs. retrospective recall
Design Team Timeline

- Jul 2012 – Kick-off
- Oct 2012 – Data collection recommendations, by quex group
- Nov 2012 – Redesign proposal outline (i.e., table shell)
- Nov 2012 – Summarize independent design proposals
- Dec 2012 – Census, BLS staff redesign ideas
- Jan 2013 – High level decisions re: survey redesign elements
- Feb 2013 – Present update at CE Annual Meeting
- Feb 2013 – Detailed view of proposed redesign elements
- Mar 2013 – Draft redesign proposal report
- Jun 2013 – Final redesign proposal report
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Tasks</th>
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<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Research database&lt;br&gt;Define user needs&lt;br&gt;Define data quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010 – 2012</td>
<td>Information gathering&lt;br&gt;- Events, outreach, CNSTAT Panel</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Deliver redesign proposal&lt;br&gt;Develop research roadmap&lt;br&gt;Assess user impact</td>
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<td>2014 - 2018</td>
<td>Feasibility testing (FY13-15)&lt;br&gt;Pilot testing (FY16-17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 – 2023</td>
<td>Development, training, implementation&lt;br&gt;Evaluation</td>
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Concluding Thoughts

- A major survey redesign is time consuming, expensive, and stressful, but also very exciting.
- Clear objectives, careful planning, and constant communication can really help the process.
- CNSTAT’s report and recommendations are a key part of the redesign development process and have added much value.
- CE has come a long way, and still has a long way to go, but we’re optimistic about concluding with a much improved survey design.
Questions for FESAC

- Feedback on CE’s redesign progress and plans?
- Advice or suggestions for prioritizing and addressing multiple design decisions (e.g. incentives, mode, content) within the same research series?
- If only able to do one major field test of the final design, how to make decisions based on smaller scale tests?
THANK YOU