

Data Users' Concerns of the CE Redesign

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Outline

- Background
- Purpose
- Outreach Efforts
 - Webpage
 - Federal Register Notice
 - Events
 - Data Users Impact Survey
- Overall evaluation of outreach efforts

Background

- Events held to solicit user needs prior to developing new survey requirements and subsequent design plan
 - ▶ CRIW-NBER Conference on Improving Consumption Measurement (July 2009)
 - ▶ Data Users' Needs Forum (June 2010)
 - ▶ Methods Workshop (December 2010)
 - ▶ CE Survey Methods Symposium (July 2012)

Background

- Gemini Data Users Impact Team (DUIT) chartered in May 2013 to follow up with users to assess impact of new design



Purpose

- DUIT has two primary goals:
 - ▶ Acquaint and educate users on new design and plans for implementation
 - ▶ Compile user concerns with new design
- Team organized series of outreach efforts
 - ▶ Some passively solicited user feedback through dedicated redesign webpage on BLS site and Federal Register notice
 - ▶ Some actively engaged users through presentations at conferences, professional meetings, and invited panels

Outreach Efforts: Webpage

- Revamped to accurately reflect details of redesign.
- Allows public to both access information and provide feedback to project team
- Interactive graphics describing survey process step-by-step and highlighting key differences between redesign and current design
- Updated lists of outreach events and new information available
- No correspondence has been received through webpage

Outreach Efforts: Federal Register Notice

- Notice replicated template used by other BLS offices in posting notices
- Notice included:
 - ▶ Background on new design
 - ▶ Links to detailed design information on CE website
 - ▶ Desired focus of comments
 - Enhancements or limitations of new design on data use
 - Features of new design that are appealing or problematic
 - Information and lead time needed prior to implementation to adapt to new design

Outreach Efforts: Federal Register Notice

- Notice submitted for publication on January 28, 2014
- Notice open for 90 days, with comments directed to BLS through April 1, 2014
- No comments have been received from notice

Outreach Efforts: Events

- CE Survey Methods Symposium
 - ▶ Held in conjunction with CE Microdata Users' Workshop in July 2013
 - ▶ Invited audience of local data users and workshop attendees.
 - ▶ Drew an attendance of 47
 - ▶ Among presentations was overview of proposed CE redesign

Outreach Efforts: Events

- CE Survey Methods Symposium – cont.
 - ▶ Summary of user comments:
 - Overall design approved of, especially classification of expenditures as easily recalled, frequent, and efficient to collect via records
 - Possible problem with capture of expenditures with longer transaction time
 - Is expenditure one-time expense or regular expense due to year between waves? (Particular impact with larger expenditures)
 - Impact on response rates since respondent burden within wave increasing, even if cumulative burden with just two waves lower

Outreach Efforts: Events

- CE Survey Methods Symposium – cont.
 - ▶ Summary of user comments:
 - Impact on attrition rate of year between waves
 - Cash incentives more expensive than debit cards?
 - Concern with seasonality at micro level since respondents reporting for same time of year at each wave.

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Housing Statistics Users Group (HSUG) Meeting
 - ▶ Regular meetings every three months on housing data
 - ▶ Presentation on redesign given at November 2013 meeting to audience of about 40.
 - ▶ Summary of comments:
 - Inquiry about design of incentives in proposal and research to develop them
 - Concern about expenditure detail on property repairs, maintenance, and construction jobs

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Association of Public Data Users Webinar
 - ▶ One-hour webinar on overview of redesign presented to 35 virtual attendees in November 2013
 - ▶ Questions posed to attendees at end of webinar
 - Positive (negative) impacts on research?
 - Concerns about specific design changes:
 - 12-month change vs. 12 consecutive months of data
 - Fewer, more aggregated expenditure categories
 - Diary reference period not aligned with reference period of interviews
 - What information/training/lead time needed prior to implementation?

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Association of Public Data Users Webinar
 - ▶ Summary of user comments:
 - Overall positive feedback on redesign
 - General discussion about timetable for implementation
 - Interested in geographic detail redesign would provide
 - Question whether administrative records would be used

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Conference (FCSM)
 - ▶ Annual conference highlights research and methodological topics relevant to Federal statistical programs for an audience of government, private, and academic researchers
 - ▶ Presentation on new design and implementation plans part of larger session in November 2013
 - ▶ About 75-80 attendees for presentation; about 35-40 remained for Q & A session at end

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Conference (FCSM) – cont.
 - ▶ Summary of user comments:
 - Concern about continuity of time-series data and how CE would handle break in series
 - Extensive documentation in preparation for this change is necessary.
 - Information should be provided on how estimates from data will change

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Federal Data Users Meeting – Part 1
 - ▶ Meeting designed to get feedback from local users in Federal agencies
 - ▶ Brief presentation on redesign proposal followed by questions to guide discussion
 - ▶ Meeting held in November 2013 and attended by five people representing four agencies

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Federal Data Users Meeting – Part 1 – cont.
 - ▶ Summary of user comments:
 - Pleased with focus on increased data quality
 - Reduction in level of expenditure detail issue for sales tax analysis
 - Reduction in detail for assets, durables, and gifts concern for poverty and well-being analysis
 - Health expenditure/reimbursement issue due to year period between waves
 - Collection of health insurance subsidies due to ACA also raised.

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Federal Data Users Meeting – Part 1 – cont.
 - ▶ Summary of user comments:
 - In general, group felt new design could work, but would need as much time as possible to prepare for implementation, e.g., as soon as final level of expenditure detail decided
 - Crosswalk between current design and new design
 - Continuity of time series and how years of data could be linked
 - Provision of sample programs using new data
 - Detailed instruction on using data at microdata workshop

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Federal Data Users Meeting – Part 2
 - ▶ Second meeting bringing other Federal users held in January 2014
 - ▶ Meeting followed same format with eight attendees representing five agencies

Outreach Efforts: Events

- Federal Data Users Meeting – Part 2 – cont.
 - ▶ Summary of user comments:
 - New design generally well received with few concerns expressed
 - Lack of four consecutive quarters of data with suggestion that CE provide guidance on creating synthetic panel
 - Impact of reduction in number of expenditure categories for sales tax analysis
 - Impact of reduction in number of expenditure categories on evaluations of data quality via comparisons with PCE/other sources.

Outreach Efforts: Data Users Impact Survey

- DUIT designed and fielded web-based users' survey to solicit additional feedback
- Information to be elicited from survey
 - ▶ CE data products used by respondent
 - ▶ Features of new design that are appealing
 - Use of technology for diary keeping (web, smartphone)
 - ▶ Does new design support or impede current research?
 - ▶ Does new design allow new research?

Outreach Efforts: Data Users Impact Survey

- Type of information to be elicited from survey
 - ▶ Reaction to specific design changes like global Diary questions in Interviews
 - ▶ Impact of fewer, more aggregated expenditure categories
 - ▶ Additional information needed in preparation for new data
 - ▶ Amount of lead time needed
- Two-tiered sample
 - ▶ Direct invitations to Users Needs Forum attendees and Gemini email blast list
 - ▶ Notification of survey to CE update email list

Outreach Efforts: Data Users Impact Survey

- OMB approval received in late January 2014
- Instrument open for completion from February 6 – February 24, 2014
- 22 responses were received

Outreach Efforts: Data Users Impact Survey

- Analysis of results
 - ▶ Respondents evenly divided among table users, microdata users, and others
 - ▶ About one-half of respondents found use of technology for diary keeping appealing
 - Over 70% of table users, about 30% of microdata users
 - ▶ Table users and others liked shorter interviews to lower burden and increase accuracy
 - ▶ Microdata and table users liked 12-month interval between waves for analysis of year-over-year change
 - ▶ Microdata and table users both said new features would support current research

Outreach Efforts: Data Users Impact Survey

- Analysis of results
 - ▶ About half of table users said new features would support new research; remainder were unsure
 - ▶ About half of microdata users said new features would not support new research
 - ▶ Most microdata users said new design would limit their current research, primarily due to lack of quarterly data and reduction of expenditure detail

Outreach Efforts: Data Users Impact Survey

- Analysis of results
 - ▶ Switch from 12 consecutive months of data to data from 2 points in time 12 months apart major issue for microdata users, not at all for table users
 - ▶ All respondents felt one to two months sufficient lead time to receive transition materials

Overall Evaluation of Outreach Efforts

- Neither redesigned Gemini Project web page nor Federal Register Notice generated any feedback
- Data Users Impact Survey provided feedback from very small number of respondents, but feedback reinforced many comments heard at outreach events
- Outreach events collectively reached wide range of data users whose feedback touched on various facets of redesign

Overall Evaluation of Outreach Efforts

- In general, users had positive reaction to new design
- One significant concern was impact of elimination of quarterly panels with two waves of data collection one year apart. Number of users felt it would limit utility of data and asked for guidance in adapting their research to new design.
- Another concern was reduction in expenditure detail in new design compared to current design.

Overall Evaluation of Outreach Efforts

- While sentiment about use of technology in redesign was not specifically cited in comments, evidence from user impact survey did indicate appeal of that feature for some users
- While users did register some concerns with aspects of redesign, none rise to level of “showstoppers” that would lead Gemini Project team to consider modifying proposed redesign

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